

2016

# Dog Control Survey





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## Introduction & Methodology

Maidstone Borough Council undertook a consultation with residents and visitors in relation to controls for dogs in borough. The survey objectives were to establish awareness levels around the removal of specific bins for dog waste and the success of the accompanying campaign about how dog waste can be disposed of in the regular litter bins, and to identify what support there is for increasing dog controls and amending the current controls. A full copy of the survey is available at Appendix A.

The survey was open to all residents and visitors and was promoted on social media, through the Council's website and at events where the environmental enforcement team was presenting. Data has been weighted according to the known population profile (using age and gender as variables) to counteract non-response bias. Full details of the applied weighting are available in the demographics section of this report.

A total of 369 responses were received for the survey. Please note not every respondent answered every question therefore the total number of respondents refers to the number of respondents for the question being discussed not to the survey overall. This level of response gives us a 4.3% error rate at 90% confidence level.

There was a low response rate from residents with BME backgrounds, therefore it should be noted that the results for this group are not statistically significant. While these results are included in the tables in this report they are not referred to in the narrative as the response level from this group was too small.

## Survey Summary

The survey shows that the majority of respondents were aware they can use any litter bin or household waste to dispose of bagged dog faeces. Though it should be noted the lowest levels of awareness were amongst the 75 years and over age group and highest for the 18 to 24 years group. The further comments section of survey there were comments that in some areas dog bins had been removed but there are no 'normal' litter bins, other comments in relation to bins expressed the need for them to be emptied more frequently now that they are dual purpose.

Overall, respondents were very supportive of the Council using its existing powers in relation to dog fouling and in relation to allowing dogs into a fenced or enclosed play area. In the final comments section of the survey 40 comments were in relation to increasing enforcement including more fines, 14 mentioned issues with dog fouling in their area.

The majority of survey respondents were in favour of increasing the fine for dog fouling to £100.

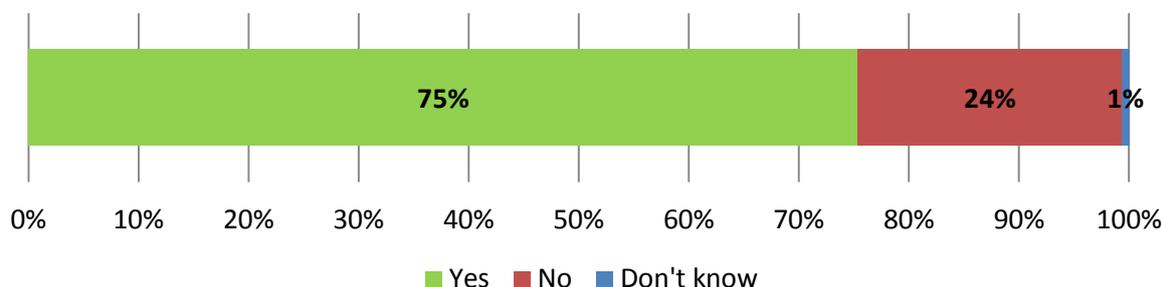
Over 90% of respondents were in favour of introducing a new offense requiring dogs that are causing a nuisance in a public area to be placed on a lead when directed to do so by an authorised council officer.

There were 31 additional comments that have been classified as suggestions. These included having specific dog exercise areas, offering dog obedience lessons, allowing dogs to be off lead in parks before a certain time and after a certain time such as in Central Park, New York. It was also suggested that the fine for dog fouling be increased to £250, employ more dog wardens and that dog licenses should be reintroduced.

While there was strong support for the introduction of a new offense requiring dogs to be kept on a lead in certain areas across the areas outlined in the survey however the most popular area where respondents would like to see this introduced was specific shopping areas and parades with 79%.

Half of respondents were in favour of the introduction of a new offense which would prohibit a person from walking six or more dogs at any one time. The greatest levels of agreement were from respondents aged 75 years and over (78%) and those with a disability (66%).

## Question 2: Before today, were you aware that you can use any litter bin or your household waste bin to dispose of dog faeces?



