

# Appendix D

Public Online Survey Results

# Saanich People, Pets and Parks Strategy

## PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

The public survey was available on the People, Pets and Parks Strategy [project website](#) from May 20th-June 19th, 2022.

The number of times a particular theme was referenced in the online survey is included in parenthesis. *Example:* Dog presence and owner behavior (225).

Results are grouped by the following topics areas:

- Park Access and Potential Barriers
- General Park Uses
- Pets in Parks
- Pet Owner Trends
- Additional Considerations

### I. PARK ACCESS & POTENTIAL BARRIERS

#### *How often do you visit Saanich public parks or beaches?*

Most participants visit Saanich public parks and beaches daily or more than once per day (43%) or several times a week (38%).

1,831 responses

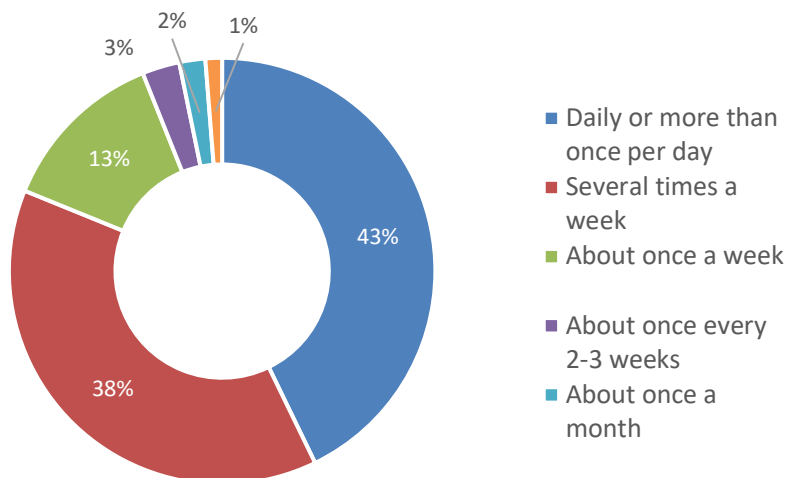


Figure 1 Frequency of Park/Beach Visit

### What are your main reasons for visiting the parks?

Most participants indicated that their main reason to visit the park is to bring pets to walk or play with (69%).

1,834 responses

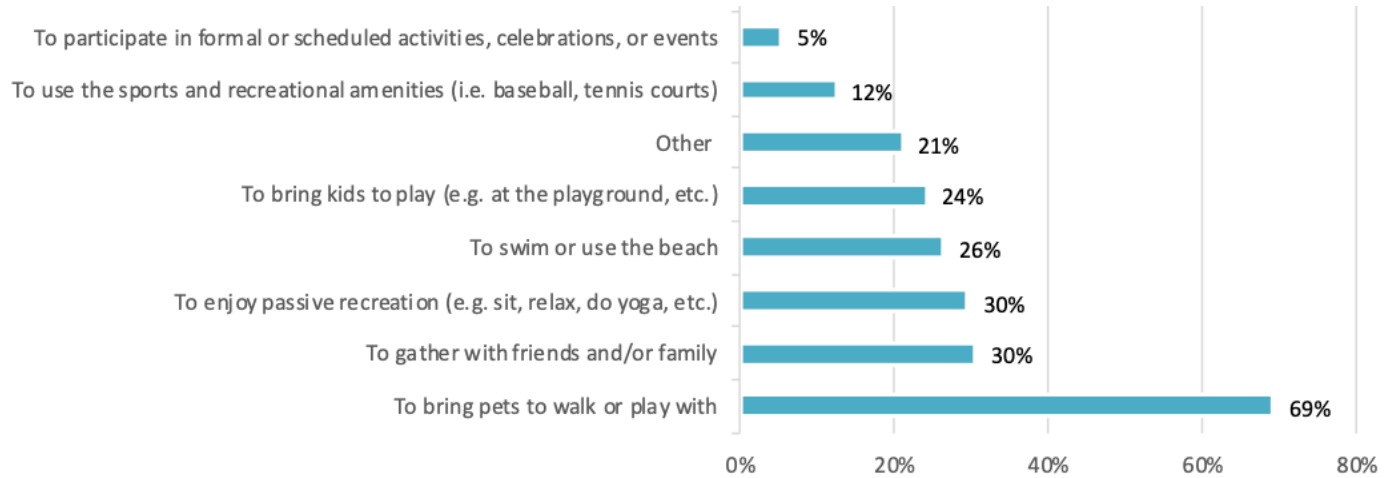


Figure 2 Main Reason to Visit Par

### How do you typically get to the park?

Most participants access the park by car (51%) or by foot (44%).

