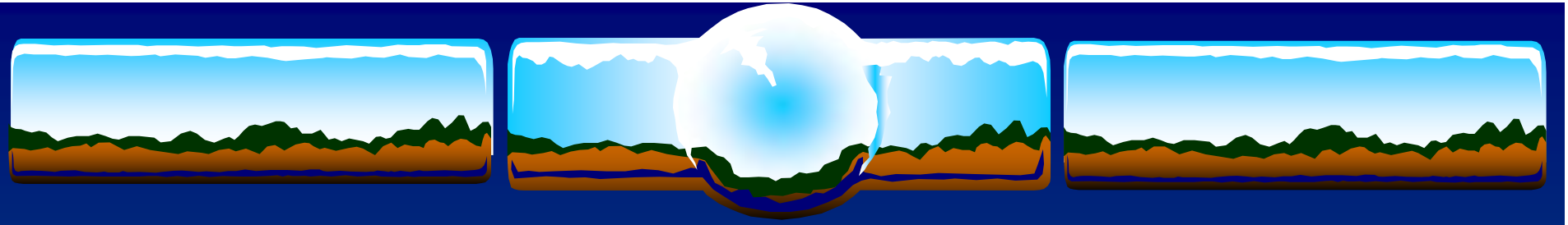

Golden Gate National Recreation Area: Public Opinion Research Telephone Survey & Public Comment Analysis

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Social Research Laboratory

August 15, 2002

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

Briefing Overview

- Discuss project background.
- Review findings from public opinion research telephone survey.
- Review findings from public comment analysis.
- Discuss integration of data.

Study Purpose

- The National Park Service sought public comment regarding pet management issues in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area through an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR).
- The ANPR was published in the Federal Register on January 11, 2002. Public comment was received for 91 days, until April 12, 2002.
- Study designed to determine whether the public supports a revision to GGNRA's current pet management regulations regarding dogs in the park.

Comparison of Two Studies

- Phone survey is conducted with a representative sample of the population, while public comment analysis is conducted with self-selected sample.
- Phone survey provides more breadth of understanding, while public comment analysis provides depth of understanding within specific areas of inquiry.

Telephone Survey Research Methodology

- Random telephone survey of 4 county region:
  - Alameda
  - Marin
  - San Francisco
  - San Mateo
- 400 adult residents surveyed from each county.
- 4-county region results are valid at +/- 2.5% MOE.
- Specific county results are valid at +/- 5.0% MOE.

Park Sites Visitation

- Virtually all respondents (96%) have visited at least one GGNRA site in their lifetime.

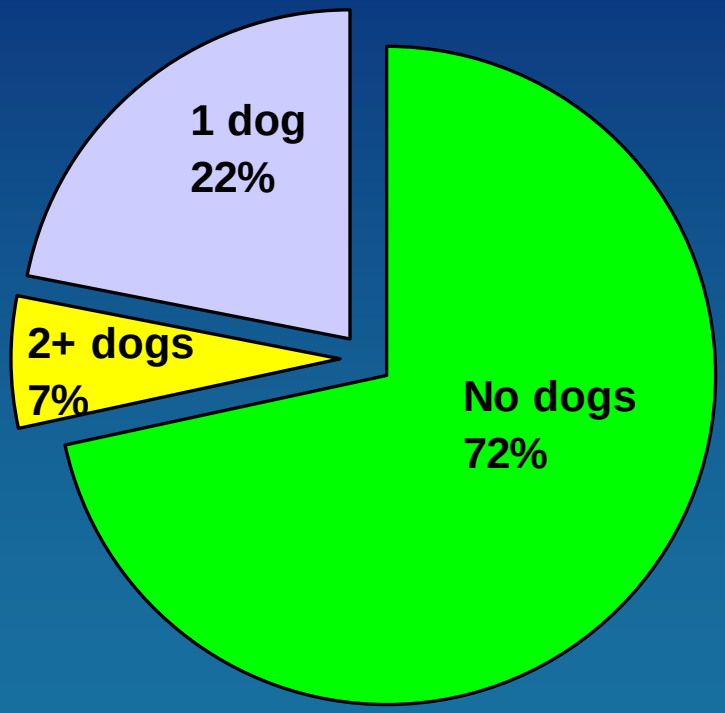
- Three-quarters of respondents (74%) have visited at least one GGNRA site within the last year.