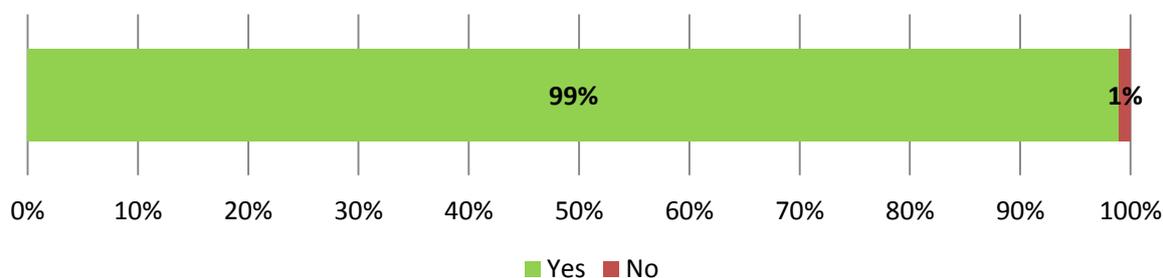
It appears that the publicity campaign informing residents and visitors that dog waste can go in any bin has been successful. Overall, three out of four people were aware that they can use any litter bin or their household waste bin to dispose of dog waste.

The greatest levels of awareness were from the 18 to 24 years group at 86% and the lowest level of awareness was amongst those aged 75 years and over.

The result for men and women and those with and those without a disability are broadly consistent with the overall result with a variance of less than 2%.

Percentage Yes	
<b>Age</b>	
- 18 to 24 years	86%
- 25 to 34 years	74%
- 35 to 44 years	81%
- 45 to 54 years	75%
- 55 to 64 years	72%
- 65 to 74 years	73%
- 75 years and over	67%
<b>Gender</b>	
- Male	74%
- Female	77%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
- White groups	75%
- BME groups	100%
<b>Disability</b>	
- Yes	77%
- No	76%

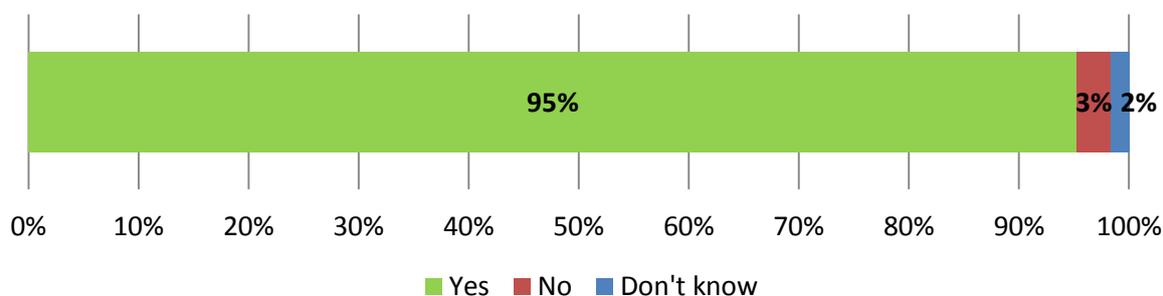
**Question 3: The Council has a number of existing powers which make it an offence if a person in charge of a dog fails to clean up its faeces. Do you think the Council should continue to enforce this?**



The majority of respondents across groupings are supportive of the Council using our powers to enforce dog fouling.

Percentage Yes	
<b>Age</b>	
- 18 to 24 years	100%
- 25 to 34 years	99%
- 35 to 44 years	96%
- 45 to 54 years	100%
- 55 to 64 years	100%
- 65 to 74 years	100%
- 75 years and over	100%
<b>Gender</b>	
- Male	98%
- Female	100%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
- White groups	99%
- BME groups	100%
<b>Disability</b>	
- Yes	100%
- No	99%

### Question 4: Do you support the continuation of the existing powers that make it an offence to allow dogs into fenced in or enclosed children's play areas?