1,832 responses

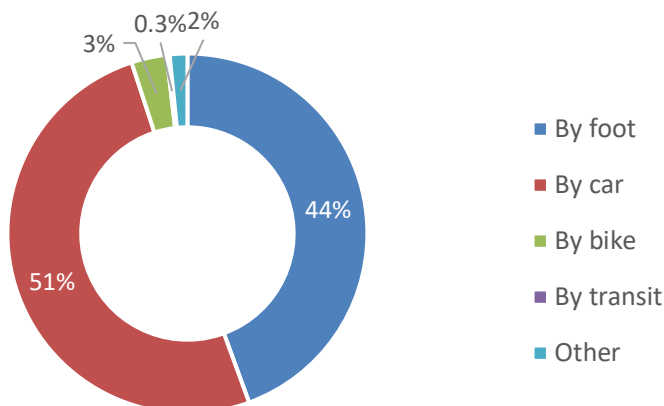


Figure 3 Access to Parks

## *What prevents people from visiting parks?*

*In the public survey, we asked participants what prevents them from visiting Saanich parks. The top barriers mentioned in survey responses include:*

- *Pet Management and Level of Restriction*
- *Vehicle Parking & Accessibility*
- *No barriers (content with current level of access)*
- *Overcrowding of parks*

### **Pet management and level of restriction (464)**

Comments generally include concern with level of restrictions, issues with dog behavior and dogs chasing wildlife, irresponsible owners, and inadequate management of dog waste. The majority of comments simply state “off-leash dogs” as a reason people do not visit parks.

#### **Too many dog restrictions (200)**

Respondents shared that they do not go to a park if they are unable to bring their dog(s). There were comments expressing frustration with the restrictive beach bylaws towards dogs.

#### **Not enough restrictions (134)**

Many other respondents shared that, due in large part to safety concerns, they would not like to have any dogs around. Some respondents point to owners not properly training their dogs or not complying with bylaws as a reason for not attending certain parks.

#### **Designated off-leash areas (130)**

Many respondents shared their desire for more dog friendly areas both leashed and unleashed. They supported options and a variety of safe off-leash areas (agility, socialization/ exercise open areas vs. shy, small, senior dog areas, agility, trails, etc.) Suggestions also included large, fenced spaces for dogs who do not wish to socialize, adding that this would lead to less dog conflict.

### **Vehicle parking & accessibility (235)**

Respondents shared that access to parks is a challenge. In particular, parking limitations for those that need to drive to the park can be a strong barrier. There were also comments from participants around accessibility for those with mobility issues.

### **Content with state of parks (212)**

Responses coded here indicated that participants did not have any barriers to access that prevent them from visiting parks.

### **Busy or overcrowded parks (163)**

Many respondents commented that overcrowding is a deterrent from visiting parks and limits their enjoyment. Mount Douglas Park was mentioned as a particularly busy park.

### **Safety (142)**

Respondents largely commented on their feelings of discomfort and insecurity around off-leash dogs. Other safety concerns respondents shared included presence of needles, lack of lighting, and proximity to busy streets.

### Amenities and infrastructure (102)

Limited amenities in some Saanich parks were stated as barriers, including additional bathrooms (or unlocked bathrooms) and better playground equipment for children.

### Other (88)

Responses expressed time constraints or weather conditions preventing attendance at parks.

## II. PARK USES

*When thinking about Saanich parks generally, what are the most important considerations? (Choose up to 3).*

The most important considerations for Saanich parks generally indicated by survey participants include opportunities to connect with nature (61.9%), environmental protection and wildlife habitat (41.3%), and cleanliness of parks and facilities (36.3%).