Park Sites Visitation

- Most popular sites overall: Cliff House, Alcatraz, Muir Woods, Stinson Beach, Baker Beach.

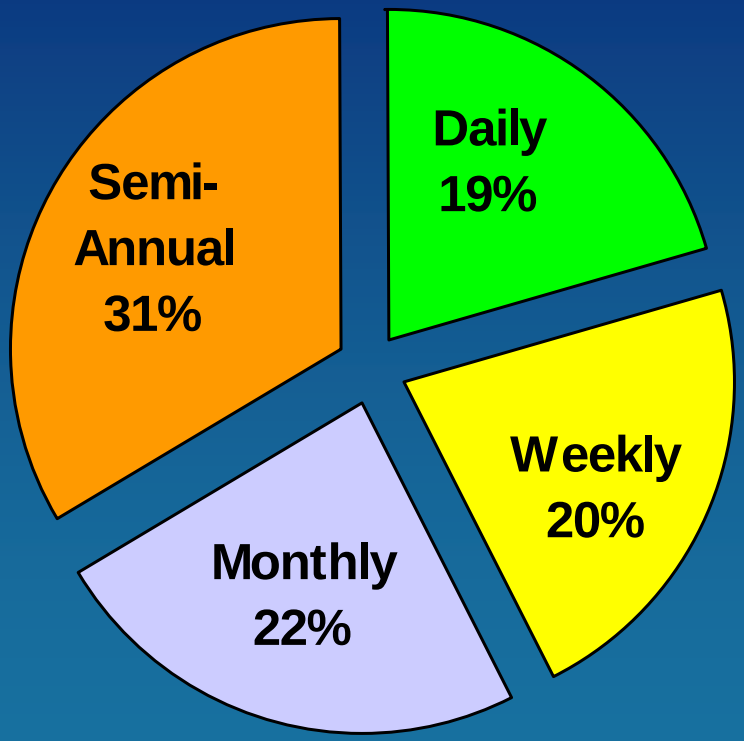
- Most popular sites within last 12 months: Presidio, Ocean Beach, Marin Headlands, Crissy Field, Stinson Beach.

Dog Ownership



- Twenty-nine percent of all respondents own or care for a dog.
- Twenty-two percent of respondents own one dog.
- Seven percent of respondents have more than one dog.

