

# Welfare of Dogs (Scotland) Bill: Summary of questionnaire

The Rural Affairs and Islands Committee ran a call for views as part of its scrutiny of the Welfare of Dogs (Scotland) Bill.

The call for views ran between 30 June and 11 August 2023. Participants could choose to complete a detailed survey on specific provisions of the Bill or complete a questionnaire on the key aspects of the Bill.

Those who chose to complete the questionnaire were asked to respond to eight questions relating to different aspects of the proposals and provide overall comments on the Bill.

This summary, produced by SPICe and the Participation and Communities Team (PACT), presents the findings of the questionnaire.

The summary below is based on 95 responses to the questionnaire.

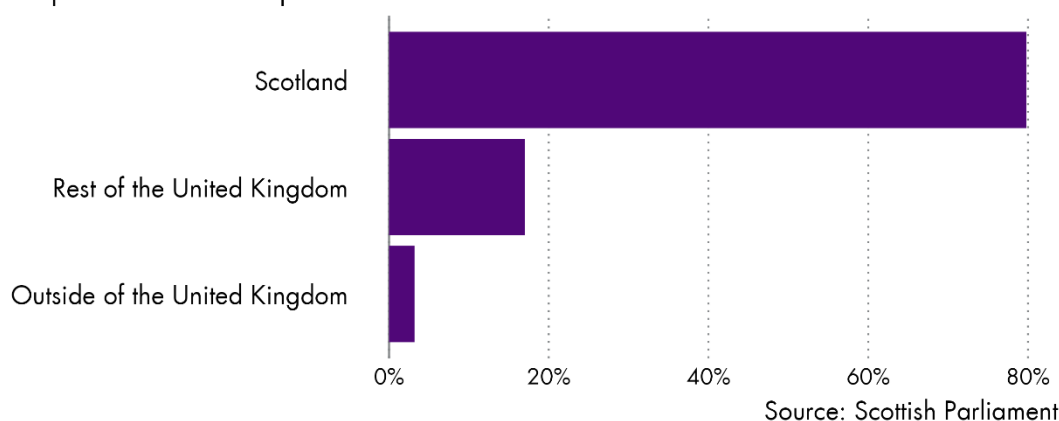
## A note on the questionnaire

This is a self-selecting questionnaire: respondents have chosen to share their views with the Parliament because they have a particular interest in this topic. It is therefore not representative of wider views amongst the general population or amongst any particular group. The insights below are produced for the purpose of informing MSPs ahead of their scrutiny of the Bill.

## Where did respondents come from?

### **The majority of responses have come from Scotland**

Proportion of total responses



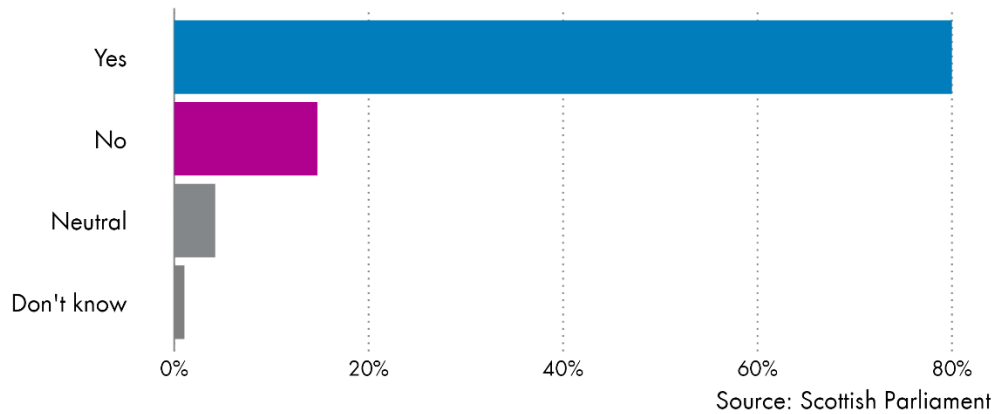
The majority of responses were received from individuals that live in Scotland (79%); 18% of respondents lived in the rest of the United Kingdom and the remaining 3% of respondents indicated they lived outside of the UK.