1,834 responses

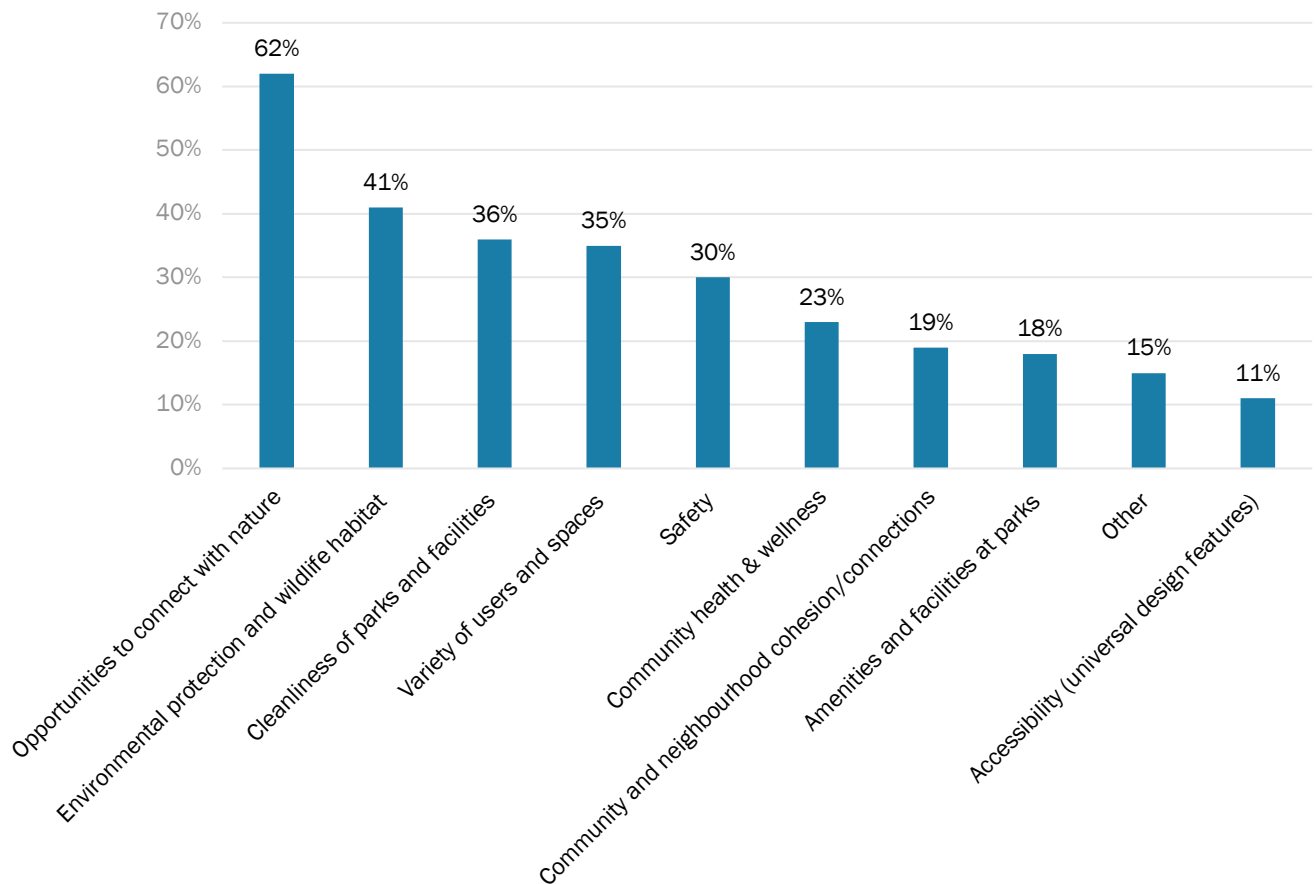


Figure 4 General Considerations for Saanich Parks

### III. PETS IN PARKS

#### *How can we share our parks with pets and people?*

The most important considerations for people and pets sharing Saanich parks indicated by survey participants include protection of natural areas and sensitive ecosystems (41.2%), safety for dogs/pets (40.0%), and safety for people (35.7%).