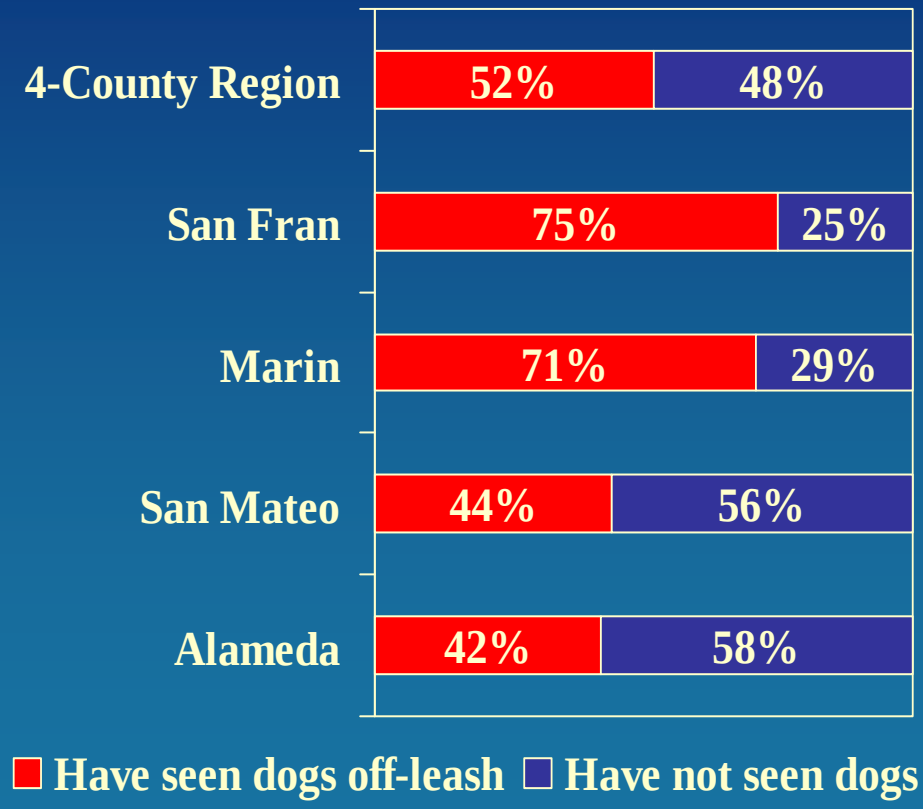
Dog Owner Use of GGNRA Sites



Population: GGNRA Dog-Walkers

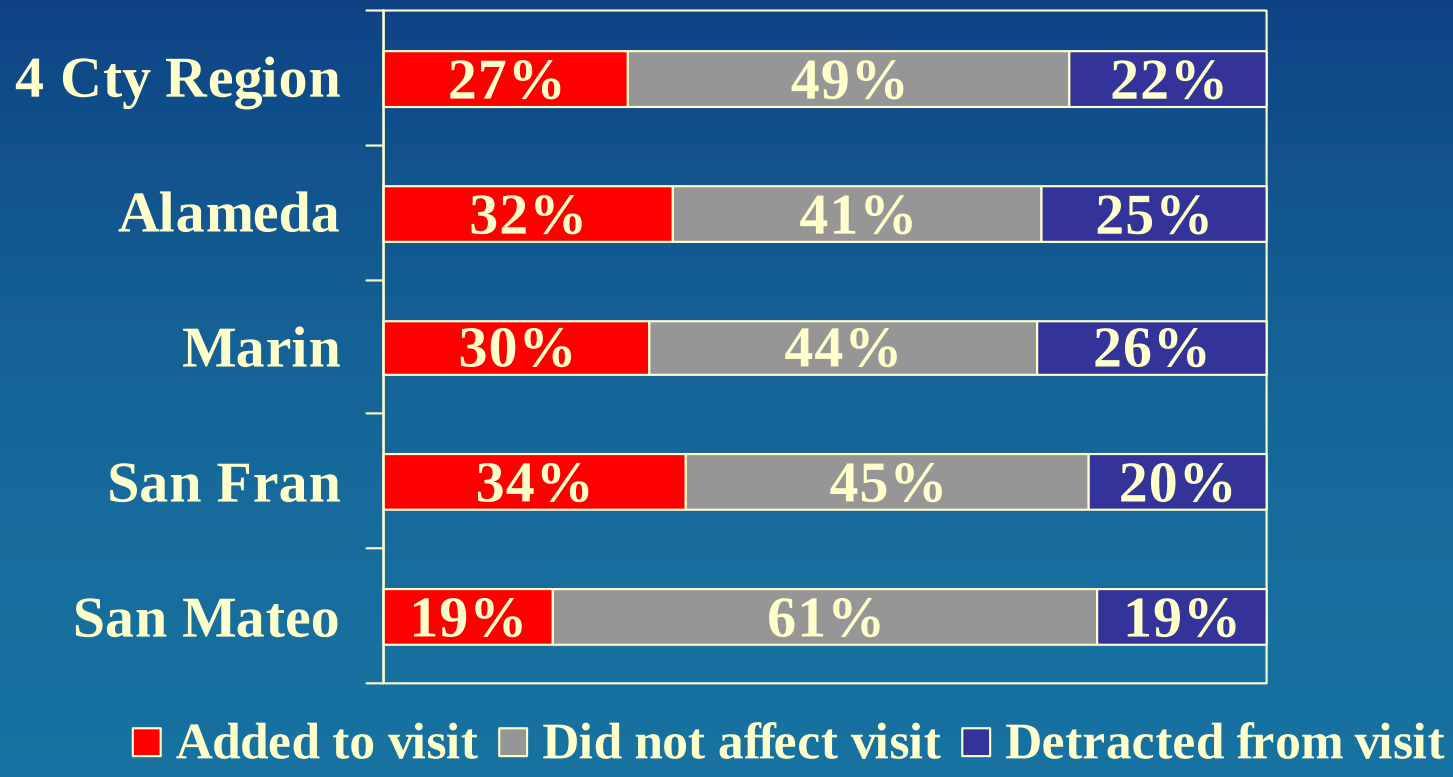
- Half of dog-owning respondents (14% of all respondents) have taken their dog(s) for a walk in a GGNRA site.
- Of those respondents, 39% walk their dog(s) at a GGNRA site at least once a week.