# Results: Summary of Responses

Most people who responded to the survey agreed that there is a need to further regulate buying, selling and transferring dogs.

## **Do you agree that there needs to be more regulation of the buying, selling and transfer of dogs?**

Proportion of responses excluding Not Answered

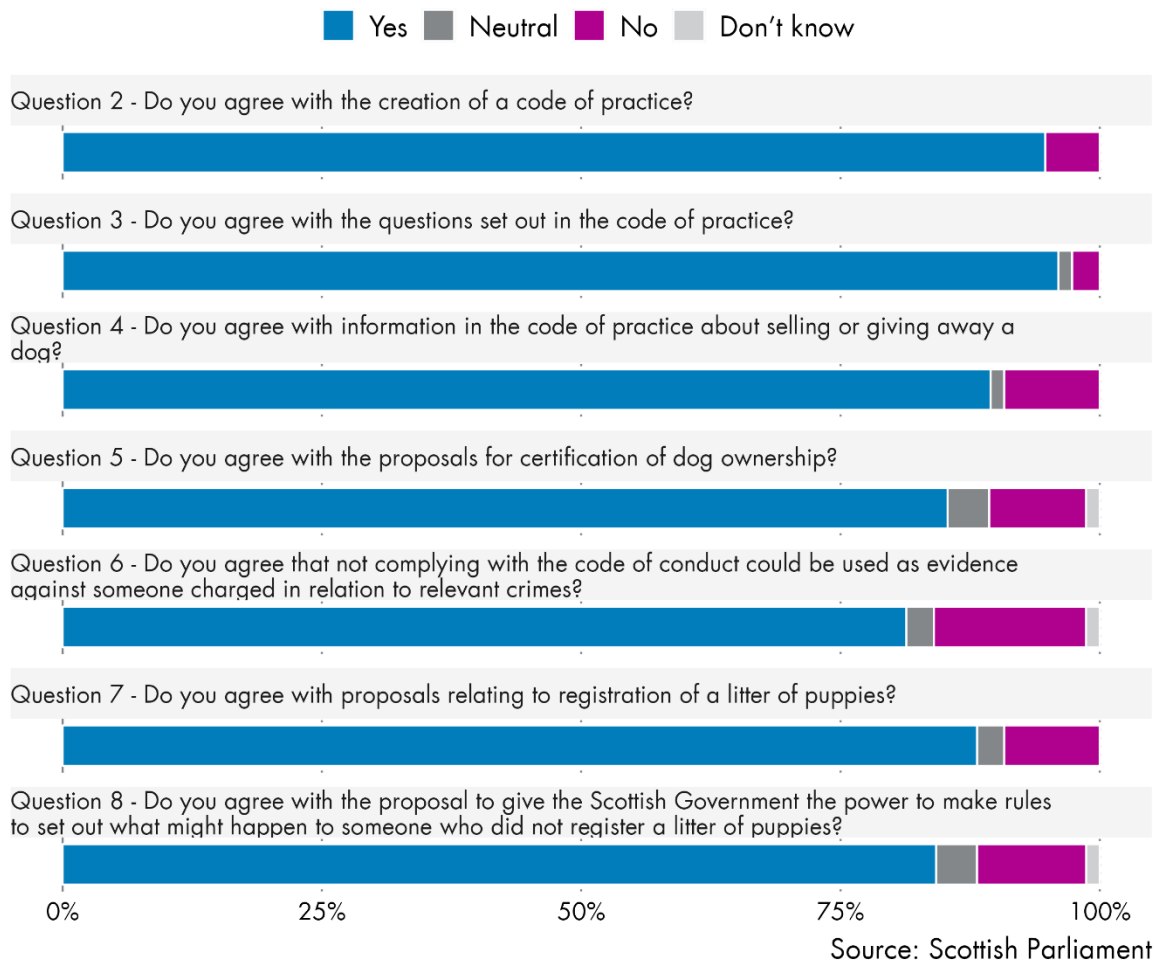


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Of those that agreed that there needs to be more regulation, most respondents also agreed with the specific proposals, but some did not.

