

Madrona Voices Airport Survey Report

Reported on August 5, 2018 by Steve Smith

Updated August 11 to include a few additional participants

Survey stats and validity

Madrona Voices released a survey about the Port of Orcas Master Plan on July 30, 2018. As of August 5, 2018, we have received 600 responses. The demographics of those responding to the survey closely match those who responded to our public hospital district surveys.

The surveys conducted by Madrona Voices regarding the public hospital district prior to the April 2018 vote predicted that 76% (+/- 5%) of the vote would be in support of the district. The actual final vote result was 76%. This means that those who answered our surveys were a representative match for those who voted. The same is true for this airport survey. We believe that the results of this survey are representative of what the community thinks.

Madrona Voices is not affiliated with the Port of Orcas. You can read more about who Madrona Voices is, why we do these surveys, and how we do the surveys on our website MadronaVoices.com.

Two primary findings from our airport survey:

1. A large portion of the comments demonstrates that the respondents believe that the Port of Orcas intends to expand the airport in order to accommodate more aircraft and larger aircraft.
2. A large portion of the respondents do not trust the commissioners to act in the best interest of the community.

Report Format

First, we share the results from the survey. Next, we compare how various groups of survey takers responded. Then, we share some of our analysis of the results. Finally, we share the comments of those who took the survey.

Summary of Fact Sheet Facts

Madrona Voices visited with the airport manager, Tony Simpson, and with Port Commissioner, Greg Sawyer. Based on those conversations, we created a two-page

summary about the issue. We embedded that summary in the survey as a link that we hoped people would read. We asked people to read that before completing the survey. The request was made in a larger and a different-colored font than in the rest of the text of the survey. We also posted the summary on our website.

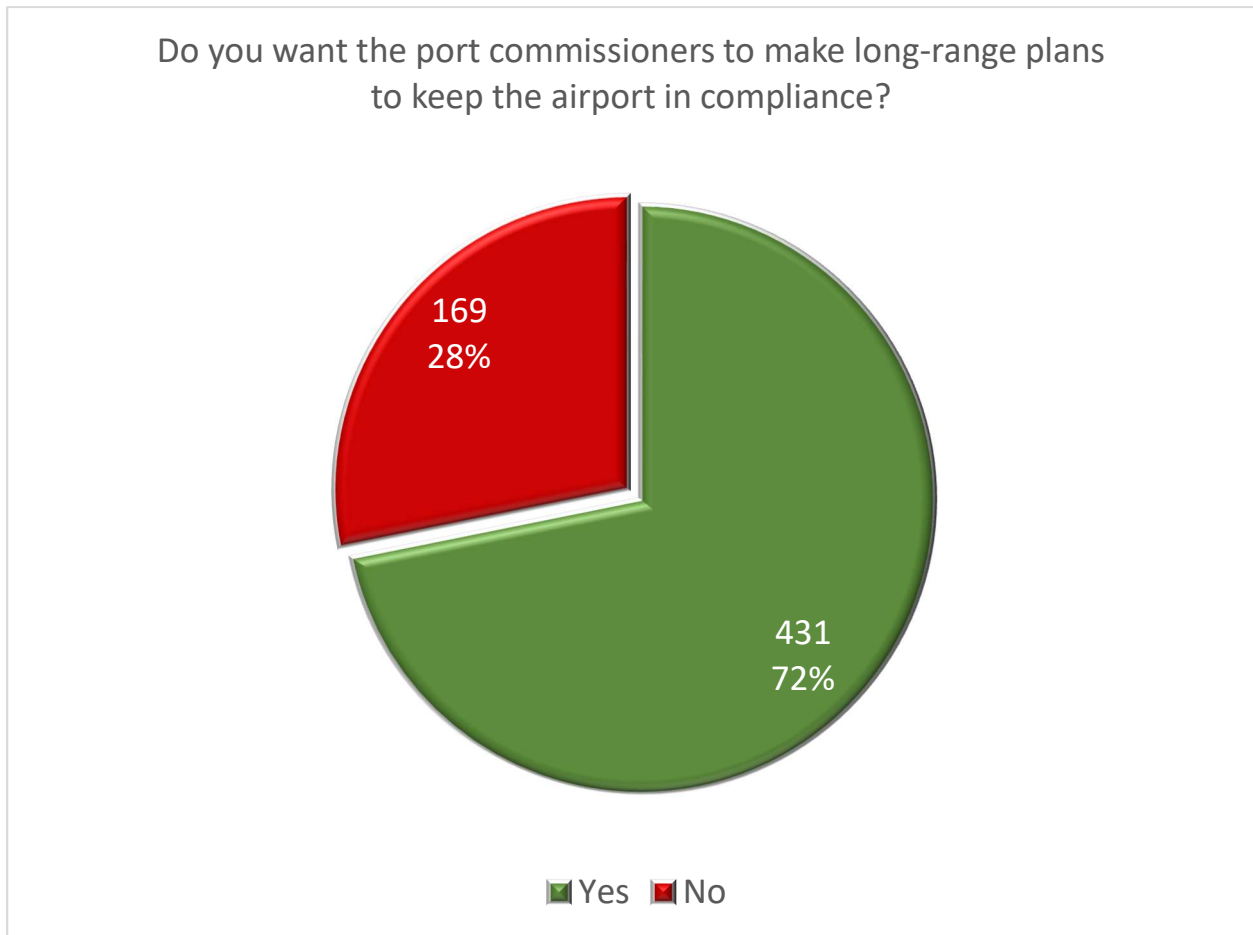
Survey Responses

The numbers in the pie charts reflect the number of people selecting a particular response to the question on the survey. The percentage is the percentage of the total respondents who selected that response on the question. It won't always add up to 100% because not all people answer all questions.

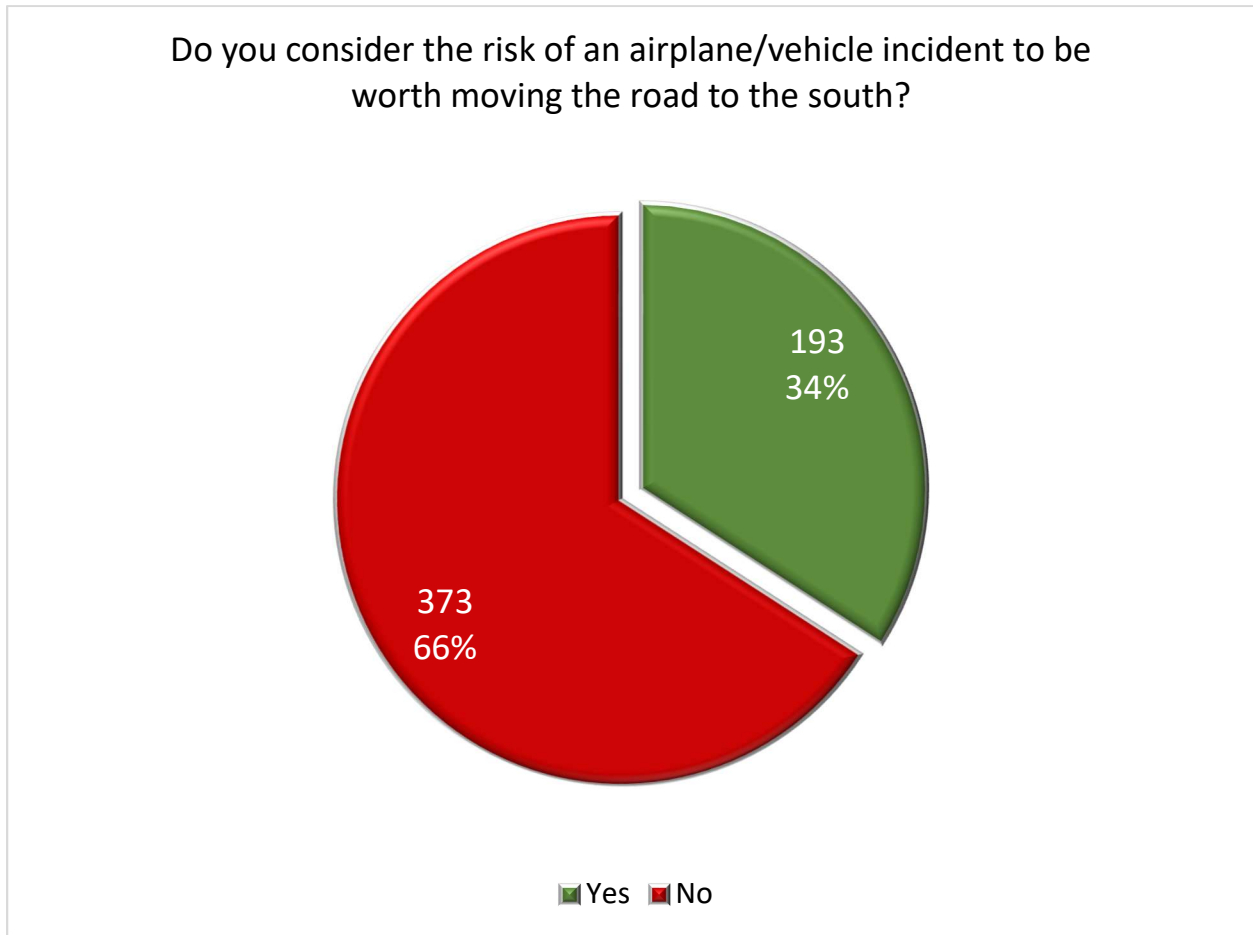
Our first question asked – “The Orcas Island airport is not up-to-date with current FAA safety standards. Do you want the port commissioners to make long-range plans to keep the airport in compliance?”