1,834 responses

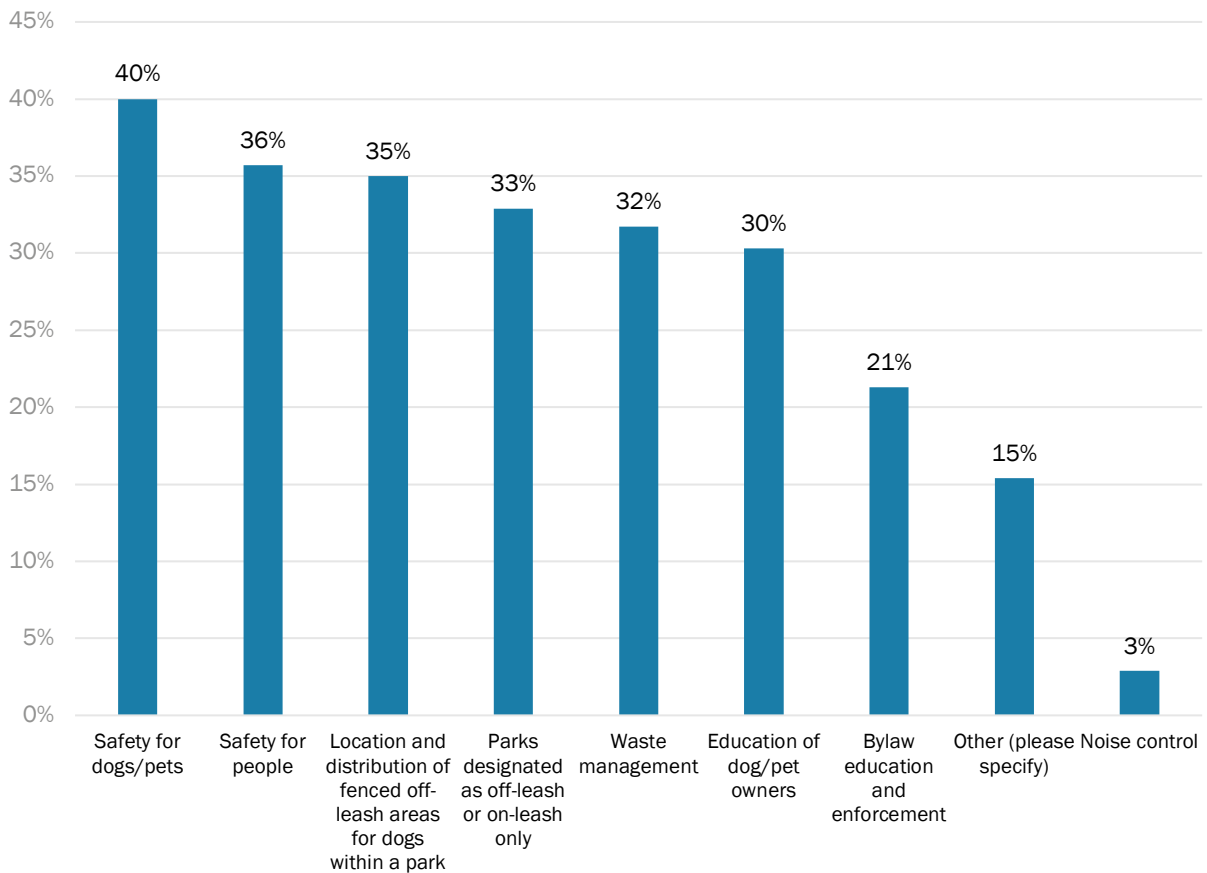


Figure 5 Considerations for Pets in Parks

“

*Cuthbert Holmes Park is a great place for people and pets, but the needs of wildlife need to be paramount. Ground nesting birds and birds in the river are particularly vulnerable to disturbance by off-leash dogs. There needs to be places for dogs to be off-leash, but natural areas with sensitive species need to be protected.*

”

### Would you support having a park where no dogs are allowed?

When asked whether they would support having a park where no dogs were allowed, respondents were equally divided.

1,768 responses

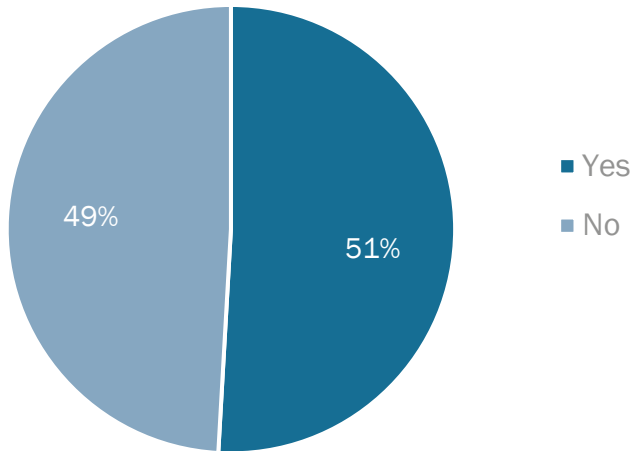
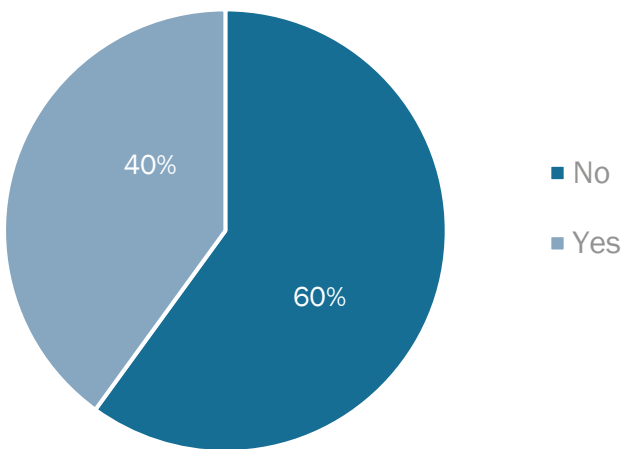


Figure 6 Support for Dog Restricted Parks

### Are there parks you avoid because of the high number of off-leash dogs?

Over half of respondents responded that they do not avoid parks because of off-leash dogs. However, 40% stated that they do avoid some Saanich parks for this reason.