## This group of respondents **agreed** that there needs to be more regulation of buying, selling and transferring dogs.

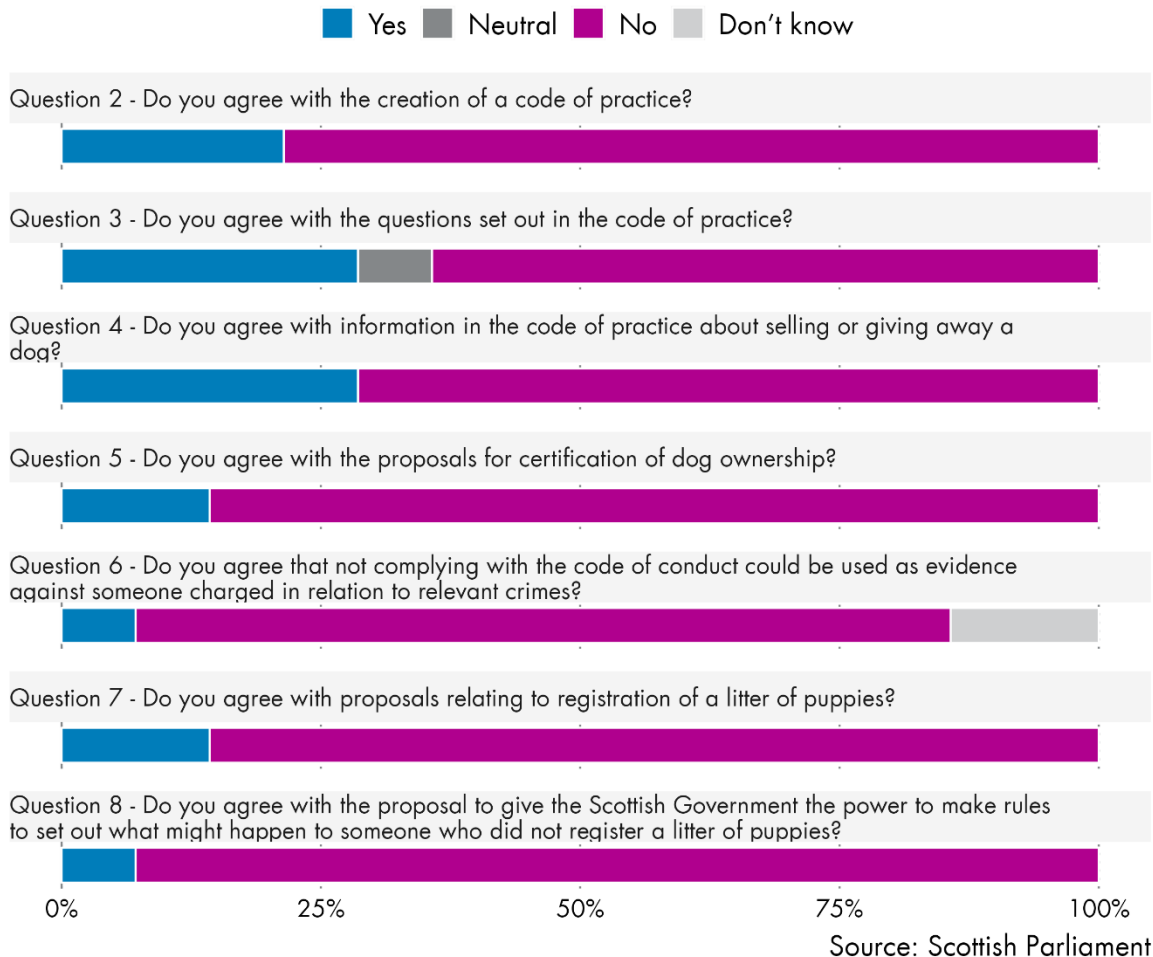
Here is how they responded to the other survey questions



Of those that disagreed that there needs to be more regulation, most also disagreed with the proposals in the Bill, but some did not.