The Port can continue to operate the airport as is, even though several of the airplanes currently flying for Kenmore, Island Air, and Empire exceed the safety guidelines issued by the FAA. The Port has the option of making sure that any plans for future modifications to the airport include changes that comply with the FAA design standards, or they can opt out of FAA design standards and lose future FAA cost-sharing money (and, potentially, past monies received).

Question 1



Question 2

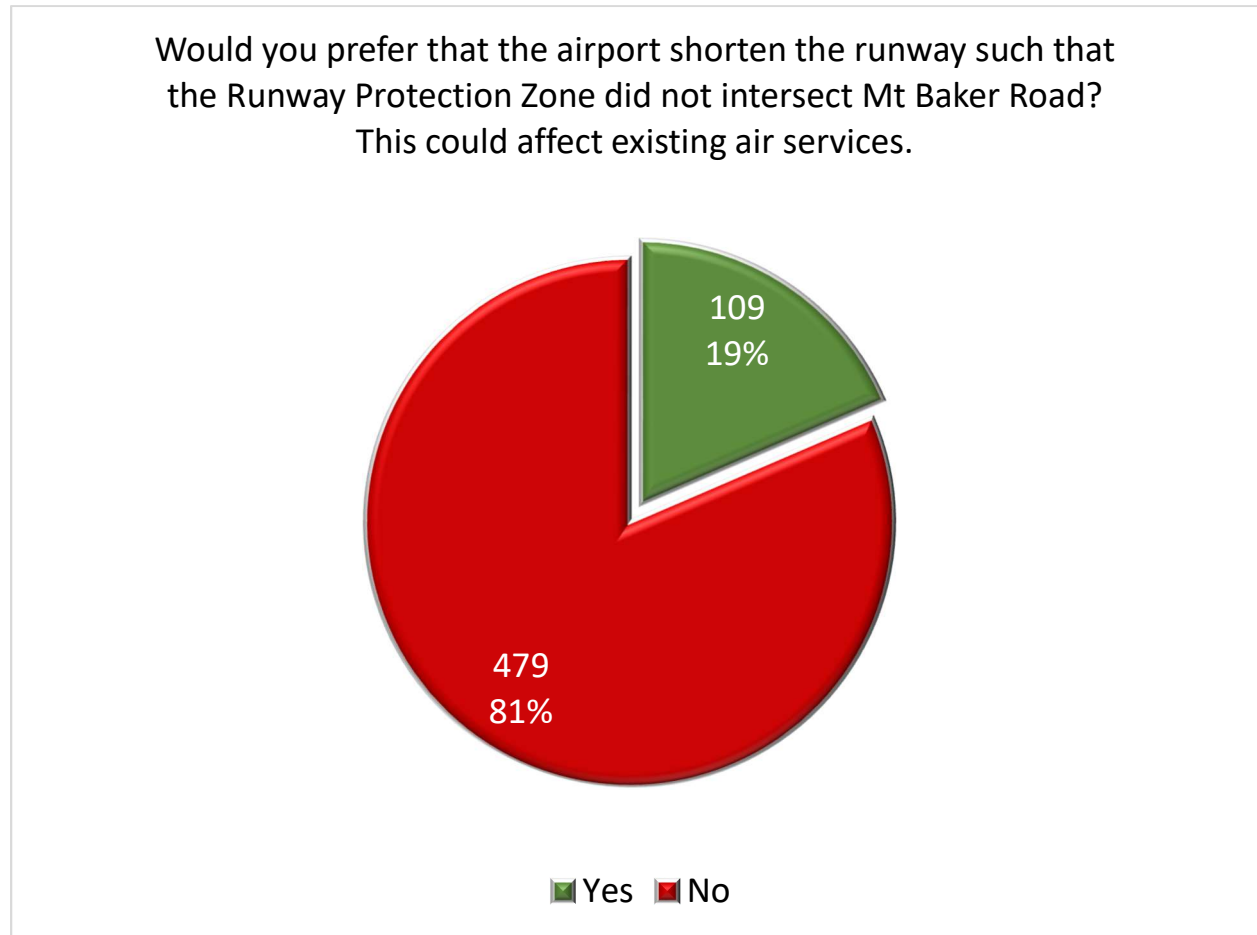


A map accompanied this question and showed several possible paths that Mt Baker Road could take, if it were moved. The summary reported that the FAA and the airport manager would like to move the road for the purpose of safety. The Port says that change would not cause the runway to be longer or to accommodate larger aircraft than what are currently using the airport.

Several respondents believe that the Port's primary reason to move the road is to allow for larger aircraft than what are using the airport now and that safety is being used as an excuse.

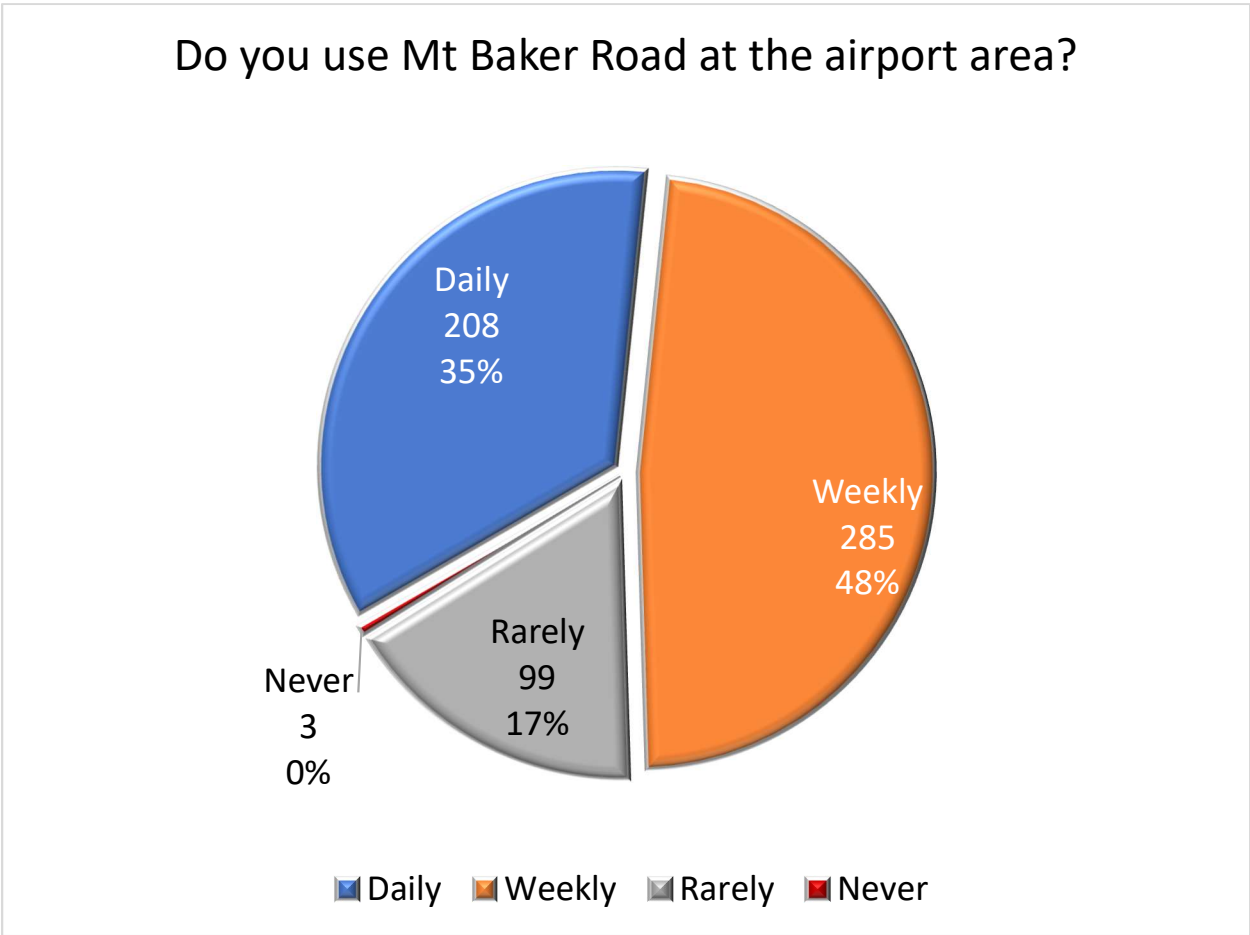
[Link to the image shown in the survey.](#)

Question 3



The Port reports that one option of increasing safety is to shorten the runway instead of moving the road. However, they state that shortening the runway would possibly cause the airlines using Caravan-type planes to either use smaller airplanes or to stop providing service to the island.

Question 4

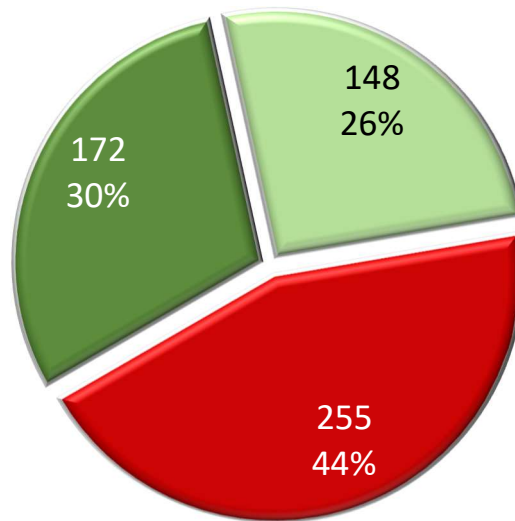


We used this question to determine if the frequency of use of the road affects people’s answers to the other questions.

It does. More about this later in this report.