1,772 responses



“

*Our dog is reactive. He walks really well on leash and is on leash at all times. Unfortunately, sometimes dogs are off leash and will approach him. I don't mind dogs off leash if they have good recall and their owners don't let them approach others. Maybe designated areas for dogs to be off leash would help. It can be challenging to take our dogs for walks because of this... We tend to avoid parks where this is common.*

”

Figure 7 Park Avoidance from Dogs

## OPPORTUNITIES *(What are the benefits to having dogs off-leash in Saanich?)*

In the public survey, we asked participants what are the benefits to having dogs off-leash in Saanich. The top benefits mentioned in survey responses include:

- Positive effects on physical and mental health (for both dogs and their owners)
- No benefit to having dogs off-leash
- Designated or enclosed off-leash areas
- Sense of community

### **Positive effects on physical and mental health (1,214)**

The majority of respondents recognise the benefits of off-leash areas for the physical and mental well-being of both owners and dogs. This includes those who don't own a pet but enjoy interacting and watching them. The caveat in most cases being that the dogs are well behaved and that they are not disturbing wildlife or sensitive ecosystems. Many respondents commented that the opportunity to exercise off-leash is incomparable and they feel the quality and quantity of exercise a dog receives off-leash cannot be replicated while on leash.

### **No benefit (285)**

Respondents felt that there are no benefits to having dogs off-leash in Saanich parks.

### **Designated and or enclosed off-leash areas (171)**

Some respondents feel that off-leash dogs should only be permitted within an enclosed area. They feel that this compromise from the current system allows dogs the freedom of being off-leash while leaving other areas dedicated for people who do not wish to be near dogs. There is also an issue of safety for dogs and wildlife that is resolved when there are clear boundaries.

### **Sense of community (151)**

Respondents noted the community value of having off-leash dog parks. It is added that particularly in the COVID-19 pandemic, with an influx in number of dogs and increased demand for open spaces to connect-parks have been essential. Some respondents have shared that taking their dog off-leash allows them to connect with other members of the community and enhances interactions as you can stand and interact while your dogs are getting exercise and socializing.

“

*I walk my dog every day to Playfair Park and meet other dog owners. It is the most important part of my dog's and my day. The dogs like to play together and us owners socialize. It was one of the things that kept us all same during the covid lockdowns.*

”

### **Easier and safer for those with mobility challenges (37)**

Comments here noted elderly people or people with mobility challenges would like their dogs to receive the exercise they need but this cannot be done consistently when on leash. Others mentioned safety around traversing difficult terrain with a leashed dog (i.e., steep slopes on trails).



**Off-leash areas should not be enclosed (34)**

Some respondents feel that off-leash areas should not be enclosed as this can lead to overcrowding and can be stressful for dogs who do not want to socialize. Participants also add that owners are unable to get exercise while at an enclosed dog park as it does not offer as much space as trails.

**Other (29)**

Responses that were not relevant to the question.

**CHALLENGES** (*What are the challenges of having dogs off-leash in Saanich?*)

When asked what are the main challenges to having dogs off-leash in Saanich, respondents mentioned the following key themes:

- *Dog behavior & waste management*
- *Safety concerns*
- *Natural areas & ecosystem impacts*
- *Appropriate designated areas (size, quantity, location)*

**Dog behavior and waste management (1,110)**

The majority of respondents pointed to dog behavior and waste management as a main challenge of having dogs off leash. The main reason was proper pet etiquette and training as the responsibility of the owner and not the dog.

**Behavioral issues and improper training (674)**

Many respondents point to a lack of training and proper recall as a key issue with off-leash dogs. Respondents share concerns around what “under control” means to different people and that there are not enough owners aware of the impact their dog can have on the comfort and safety of other park users.

**Responsible dog waste management and disposal (285)**

Respondents shared frustration around the current waste management system. They would like to see more resources allocated to keeping parks clean. Many respondents feel that there is a correlation between off-leash dogs and improper waste disposal, as owners are not always keeping a close eye on their dog leaving excrement. Others feel that there should be dog bags at parks to facilitate cleaning up after them. There were also a few comments about insufficient collection of garbage cans in popular parks.

**Safety concerns (323)**

Many survey respondents commented that the lack of separation between dogs and people is a large barrier to enjoyment and safety in parks, particularly with regards to children and the elderly. This also includes the safety between dogs. For example, reactive dogs with behavior issues who are leashed may become aggressive if approached by an off-leash dog. A few participants added they would like to see off-leash areas that separate small and large dogs. Some also considered the safety in the environment of potential dog parks (i.e., proximity to busy streets, etc.).

**Impacts on natural areas and sensitive ecosystems (230)**

Respondents call for greater consideration of the impacts that park users have on surrounding ecosystems, wildlife, and natural areas. Some respondents point out that off-leash dogs are not

responsible for understanding boundaries of sensitive ecosystem areas and that it is the responsibility of dog owners to be informed, respectful, and in control of their pets.

### **Appropriate designated areas (size, quantity, location) (190)**

Comments expressed the importance of ensuring appropriate locations of designated dog areas (i.e., avoiding ESAs and busy roads and considering regional distribution). There were some comments surrounding the need for clear signage that demarcates permitted uses in any given park or trail.

### **Education (155)**

Respondents share that greater education would lead to less tension between park users. There were calls for more training and accessible information, from both those who have and do not have dogs. There were also comments about the need for clear signage on where dogs are or are not allowed to be and designation of shared trails for cyclists and joggers who move at higher speeds.