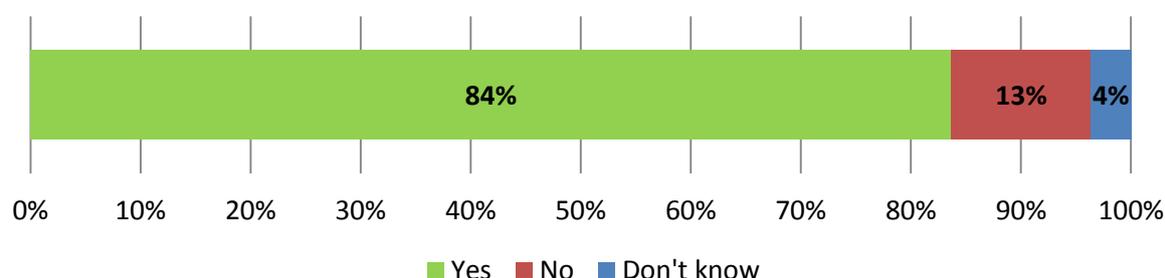


There was strong support for the continuation of the existing powers that make it an offence to allow dogs into a fenced in or enclosed children's play area, with 95% in favour.

There is a 14% difference between the age group with the greatest level of support for continuing the existing powers. The greatest levels of support were from respondents aged 65 years or over at 100%. The 25 to 34 years group had the lowest levels of support at 86%.

Percentage Yes	
<b>Age</b>	
- 18 to 24 years	90%
- 25 to 34 years	86%
- 35 to 44 years	96%
- 45 to 54 years	99%
- 55 to 64 years	97%
- 65 to 74 years	100%
- 75 years and over	100%
<b>Gender</b>	
- Male	99%
- Female	91%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
- White groups	95%
- BME groups	64%
<b>Disability</b>	
- Yes	96%
- No	95%

## Question 5: The council is considering increasing the fine for fouling and allowing a dog into a prohibited area from £75 to £100. Do you support the increase in fine?



There is strong support for increasing the fine for dog fouling and allowing a dog into a prohibited area with more than four out of five respondents agreeing.

There is a 20% difference between the age group with the greatest level of support for the increase in and that with the lowest. The 55 to 64 years group has the highest level of agreement at 91% and the 75 years and over group have the lowest at 71%.

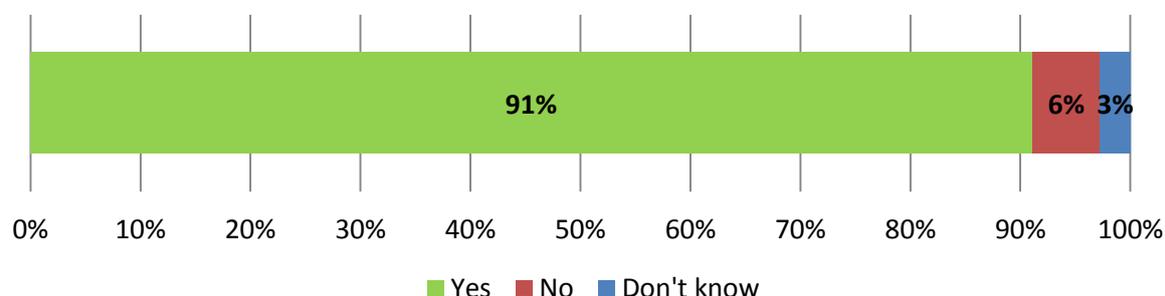
In addition there is a 12% difference between the proportion of men and women that support the fine increase.

There is an 8% difference levels of support between respondents with a disability and those without.

The lower levels of support for an increase in the fine from those with a disability and those aged 75 years and over could possibly be due to these groups being more likely than average to have a physical constraint that makes it difficult to pick up after their dog.

Percentage Yes	
<b>Age</b>	
- 18 to 24 years	90%
- 25 to 34 years	78%
- 35 to 44 years	78%
- 45 to 54 years	90%
- 55 to 64 years	91%
- 65 to 74 years	85%
- 75 years and over	71%
<b>Gender</b>	
- Male	90%
- Female	78%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
- White groups	84%
- BME groups	64%
<b>Disability</b>	
- Yes	76%
- No	84%

## Question 6: Would you like to see the introduction of a new offence requiring dogs that are causing a nuisance in a public area to be placed on a lead when directed to do so by an authorised council officer