Question 5

Do you want to see the terminal and other nearby buildings moved to the area where the dog park was, as shown here?

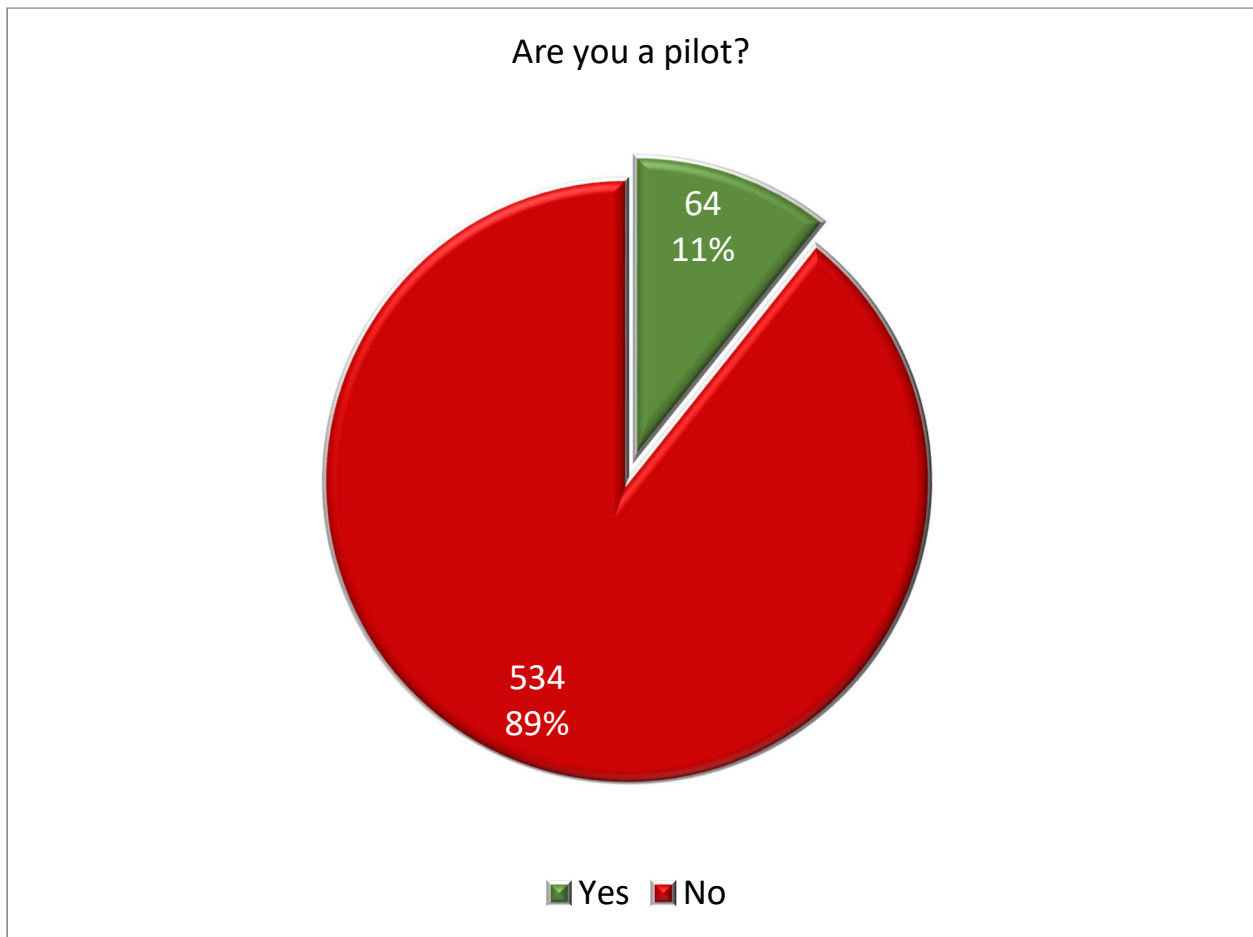


■ Yes, as shown ■ Yes, but with a smaller footprint ■ No

A majority of respondents do want to see the terminal and several other buildings moved to the old dog park area: 56% vs 44%. However, the 'yes' votes are divided as to how large an area needs to be used.

[This is the image that was shared in the survey.](#)

Question 6

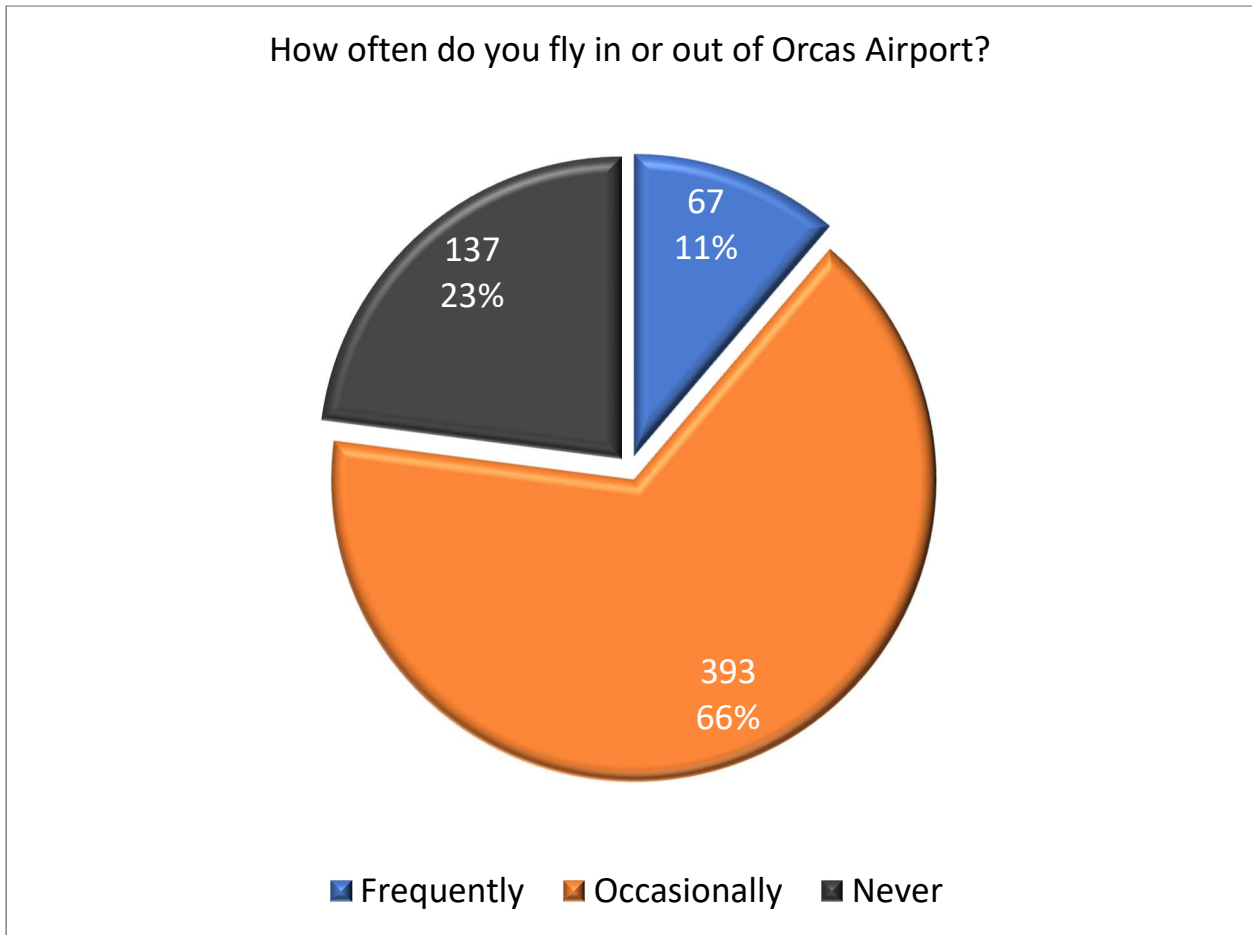


We used this question to determine if being a pilot or not affects people's answers to the other questions.

It does. However, the small number of pilots in our sample makes the margin of error higher.

More about this later in this report.