## This group of respondents **disagreed** that there needs to be more regulation of buying, selling and transferring dogs.

Here is how they responded to the other survey questions



Participants were also given the opportunity to provide comments to explain their thoughts about the Bill. Below is a summary of comments that highlight perceived positive aspects of the Bill, negative aspects of the Bill and areas for improvement.

### Positive views:

- **Support for regulation:** Many respondents support the idea of increased regulation and measures to ensure responsible ownership. They believe that the bill is necessary to address the issues related to dog breeding, sales, and ownership.
- **Encouraging responsible ownership:** Many people appreciate the emphasis on encouraging potential dog owners to educate themselves about dog ownership responsibilities before making a purchase.
- **Regulating breeders:** There's support for the idea of regulating dog breeders, including a licensing system, to ensure responsible breeding practices and prevent puppy farming.

- **Curbing irresponsible breeding:** There's agreement that more needs to be done to stop irresponsible and unregulated breeding, especially of certain breeds that face health issues due to poor breeding practices.
- **Animal welfare enforcement:** Many individuals believe that stricter regulations and penalties are needed to enforce animal welfare standards and prevent abuse or neglect.
- **Education of potential owners:** There's support for efforts to inform and educate potential dog owners about responsible acquisition of a dog, pet ownership, and the requirements of caring for a dog.

## Negative views and suggestions for improvement:

- **Enforcement and penalties:** Some individuals express concerns that the code of practice might not be enforced effectively and suggest introducing stricter penalties for non-compliance to make it more impactful. "A mild threat of a code of practice that cannot be enforced or truly hold anyone to account in a statutory sense is absolutely pointless and will not deter... puppy farmers".
- **Loopholes in regulations:** There are concerns that the proposed regulations might have loopholes that could be exploited by unscrupulous breeders and sellers, such as not following the code of practice, not registering litters accurately, or exemptions of persons not being a 'resident of Scotland' creating a loophole for people unofficially residing in Scotland to continue to sell puppies without following proposed regulations.
- **Impact on responsible breeders and concerns about bureaucracy:** Some respondents worry that the regulations might inadvertently impact on responsible breeders, as they already follow stringent breeding practices and might face additional bureaucratic requirements.
- **Sufficient legislation is already in place:** Some believe that proposed regulations could be an overreach and that existing animal welfare legislation is sufficient.
- **Regulation of online advertising:** People believe that stricter regulations on online platforms and social media for advertising dogs are necessary to prevent illegal sales and to ensure traceability of legitimate sellers. Some respondents suggest that microchip numbers and that breeders hold the relevant breeding licences should be verified prior to ads being placed online.
- **Focus on puppy farms and irresponsible breeders:** Some respondents feel that the proposed regulations should put more emphasis on targeting puppy farms, illegal breeders, and sellers who engage in unethical practices. They believe that stronger regulations are needed to curb these practices, protect animal welfare, and ensure that puppies are bred and raised in healthy conditions.
- **Accessibility and affordability:** Concerns are raised about the affordability of veterinary care, suggesting measures such as capping veterinary fees to make pet care more accessible might be better ways to achieve the goals of the Bill

- **Support for animal welfare organisations:** Some people believe that the provisions in the Bill would have more impact if animal welfare organisations like the Scottish SPCA had more power and support to rescue animals and take action against abuse or neglect.
- **Animal welfare vs. human welfare:** A few individuals express concerns that while animal welfare is being heavily regulated, other issues like child welfare or human welfare might not receive similar attention.