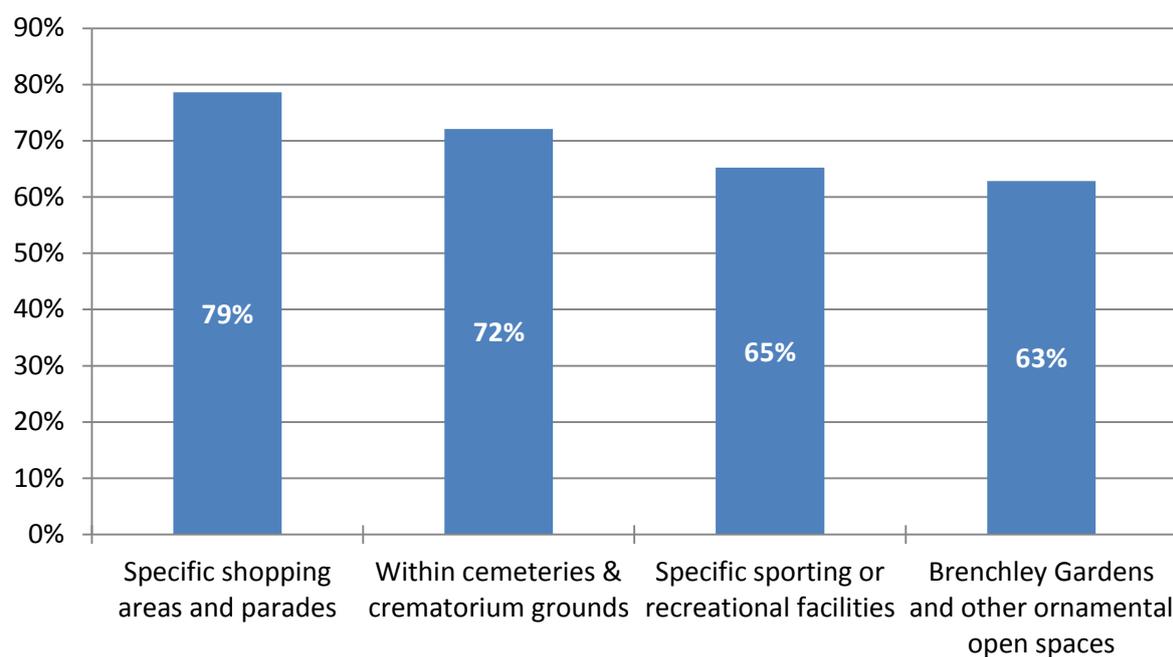
The majority of survey respondents, nine out of ten, are in favour of introducing a new offence that requires dogs that are causing a nuisance to be put on a lead when directed so by an authorised council officer.

While there was no difference in the level of support for the new offence between men and women there is a 13% difference in levels of support between the age group with the greatest proportion and that with the lowest proportion in favour.

Respondents aged over 65 years had the greatest proportion in favour at 96%. The 35 to 44 years group had the lowest level of support at 83%.

Percentage Yes	
<b>Age</b>	
- 18 to 24 years	90%
- 25 to 34 years	93%
- 35 to 44 years	83%
- 45 to 54 years	90%
- 55 to 64 years	94%
- 65 to 74 years	96%
- 75 years and over	96%
<b>Gender</b>	
- Male	91%
- Female	91%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
- White groups	92%
- BME groups	100%
<b>Disability</b>	
- Yes	92%
- No	91%

## Question 7: Would you like to see the introduction of a new offence requiring dogs to be placed on a lead in any of the following areas?

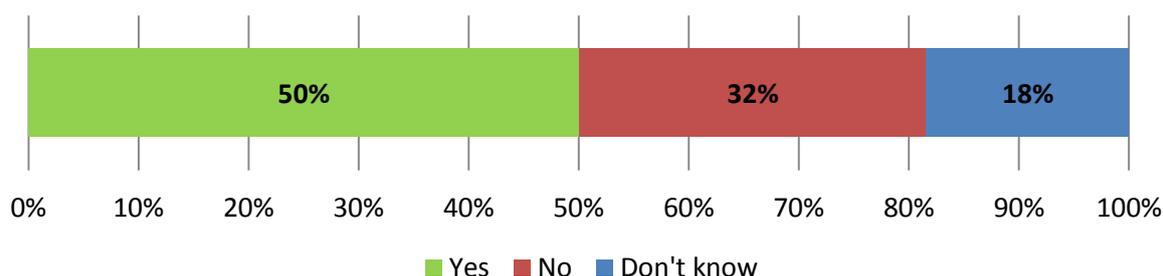


Most respondents are in favour of the introduction of a new offence requiring dogs to be placed on a lead in the areas described. The greatest support was for specific shopping areas and parades with almost four in five supportive of a new offence covering this type of space. The table shows that this was also the top area, or joint top area, for both men and women, those with and those without a disability and all age groups, except the 45 to 54 years group.