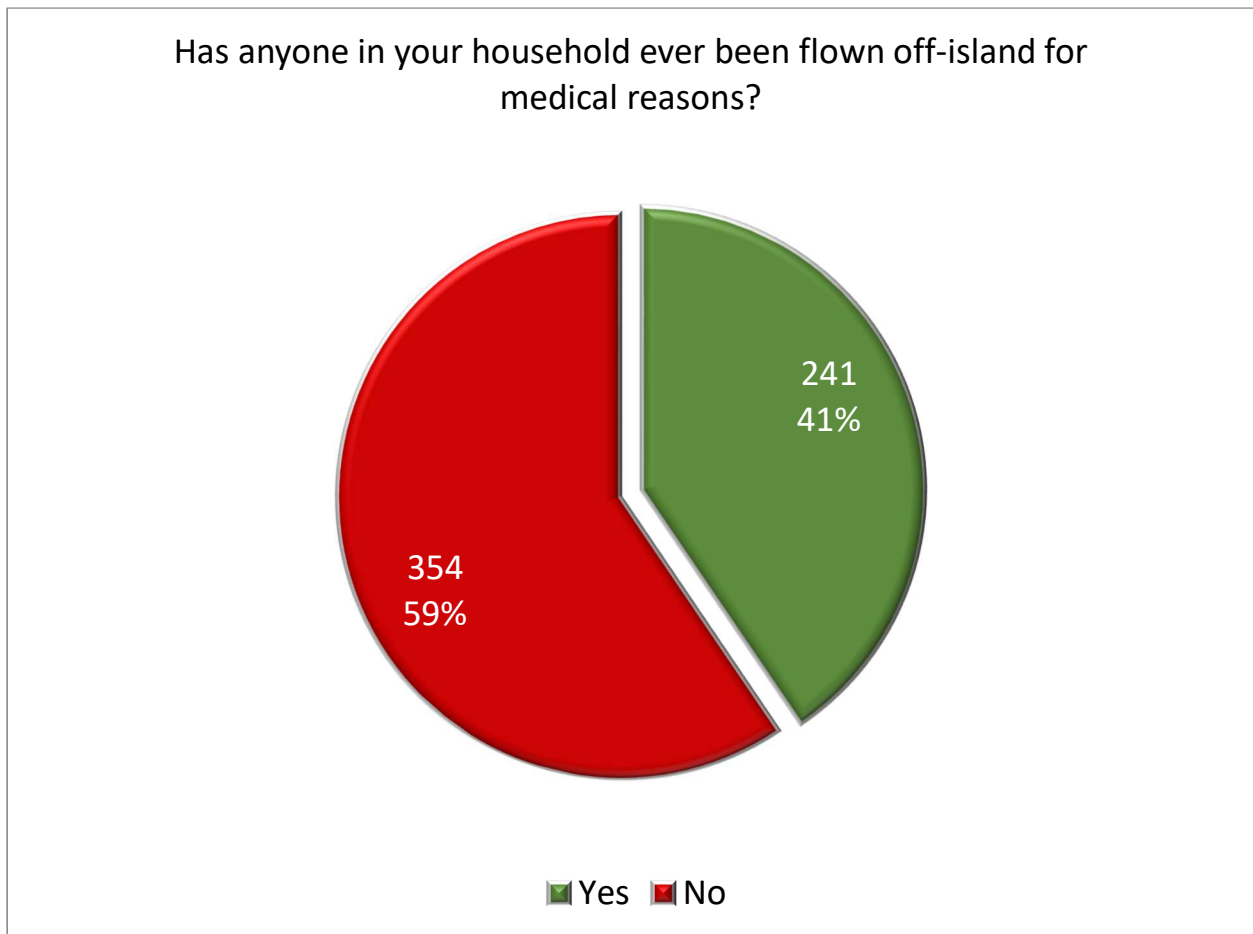
Question 7



We used this question to determine if the frequency of using the airport affects people's answers to the other questions.

Only marginally. The more often a person uses the airport, the more likely they are to attend one of the Port meetings; but it has little effect on the answers to the other questions.

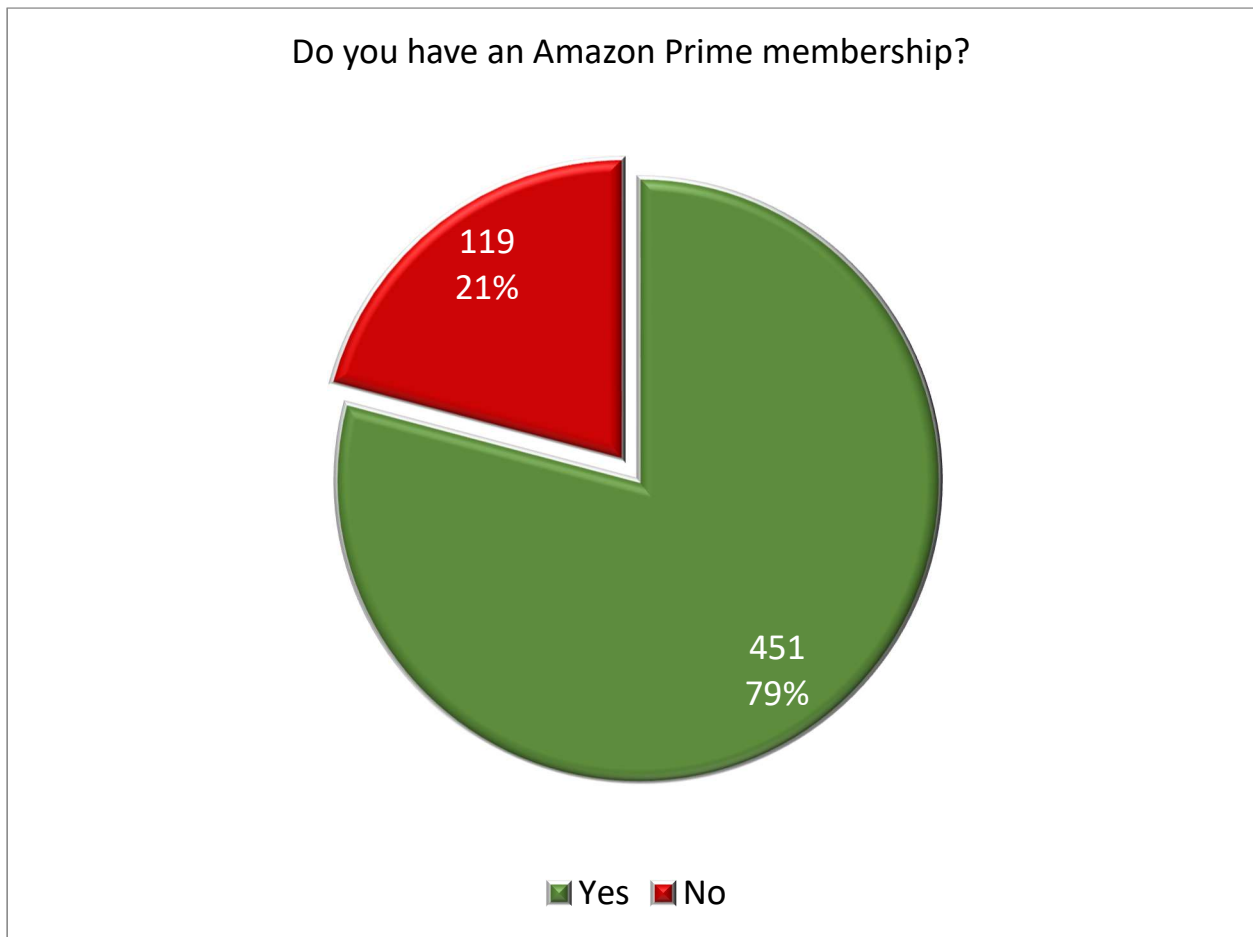
Question 8



We used this question to determine if the past use of medical airlift affects people's answers to the other questions.

It doesn't. However, the longer someone has lived on-island, the more likely someone in their household is to have used the service.

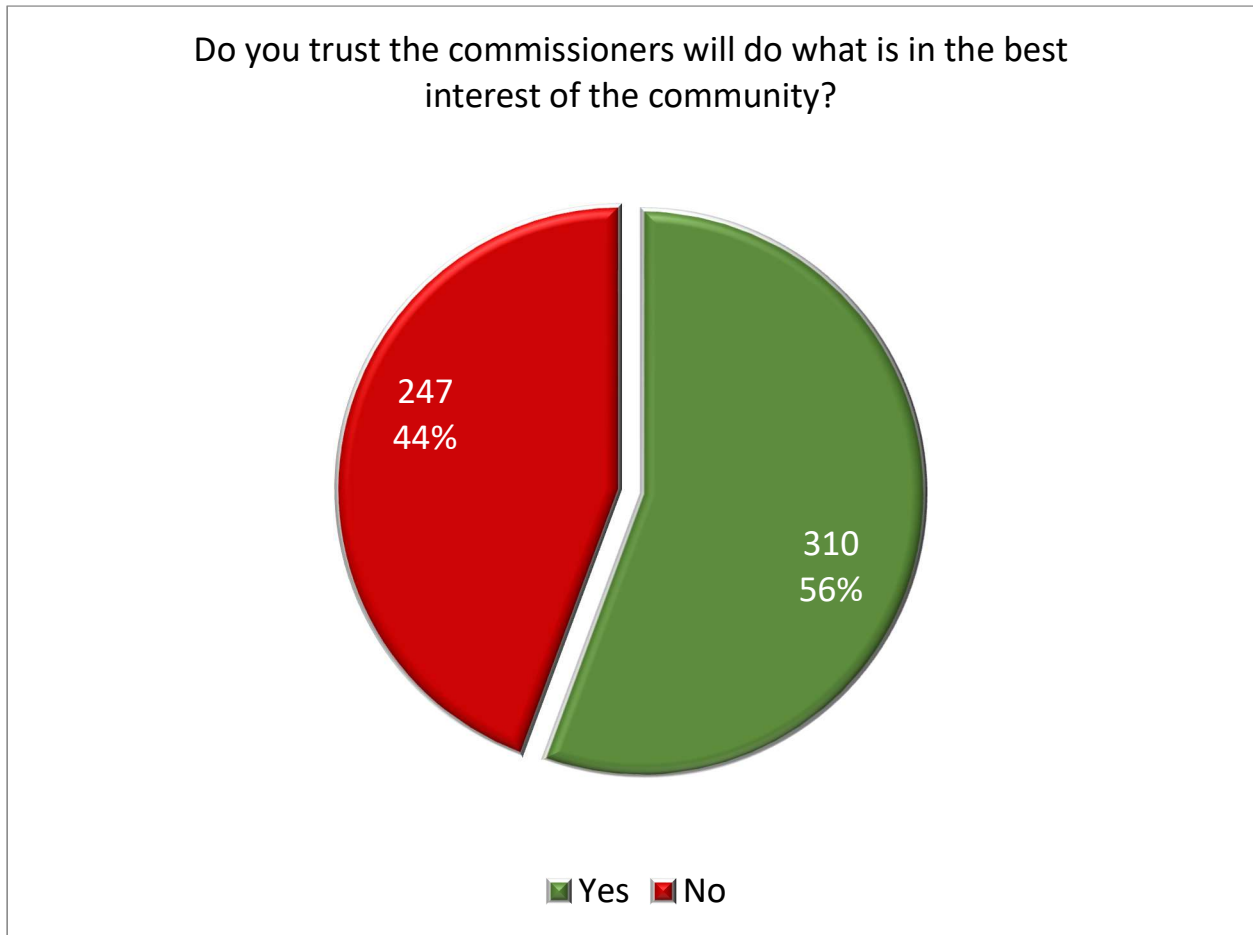
Question 9



We used this question to determine if having an Amazon Prime membership affects people's answers to the other questions. Most of the Prime packages come to the island via the airport.