### **No challenges (129)**

Many respondents feel that there are no challenges to having dogs off-leash in parks. Respondents commented on the years of visiting/using Saanich parks and not seeing any altercations or conflict.

### **Understanding of non-pet owners (103)**

Some respondents share that there is tension between those who own pets and those who don't. There can be a lack of understanding from those who don't own pets on how to behave towards dogs. There were some concerns raised around unsafe or aggressive treatment of dogs. Other respondents share that there is a lack of knowledge of where dogs are permitted, leading non-pet owners to be disagreeable in their attitude towards dogs.

### **Bylaw compliance and enforcement (87)**

Comments stated that non-compliance is most common with owners who take dogs where they don't belong or are not allowed. Respondents expressed that some bylaws are currently written in a way that leaves room for interpretation (e.g., "dog must be under control"). Others comment that there is not enough available information on rules for parks which lead to confusion and tension between users. There were some questions on how the bylaws will be enforced.

### **Overcrowding of parks (24)**

A few respondents share that overcrowding in dog parks, particularly smaller fenced areas, can lead to overstimulation or aggression in dogs. They add that some dogs who do not wish to interact with others are forced to be in a small area with others approaching them, which can lead to uncomfortable dogs lashing out. Others add that when designated off-leash parks get busy, dogs are not given enough space to run without running into other park users disinterested in interacting with dog.

“

*I used to really enjoy going for early morning walks along some of Saanich's beautiful sandy beaches, including Island View, Cordova Bay and Cadboro Bay. However, as I have gotten older and my balance is not as good as it once was, I find that I can no longer visit these places as I am constantly getting knocked off balance by off-leash dogs. I realize many of the dogs are simply excited and well-meaning, but it is a shame that I can no longer visit these beautiful beaches due to the constant presence of off-leash dogs.*

”

## How important are the following common features of off-leash dog areas in parks?

For over half (69%) of the 1,755 respondents who answered this question, fenced off-leash open areas for running and play activities was classified as very important or important. Respondents also prioritized walking path/trail loops (65%). Both themes echoed throughout the survey by those who are and are not pet owners. Most respondents felt that the availability of a sand box for dogs who like to dig is an unimportant park feature.

1,755 responses

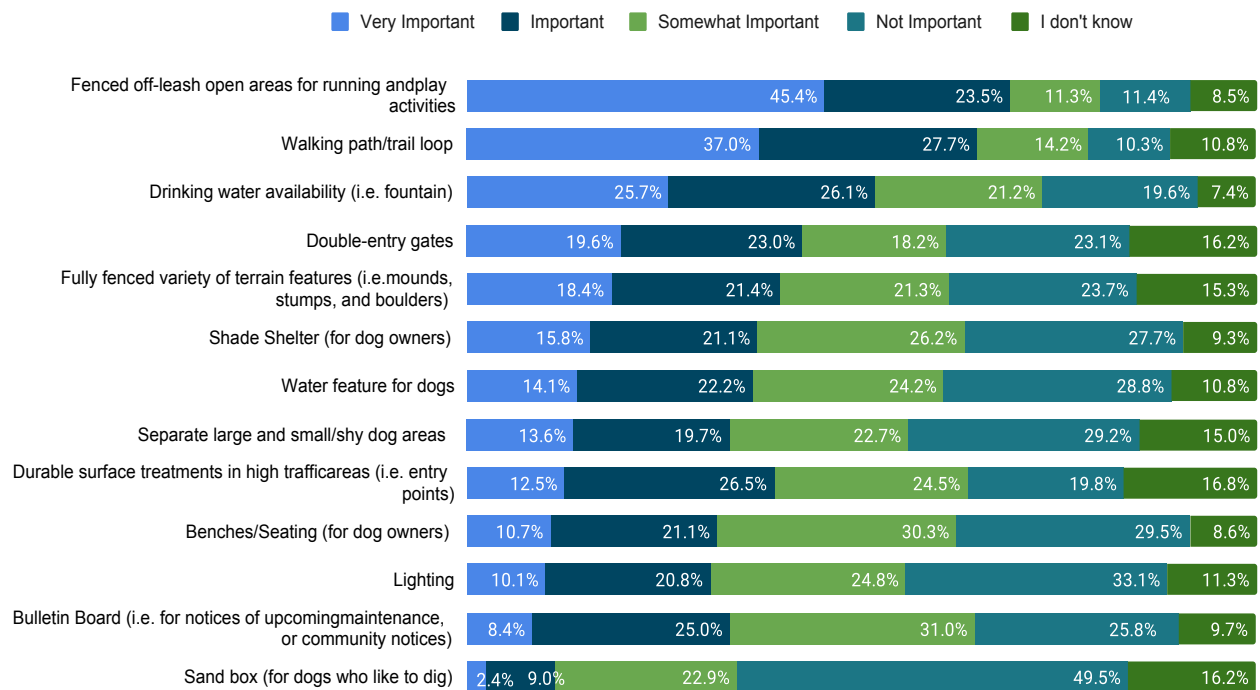


Figure 8 Importance of Dog Park Features

“

We have a dog and love going to the parks for walks in the forest. But would prefer an enclosed area for the dogs to play.