Cemeteries and crematorium grounds was the second most popular area where respondents were in favour of the new offence being introduced. This was the top response from the 45 to 54 years group. This area was more popular with women with 78% in favour compared to 66% of men - a 12% difference.

Top Response by Grouping	
<b>Age</b>	
- 18 to 24 years	Specific shopping areas and parades
- 25 to 34 years	
- 35 to 44 years	
- 45 to 54 years	Within cemeteries and crematorium grounds
- 55 to 64 years	Joint – Cemeteries & Shopping areas
- 65 to 74 years	
- 75 years and over	Specific shopping areas and parades
<b>Gender</b>	
- Male	Specific shopping areas and parades
- Female	
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
- White groups	Specific shopping areas and parades
- BME groups	Within cemeteries & the crematorium grounds
<b>Disability</b>	
- Yes	Specific shopping areas and parades
- No	

## Question 8: Would you like to see the introduction of a new offence which prohibits a person walking six dogs at any one time?



Half of respondents were in favour of introducing a new offence which prohibits a person walking six dog or more at any one time.

While there is no variation between the proportion of men and women in favour of this change, there is a 56% difference between the age group with the greatest level of agreement and that with the lowest. The 25 to 34 years group have the lowest level of agreement at 22%, this proportion then increases as we go up the age groups to the 75 years and over who had the greatest proportion of respondents in agreement with this changes.

Respondents with a disability are more likely than average to be in favour of this change and respondents from BME groups are more likely than average to be against this change.

Percentage Yes	
<b>Age</b>	
- 18 to 24 years	45%
- 25 to 34 years	22%
- 35 to 44 years	37%
- 45 to 54 years	53%
- 55 to 64 years	63%
- 65 to 74 years	64%
- 75 years and over	78%
<b>Gender</b>	
- Male	50%
- Female	50%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
- White groups	50%
- BME groups	36%
<b>Disability</b>	
- Yes	66%
- No	48%

## Suggested locations where dogs should be kept on a lead & why

A total of 149 comments were received in relation to locations where respondents felt dogs should be kept on leads. Not all respondents provided a comment and there were 8 respondents that commented that there was nowhere they should be kept on the lead and it is dependant on the individual dogs' behaviour.

The greatest number of comments mentioned Bearsted Woodland Trust (48 comments). The comments show that although there are areas within the woods where the Woodland Trusts asks that dogs are kept on lead, it appears that this doesn't always happen in practice.

Respondents showed a concern for children with 15 saying dogs should be kept on leads in or around children's play and recreation areas and 11 commenters that suggested schools as a location. One commenter said that dogs should be kept on leads anywhere there is children. In relation to this theme commenters said that dogs can become excited around lots of children making noise especially around pick up and drop off times, that some children are scared of dogs and there is a risk of the dog running into the road.

There were nine comments that mentioned roads and highways. The reasons cited were around safety and accident prevention.

There were eight commenters that said dogs should be kept on a lead in shopping areas, including the town centre. These people were concerned for public safety and one said that it was unfair on the dog to be dragged around shops.

Fourteen commenters said that dogs should be kept on a lead in all public or all open spaces. The reasons cited for this was control, over fouling and jumping up.

There were nine commenters that said that dogs should be kept on a lead in parks, four of these commenters moderated this location saying parks those with children's play areas. The reasons for this were that many children are scared of dogs, irresponsible dog owners and dogs jumping up at people.

There were 13 comments that mentioned Mote Park. However, some were more specific about the areas in Mote Park where dogs should be kept on a lead mentioning the lakeside, around the café and around the children's play areas. For this theme the reasons cited were risk of danger/injury to children, lots of dogs around but no way to tell which ones are well behaved. In relation to the lakeside the commenter that specifically mentioned the risk angler's equipment from dogs off lead.