It does seem to affect answers to the other questions. More about this later in the report.

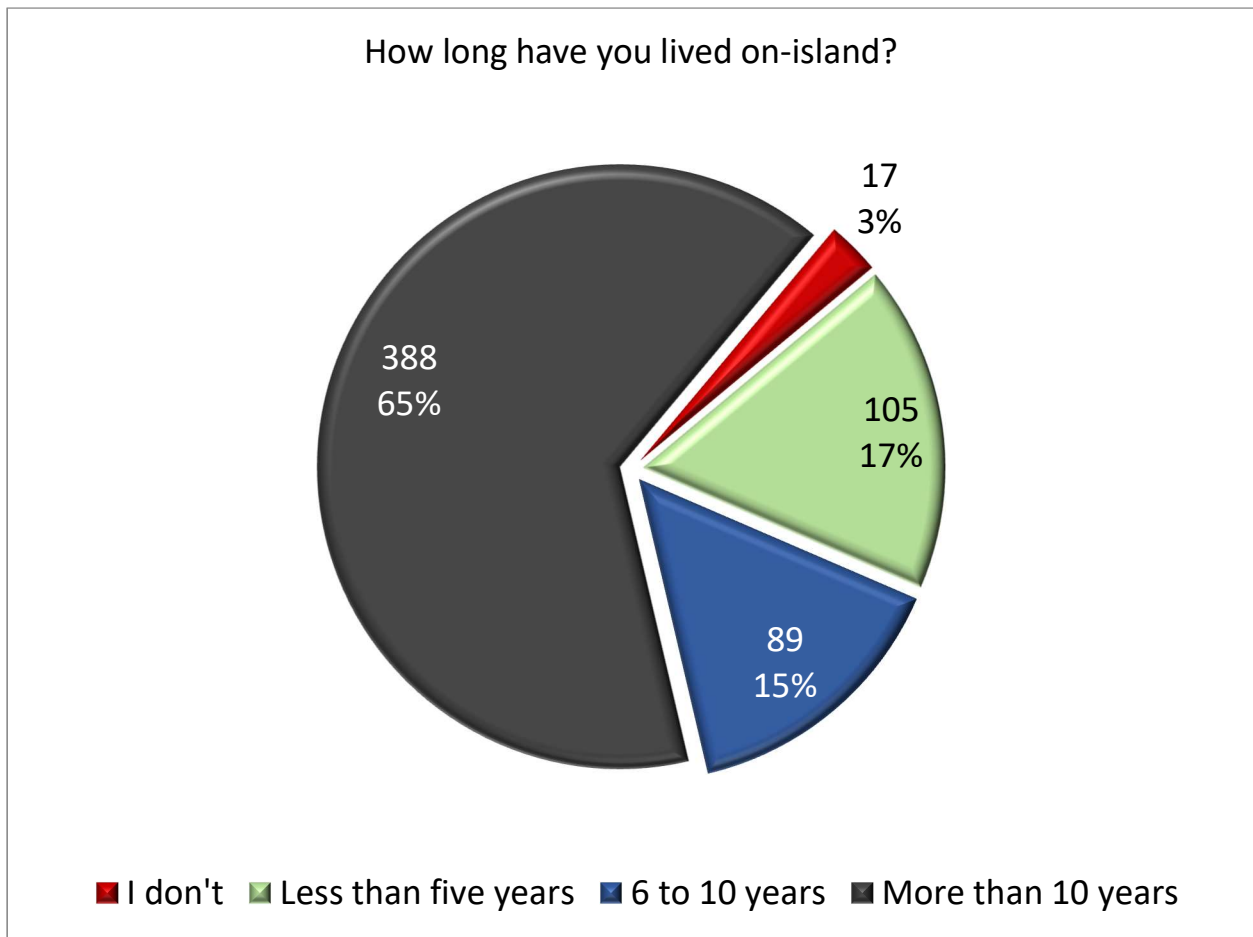
Question 10



Whether a person trusts the commissioners or not seems to affect all other responses. We will show whether a person trusts or doesn't trust alongside each of the comments we received.

A 44% "Don't Trust" percentage is a very high number. It is common for there to be a few people who don't trust their neighbor to govern wisely. Here, though, we see a much larger group who are concerned.

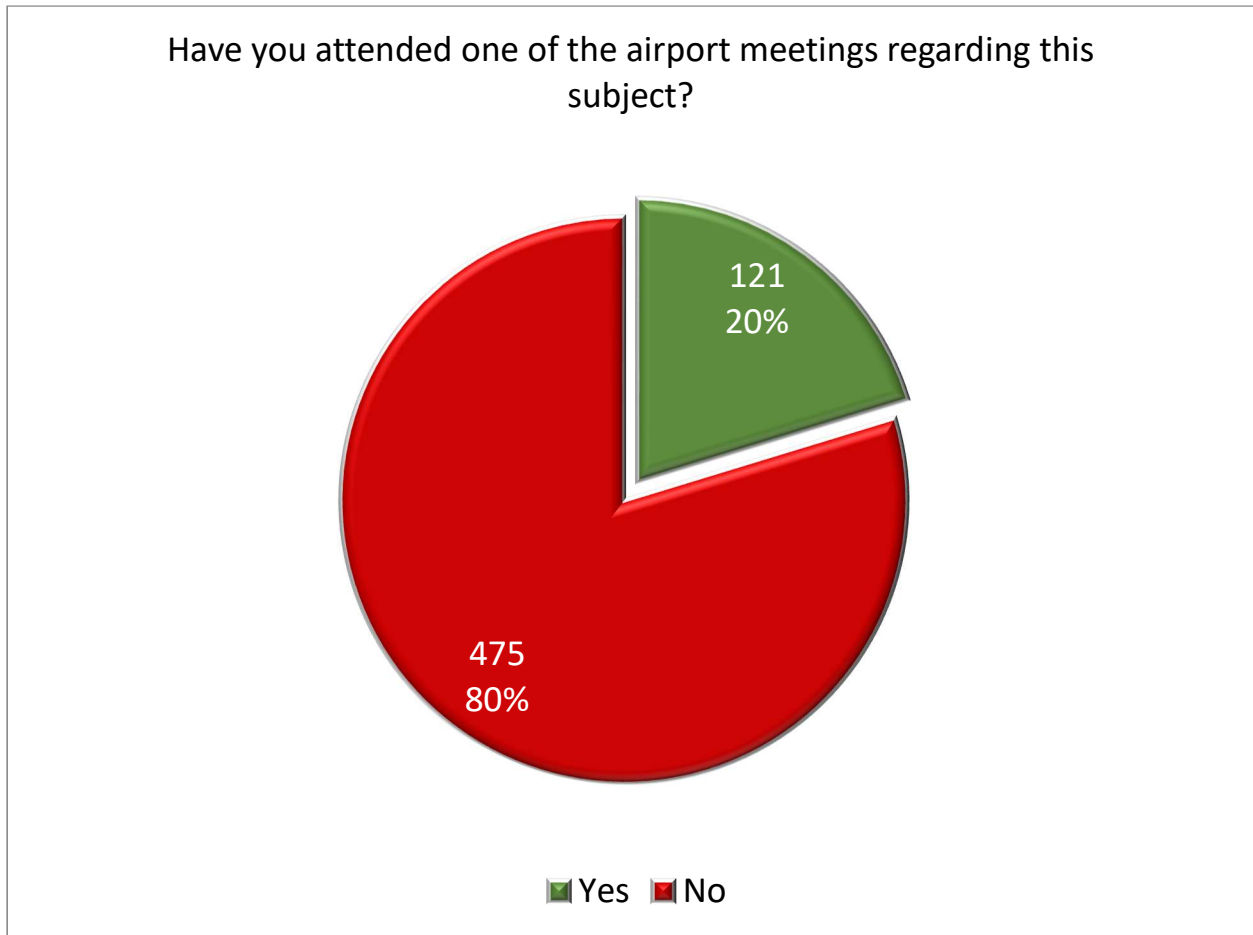
Question 11



We used this question to determine if how long a person has lived on-island affects people's answers to the other questions.

It does. More about this later in the report.

Question 12



We used this question to determine if attending one of the Port meetings affects people's answers to the other questions.

It does. More about this later in the report.

One consideration – There have been about 150 people who have attended the various Port of Orcas meetings. A large percentage of those individuals have completed our surveys. They have completed both our hospital district surveys and this airport survey. I would question our sample as including more meeting attendees than seems likely except many of these individuals have participated in our other surveys. About 10% of the people responding to this survey did not participate in our hospital district surveys.

Comparisons

We have a large enough sample that we can look at something statisticians call “cross-tabs.” It simply means that we can take a look at subsets of information. For example, we can study the idea of frequency of use of Mt Baker Road meaning a person is more or less likely to trust the commissioners.