”

#### IV. PET OWNERS

*Do you currently have a dog in your household?*

The majority (70%) of survey respondents own a dog.

1,826 responses

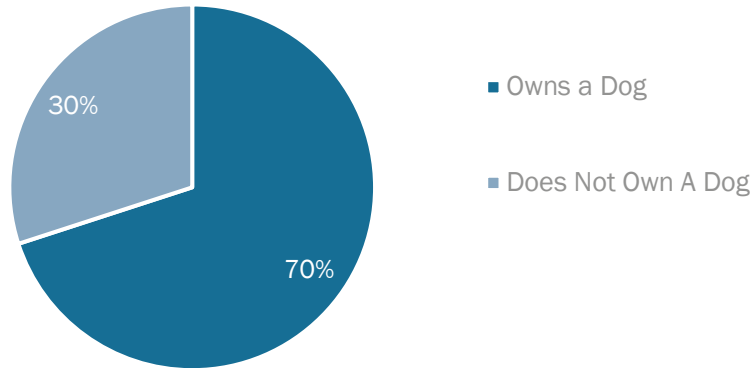


Figure 9 Dog Ownership

Out of those who have a dog in their household (1,259 responses):

Number of Dogs in Household*	
1 Dog	76%
2 Dogs	20%
3 or more	4%

Size of Dogs	
Medium (50-75 pounds)	41%
Small (25-49 pounds)	26%
Large (over 75 pounds)	17%
Tiny (under 25 pounds)	16%

\*The Animals Bylaw allows Saanich residents to have up to five dogs per property.

## Which specific parks do you enjoy taking your dog to? Why?

The most common parks survey participants mentioned included:

- Mount Douglas Park
- Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park
- Cadboro Bay Beach
- Island View Beach Regional Park
- Cuthbert Holmes
- Beckwith
- Francis/King Regional Park
- Parker Park (Cordova Bay Beach)
- Thetis Lake
- Panama Flat
- Cy Hampson (North Saanich)
- Lambrick Park

“ I visit the Cuthbert Holmes park everyday for the last 3 years and only have positive interactions. We've gotten to know other people and their pets, it's a nice community, everyone is friendly and respectful. It's a nice quiet oasis where I can enjoy nature in an urban setting with my dog. ”

Respondents expressed that they enjoy these parks because of the ability to take their dog off-leash or the presence of the pop-up dog parks, the amount of open space available, access to trails, the proximity (located in walking distance), ability to exercise, scenic views and natural elements (i.e., beach, trees, etc.).

## Do you visit local park(s) with your dog(s)?

1,238 responses

Everyday	55%
Varies (some weekdays and some weekends)	32%
Mostly weekdays	8%
Mostly weekends	5%

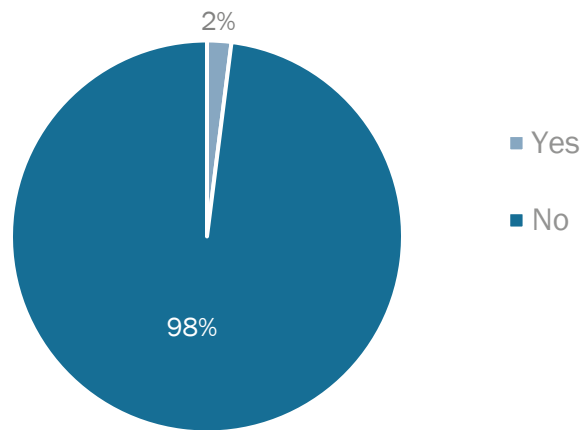
## What time of day do you usually visit Saanich parks with your dog(s)?

1,245 responses

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM	48%
It Varies	40%
4:00PM - later	36%
6:00 - 9:00 AM	28%

## Do you visit a Saanich park with any pet other than a dog?

1,777 responses



## *If you visit a Saanich park with a pet other than a dog, are there special considerations we should be aware of related to how your pet uses parks?*

Some respondents visit parks with horses, cats, and birds. Cat and bird owners shared that they typically use a pet carrier when they visit and would enjoy areas where there isn't much noise to bring cats on leash. Considerations for horses\* include:

- Type of surfaces (horses require good footing)
- Waste management (for horses)
- Horse-friendly trails
- Education and signage on safe conduct for dogs around horses

\*The majority of equestrian trails in Saanich are located in Regional Parks, managed by the CRD.