One commenter mentioned Cobtree Park citing the same reasons – children being scared and dogs jumping up at park users.

The reasons cited for these locations are very similar with some people not liking dog jumping up at them and being a nuisance, concern over welfare of children and vulnerable people if dogs are not controlled, people who are not fond of or are frightened of dogs. One commenter suggested that the Council could offer dog obedience training.

## **Suggestions of locations where dogs should be prohibited & why**

There were 77 comments in relation to locations where dog should be prohibited. Thirteen of these comments said that there was nowhere that dogs should be prohibited, most of these people said that dogs can be put on a lead and controls and therefore should not be a nuisance, one said that their dog was part of the family.

The most common area mentioned for prohibiting dogs was children's play areas and recreation grounds with 23 commenters mentioning these. The reasons cited do not differ from that in the previous question about where dogs should be kept on leads with fear of dogs, irresponsible owners, excitable dogs and children not a good mix and unpredictable all mentioned or alluded to again.

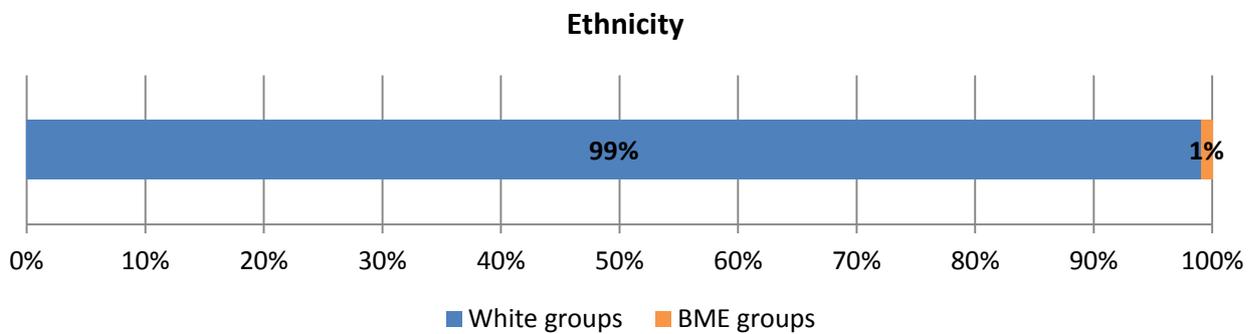
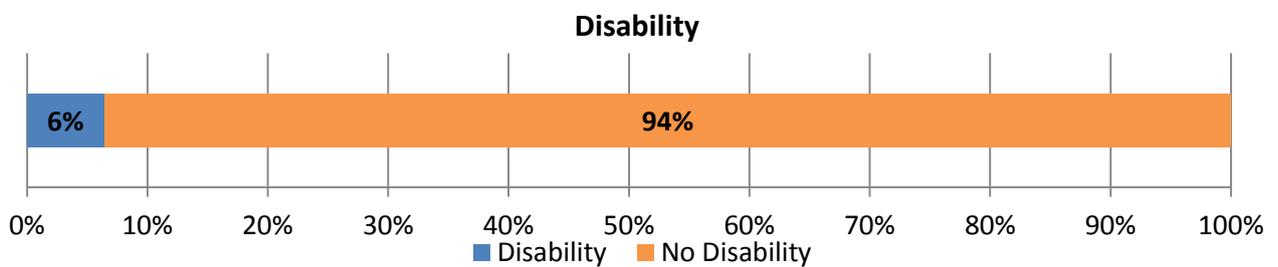
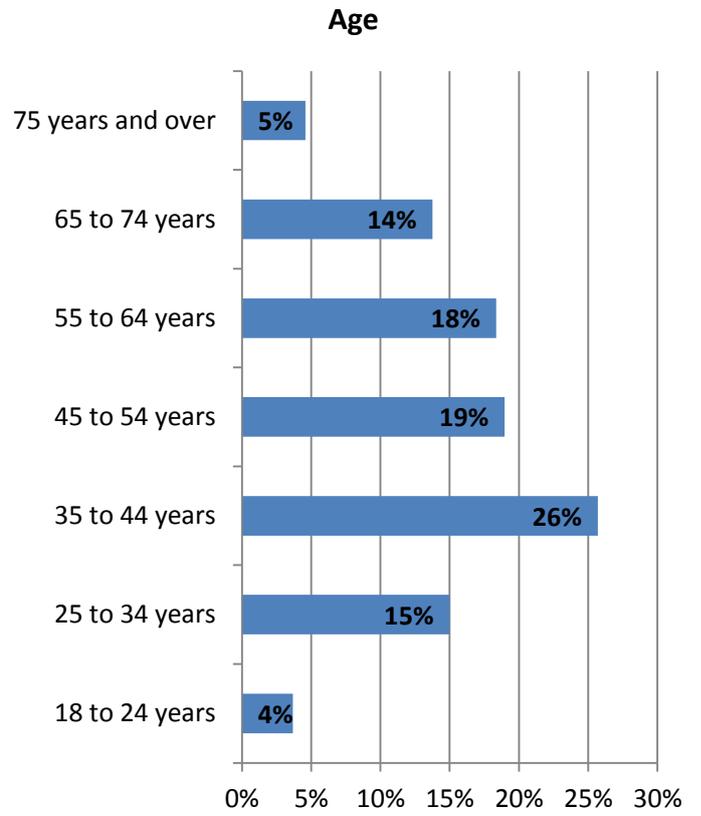
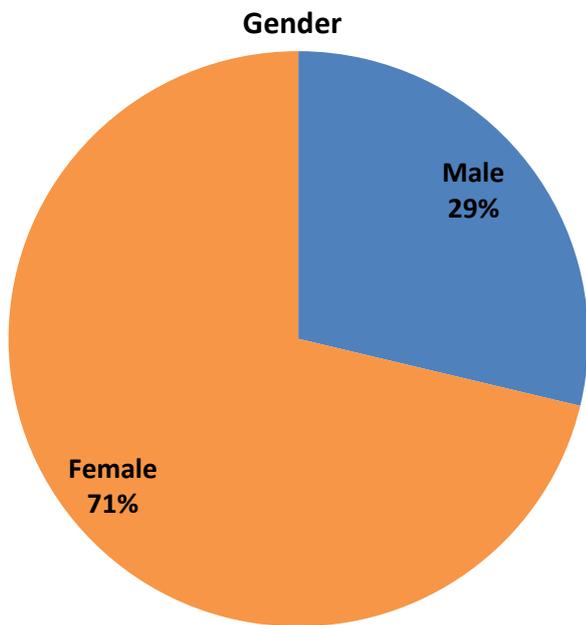
Thirteen comments related to shopping areas including the town centre, with three citing trip hazards and health and safety as reasons why. One commenter's reason was that it was unfair on the dog who could be hit with shopping bags or stood on. A further two commenters mentioned schools with the reason being children.