For this type of comparison to be valid, one needs to have a large sample (which we do), and we need to make sure that the number of participants in each of our subsets is also large enough (which they are). Again, we have enough participants to be able to look at this and still have statistically significant and representative numbers. We explain our methods in one of our [health district survey reports](#).

These comparisons are presented in the order of significance, as I perceive them. To me, the trust or lack thereof of the Port Commissioners is important. If a person doesn't believe the Port on what it says, then the Port may have a difficult time accomplishing its objectives and may well see a change in who commissioners are at the next election or before.

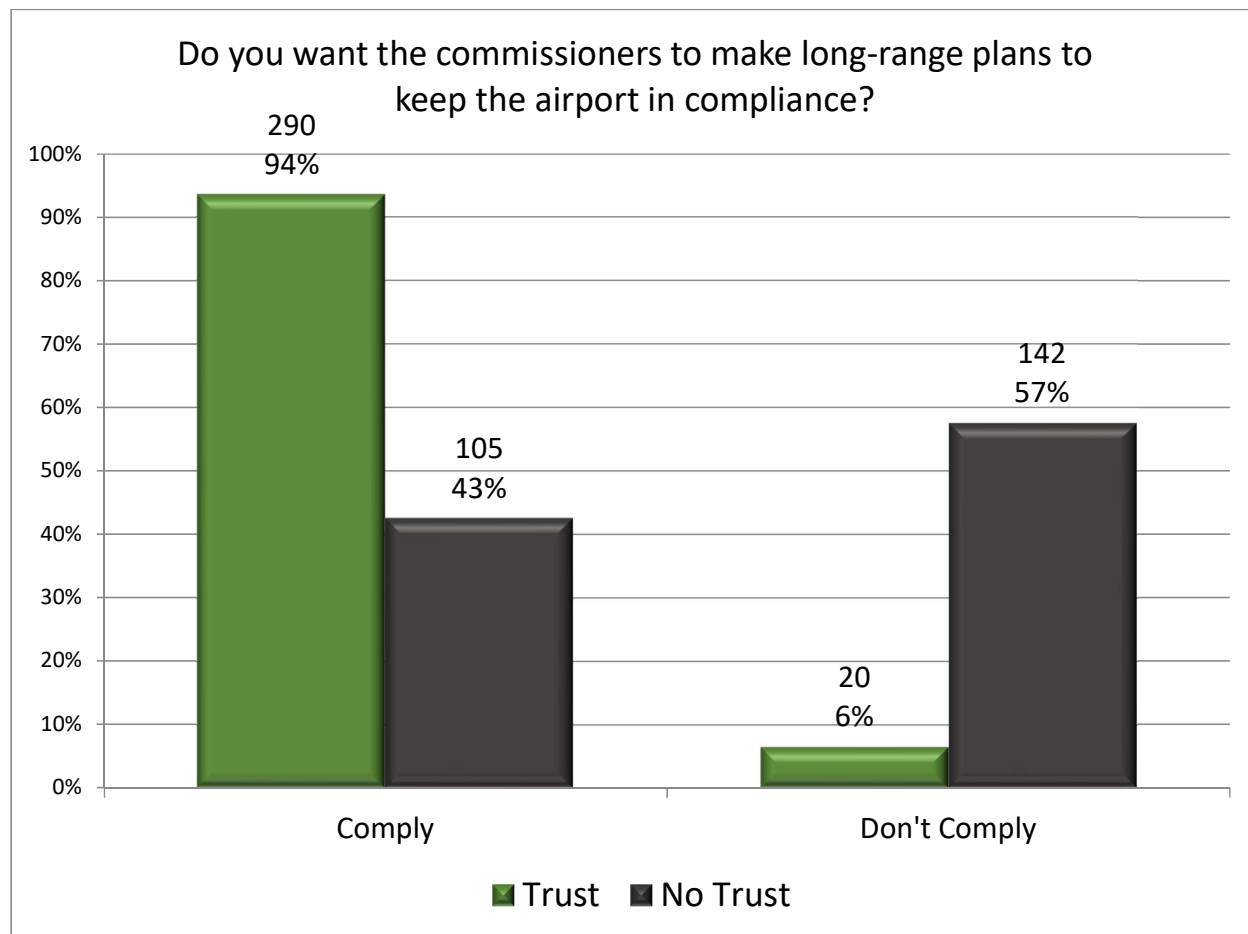
The first group we look at is the comparison between those who trust and do not trust the commissioners to act in the best interest of the community. Keep in mind, when looking at the numbers, that 55% of the respondents do trust the commissioners.

There are two ways at looking at the comparisons between those who trust the commissioners and those who do not. One is that a person does not trust a commissioner and, therefore, opposes an idea. The other is that a person doesn't like the idea and that they don't trust the commissioners to share that perspective, in spite of anything they say.

In the comparison graphs, the green bars should add up to about 100% and the dark bars should add up to about 100%. The numbers won't always be exactly 100% because not all people answer all questions. When looking at comparison graphs, it is important to note that we are comparing the percentages and not the numbers. For example, in the first comparison, there are more than twice as many people who want the Port to plan for compliance as not. 385 to 158. But the graph is looking at the difference in the ratios of those who want to plan for compliance and those who don't. Those who want compliance are much more likely to trust the commissioners than those who do not want to plan for compliance.

The survey shows that 94% of those who trust the commissioners want them to make long-range plans to keep the airport in compliance with FAA safety guidelines. Only 43% of those who don't trust the commissioners to act in the best interest of the community want them to keep the airport in compliance.

72% of all respondents want the airport to make plans that will keep the airport in compliance; 28% do not.

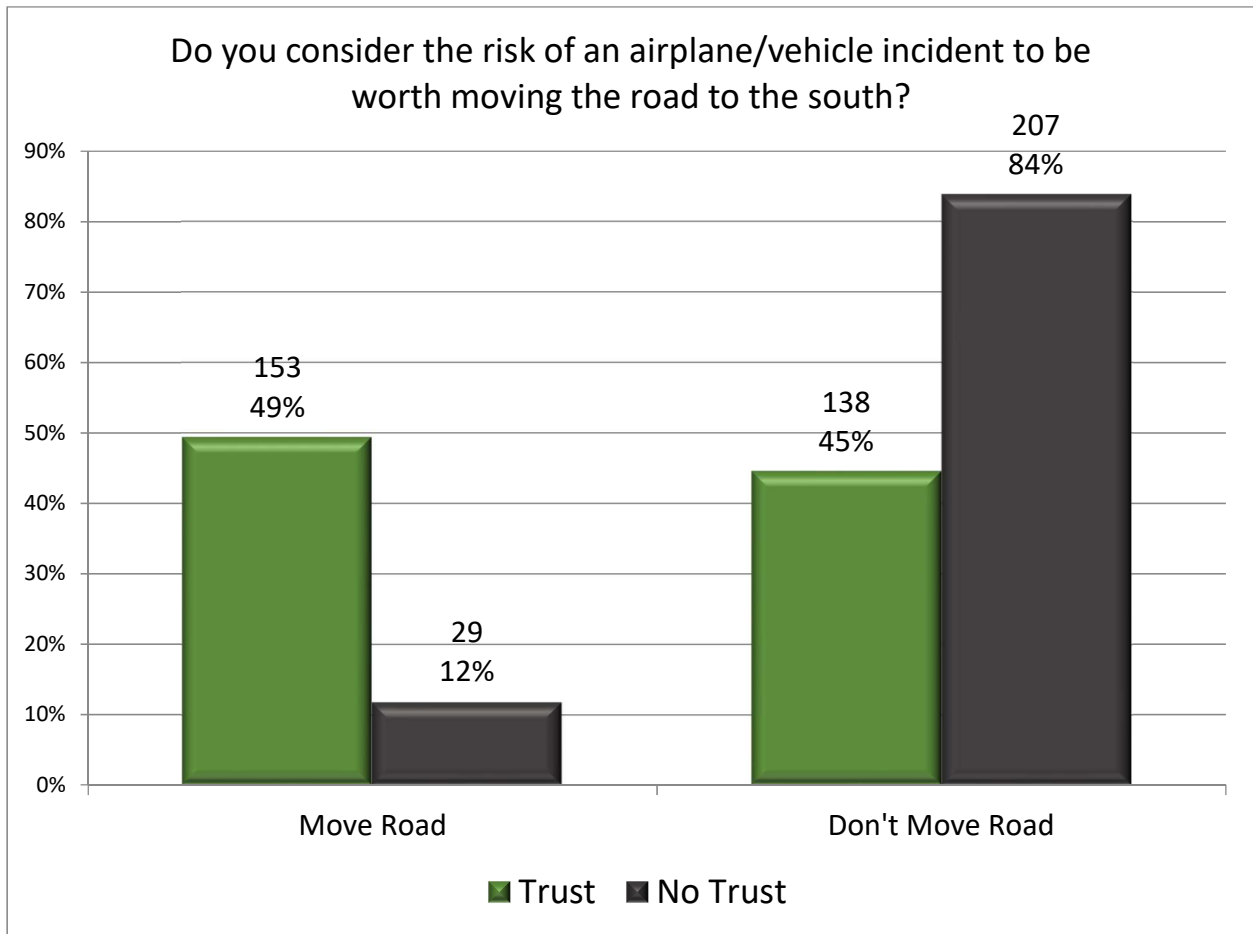


We received some complaints from people who felt we were trying to encourage one response over another on this question. That was not our intent. Some felt we were forcing people to choose between being safe or expanding the airport to allow for larger airplanes. We do not think the question implied or asked that. Several people seem convinced that the Port intends to expand the airport to allow for larger airplanes than what are currently using it. The commissioners and airport manager have assured the public that was never their intent and is not now their intent. Yet, someone who comes to the survey believing that the commissioners want larger airplanes, regardless of what they say, may find this question objectionable.