## V. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

### *Is there anything else that should be considered in developing Saanich's People, Pets, and Parks Strategy?*

#### **Designated off-leash areas (233)**

Respondents requested that the Strategy consider the difference between fenced and open off-leash areas. There were many comments that outlined how some dogs are not well suited for

enclosed/fenced areas as they are reactive or do not want to socialise but may need more exercise. Respondents commented that the District could explore permitting dogs in parks during specific times of the day. Suggested included in the mornings before families and picnickers.

### **Education and signage (171)**

Respondents called for better and more signage to distinguish areas where dogs are permitted off-leash and not, citing that the confusion can cause tension and confrontation. Generally, comments centered around availability and dispersal of information around where pets are welcome, how to train dogs, how to protect natural areas, etc.

### **Sense of community and inclusivity (166)**

Participants expressed recognition and respect for all users of the parks system. The Strategy should consider all needs and perspectives to support a dynamic and connected community. Respondents point to the dog community as a valuable part of their Saanich experience. They add that options for off-leash areas are important to the social connections formed.

### **Bylaw enforcement (125)**

A large number of respondents felt that enforcement should be increased, adding that bylaws with no repercussions for non-compliance can negate the impact they have. Some would like to see more patrol officers and potentially heftier fines. Comments also included licensing and fees associated with enforcement. There were several suggestions for strategies or implementable systems for recuperating costs or distinguishing levels of licensing.

### **Less Restrictions (102)**

Suggestions were primarily around restrictions for dogs off leash, and particularly on trails. Owners frequently reference the benefit of exercising in tandem with their dog as a reason to keep trails accessible to dogs. Some respondents have commented that dogs are better behaved when following on a trail rather than loose in a dog park as there is a clear direction and pace.

#### **Off-leash for trained dogs (20)**

A few respondents expressed that when time is invested into training, dogs should be allowed off-leash everywhere. They share concerns around limited access should there be restrictions in all parks and trails.

#### **No restrictions (7)**

Some stated that there should be no restrictions on users in the park and that the community could self-regulate.

### **More balanced restrictions (94)**

Participants expressed an understanding for the many perspectives that exist in Saanich and would like to see parks meet the needs of all users.

“

*Saanich parks provide a great place for dogs and owners to socialize in a safe environment. The majority of pet owners are respectful and always keep their pets under control.*

”

### **Ecosystem and natural area protection (92)**

Participants offered considerations related to the availability and dispersal of information around where pets are welcome, how to train dogs, how to protect natural areas, etc. Respondents called for

better/more signage to distinguish areas where dogs are permitted off-leash or not, citing that the confusion can cause tension and confrontation.

### **Safety (66)**

Specific safety concerns included those of children, families, and seniors with off-leash dogs and dog parks with little or no separation from vehicle roads.

#### **Children and families (27)**

Respondents would like to see areas for children and families to play without off-leash dogs nearby.

### **More restrictions (56)**

#### **On leash (63)**

Some respondents expressed that the nature of the bylaw should be fundamentally shifted so that the standard for the parks system is to have all dogs on-leash. A possible exception is fenced dog areas.

#### **Dog free areas (49)**

There were respondents who would like to see parks be completely free of dogs. Generally, respondents felt that there should be options for all within the parks system and that included parks with no dogs, to satisfy those with safety concerns.

### **Content with the current state (50)**

Respondents who were content with the state of the parks shared that they derive much satisfaction from the parks system currently and it does not need any change.

### **Beach access (44)**

Respondents were divided on beach access for dogs. Some expressed that with warmer summers, access to water for dogs is important. Others conveyed that dogs present a challenge when trying to enjoy the beach. There were comments surrounding waste management on beaches as well as the impact on shoreline wildlife. Some suggestions made were to permit dogs during off season (colder months when there are less people and not during wildlife mating season) and off-peak times (early morning and late evenings).

### **Amenities and waste management (36)**

Common requests were garbage cans, waste collection, shade from trees, water sources for dogs and washrooms in parks.

#### **Waste disposal (44)**

The issue of waste management was raised throughout the survey. Respondents shared frustrations with dog waste (bags) not disposed of properly, limited number of garbage bins, and infrequent garbage collection.

### **Accessibility (19)**

Respondents would like accessibility needs for those with mobility issues, strollers, wheelchairs, etc. to be considered in park design and the implementation of this Strategy.

### **Feral cats (11)**

Some respondents expressed that cats should be held to the same standard as dogs and reflected in future bylaws. They mention bird hunting as a cause for concern.



**Cyclists (10)**

A few comments related to the high speeds of cyclists on shared trails and how this causes stress and safety concerns for those with off-leash dogs, children, and mobility issues.

**Parking and traffic (7)**

Respondents noted that parking lots in popular areas (e.g., Mount Douglas Park) are frequently full and require more spaces. Others expressed safety concerns related to traffic speeds in certain areas.