Five commenters mentioned Bearsted Woodland Trust. It appears that although there are specific areas where the trust asks dogs to be put on a lead this is being flouted by some dog owners, and in turn upsetting other users of this area.

Four comments mentioned food establishments such as cafes and restaurants with hygiene being the main reason.

Two comments were related to Mote Park, one commenter cited the reason as being dogs jumping up at people while other was specific saying that dogs should be prohibited by lake, river and in the picnic areas.

## Survey Demographics & Weighting



<b>Age</b>	<b>Population</b>		<b>Survey</b>		<b>Weighting</b>
	<b>Males</b>		<b>Males</b>		
18 to 24 years	6,300	5%	2	1%	8.48
25 to 34 years	9,319	8%	6	2%	4.18
35 to 44 years	10,879	9%	11	3%	2.66
45 to 64 years	11,163	9%	19	6%	1.58
55 to 64 years	9,534	8%	25	8%	1.03
65 to 74 years	6,955	6%	21	6%	0.89
75 years and over	4,899	4%	10	3%	1.32
<b>Age</b>	<b>Females</b>		<b>Females</b>		<b>Weighting</b>
18 to 24 years	5,701	5%	10	3%	1.53
25 to 34 years	9,904	8%	43	13%	0.62
35 to 44 years	11,243	9%	73	22%	0.41
45 to 64 years	10,989	9%	43	13%	0.69
55 to 64 years	9,913	8%	35	11%	0.76
65 to 74 years	7,314	6%	24	7%	0.82
75 years and over	7,346	6%	5	2%	3.96