The alternative way of looking at this is that if a person does not want the airport to be modified, they don't trust the commissioners to share that perspective.

65% do not think the risk of an incident is high enough to make it worth moving the road; 35% do. Green bars trust the commissioners, but are split on the desire to move the road. Dark bars do not trust the commissioners, but are more likely to want no change in where the road is.

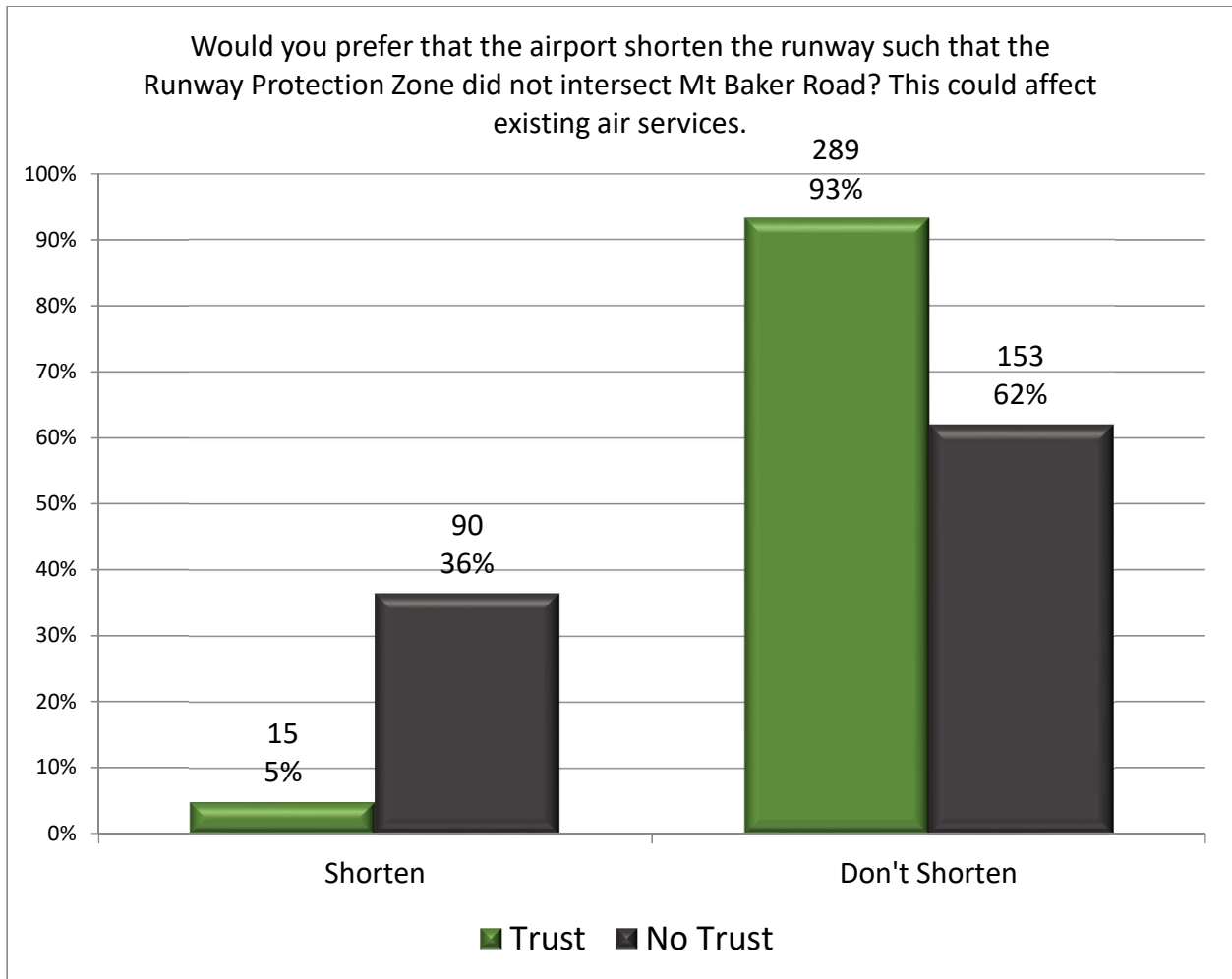
Again, the alternative way of looking at this is that those who do not want the road moved don't trust that the commissioners share their perspective.



A minority of all respondents, 19% (105 people), want the airport runway to be shortened. 81% (438 people) do not want the runway shortened.

93% of those who do not want the runway shortened trust the commissioners.

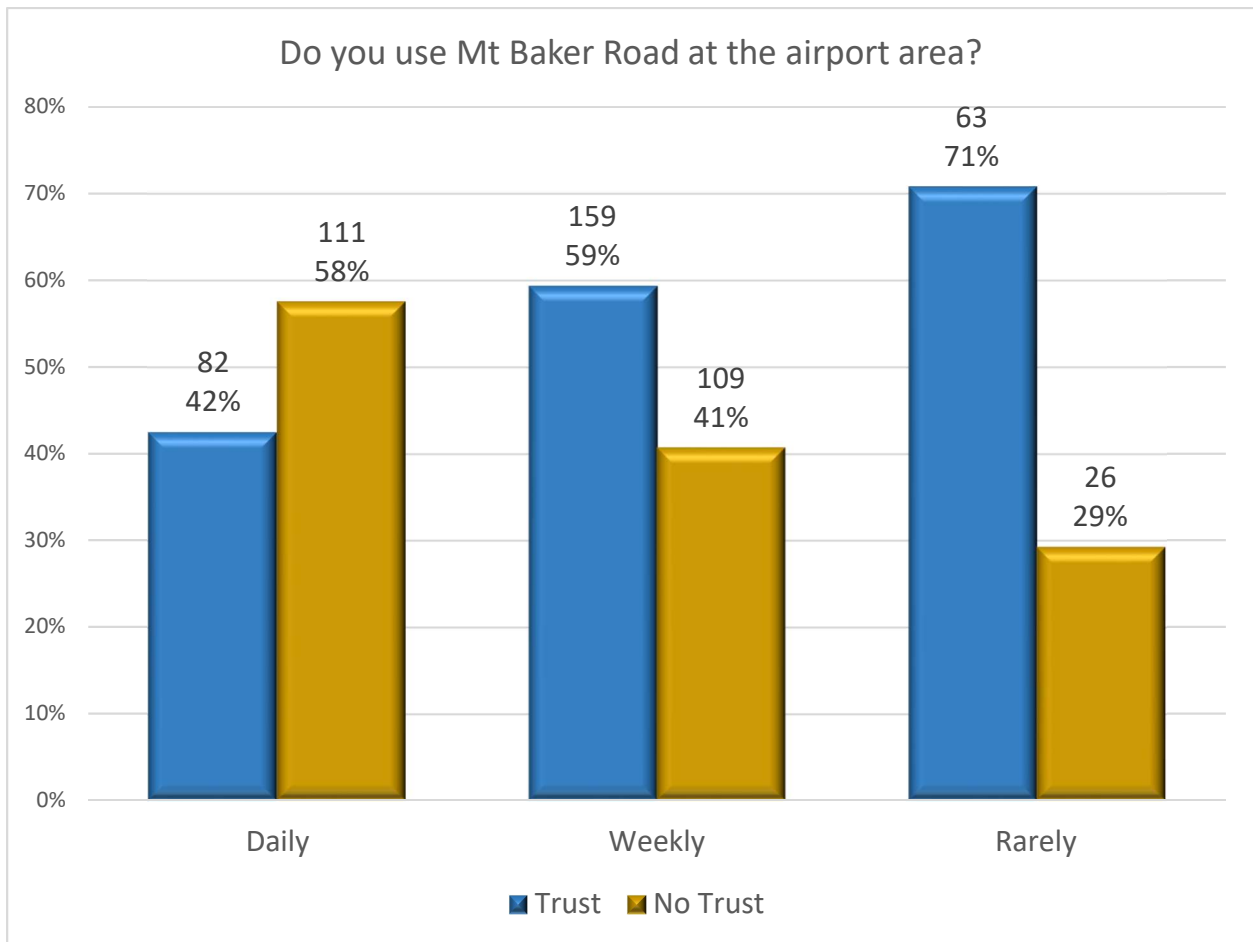
Of the 105 people who want the runway shortened, 86% of them (90 people), do not trust the commissioners.



Here, we group the data differently than in our other comparison graphs. We use different colors to make that more apparent. Here, the daily columns add up to 100%; the weekly pair of columns adds up to 100%.

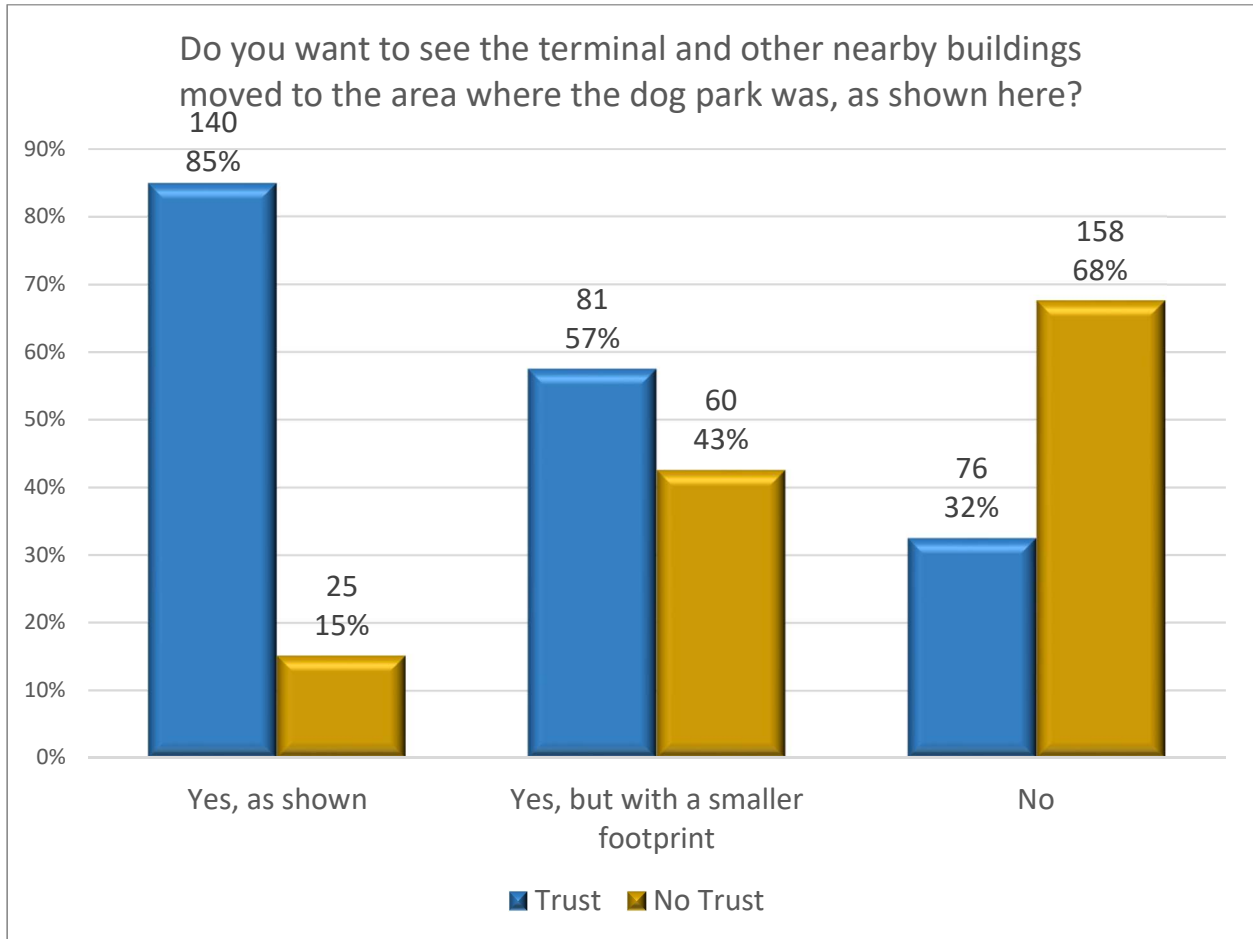
There are 89 who rarely use the road; they make up 16% of the total answering this question. 71% of those rarely using the road trust the commissioners.

The more frequently a person uses Mt Baker Road at the airport, the less likely the person is to trust the commissioners. Or, from the alternative viewpoint, those who don't trust the commissioners are more likely to use the road.

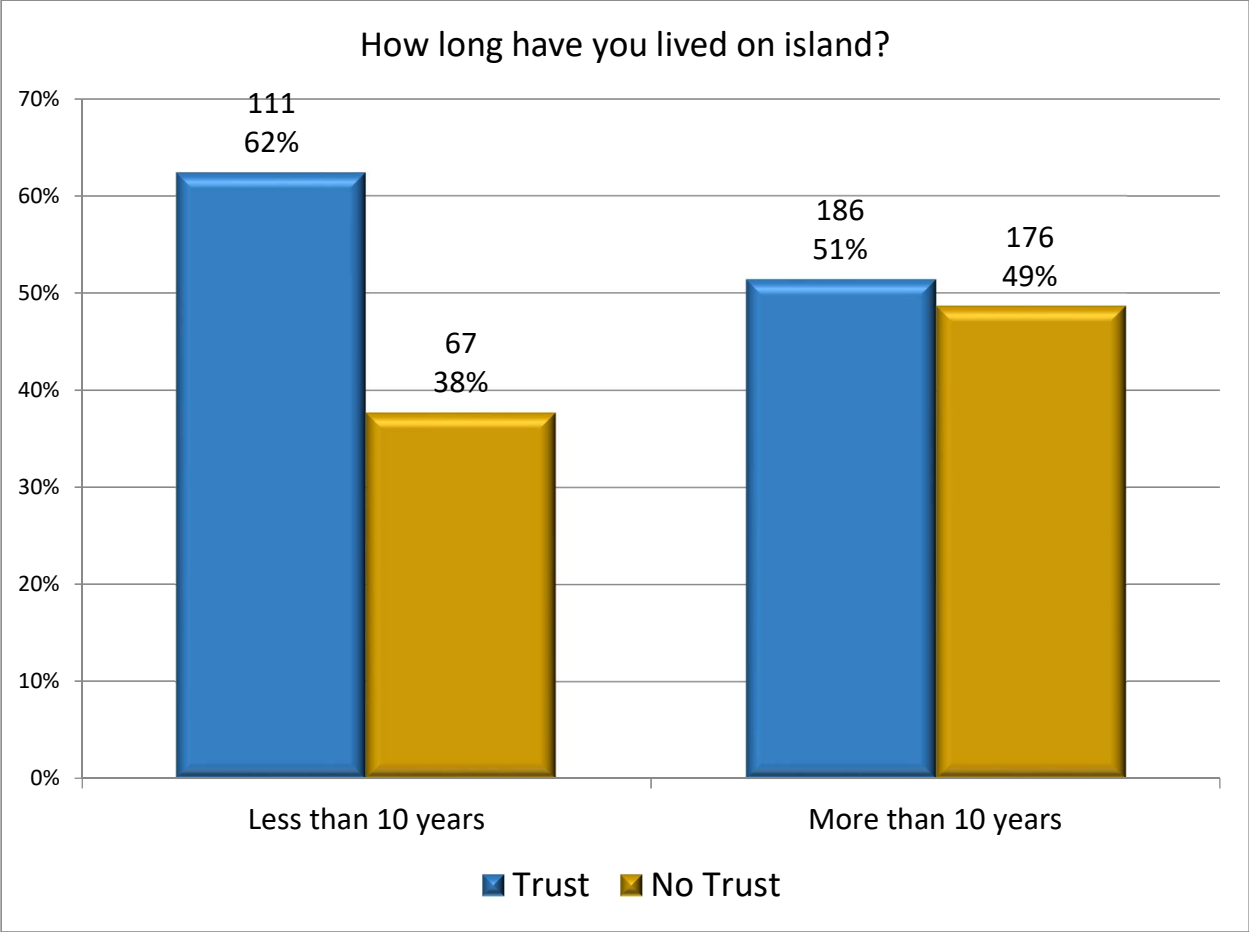


Here, we group the data differently than in our other comparison graphs. We use different colors to make that more apparent. Here, each pair of columns adds up to 100%.

Most want the terminal and nearby buildings moved. Those who do not want them moved are far more likely to distrust the commissioners than those who do.



Those who have lived on the island for more than ten years are less likely to trust the commissioners than those who are newer to the island.



Comparing the differences in trust with other questions than those above shows relatively insignificant differences. That doesn't mean that the differences are insignificant; but in comparison to the ones shown here, they are not worth reporting on.

A majority do support making plans that keep the airport in compliance with FAA standards and moving the terminal and nearby buildings to the old dog park area.

Rather than make a graph that shows every other comparison which is significant, I will instead create bullet points for results of note.

1. Those who use the road daily are less likely to consider the risk of a vehicle / airplane incident to be worth moving the road for.
2. Those who use the road daily are more likely to want to shorten the runway, even if it were to reduce air service to the island.
3. Those who use the road daily are much less likely to trust the commissioners.
4. Those who use the road daily are more likely to have attended one of the Port meetings.
5. Pilots are less likely to want to see the terminal and nearby buildings moved than are non-pilots. However, the margin of error on this is higher due to the small number of pilots in our sample: 64 pilots.
6. Those who have Amazon Prime are more likely to use the airport, to want to stay in compliance with FAA guidelines, and to want the road moved. They are less likely to want the airport runway shortened. However, such a large percentage of islanders have a Prime membership that this tells us more about those who don't have a Prime membership.
7. People are more likely to have used medical airlift for someone in the family the longer they have lived on-island.
8. Those who have lived on-island less than 10 years are more likely to have a Prime membership.
9. People who have been on-island less than 5 years are more likely to want the airport to stay in compliance with FAA guidelines.
10. People who have been on-island less than 10 years are more likely to think the road is worth moving.
11. People who have been on-island less than 5 years are less likely to fly in or out of the airport.
12. People who have been on-island less than 5 years are more likely to have a Prime membership.
13. People who have been on-island less than 5 years are more likely to trust the commissioners.
14. People who have been on-island less than 5 years are less likely to have attended a Port meeting.

Summary

A commissioner might come to the conclusion, after looking at the charts, that those who do not trust the commissioners simply do not want change -- that they do not want the airport modified in any way.

However, that would not be entirely correct. It is true that most of those who are opposed to any change don't trust the commissioners; but there is a significant group that wants some change who also do not trust the commissioners.

There is a significant portion of the survey respondents who are convinced that the commissioners intend to expand the airport to allow for larger airplanes than currently using the airport, more flights, and that this is all being done for the sake of money.

Comments

We allowed comments on many questions. We also allowed general comments on any airport-related topic of their choosing. The following is a link to the comment pages. They are grouped by question. You can search them as well as sort them.

<http://www.madronavoices.com/airport-survey-comments/>