Percentage of Visitors that Report Seeing Dogs Off-Leash in GGNRA

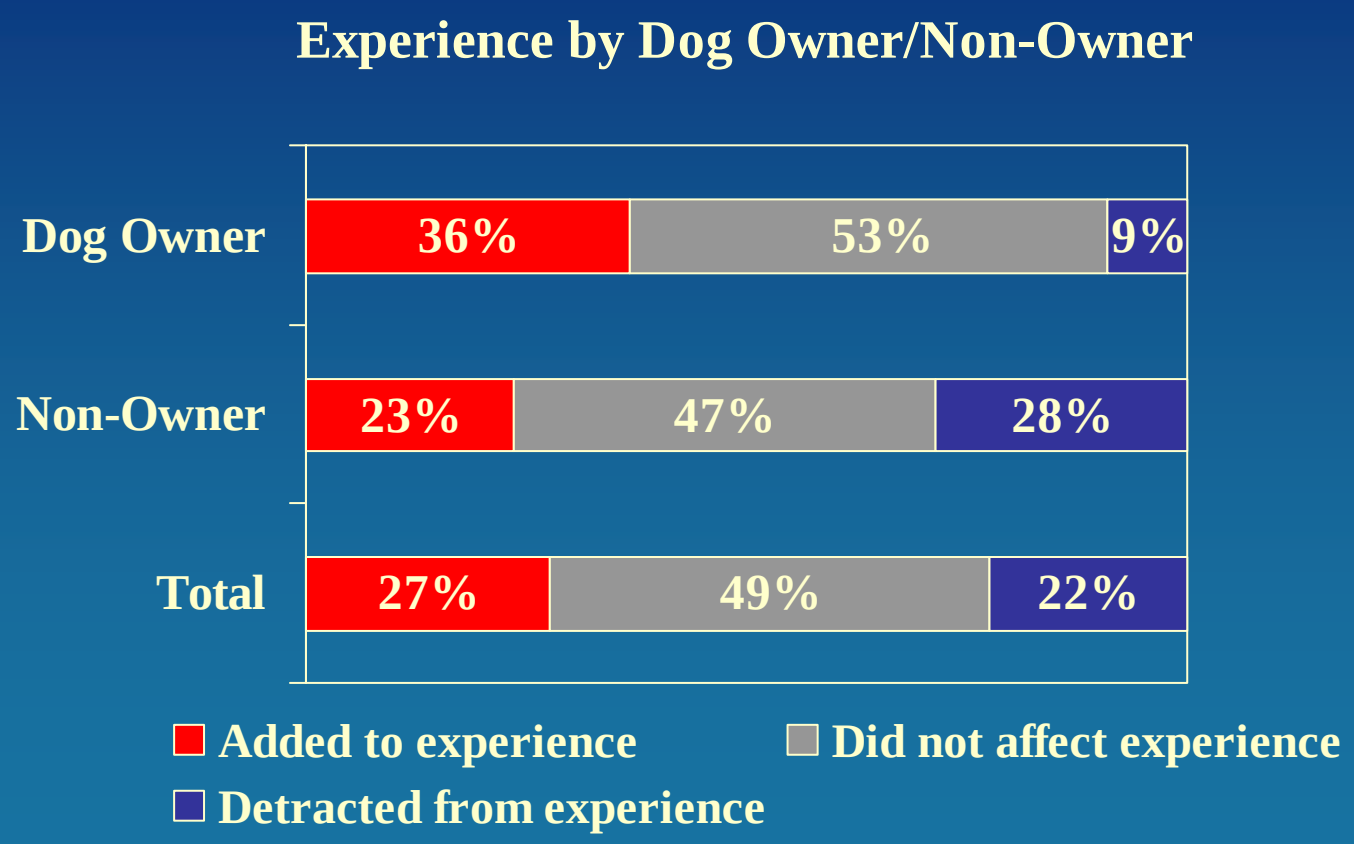


Impact of Experience with Dogs Off-Leash

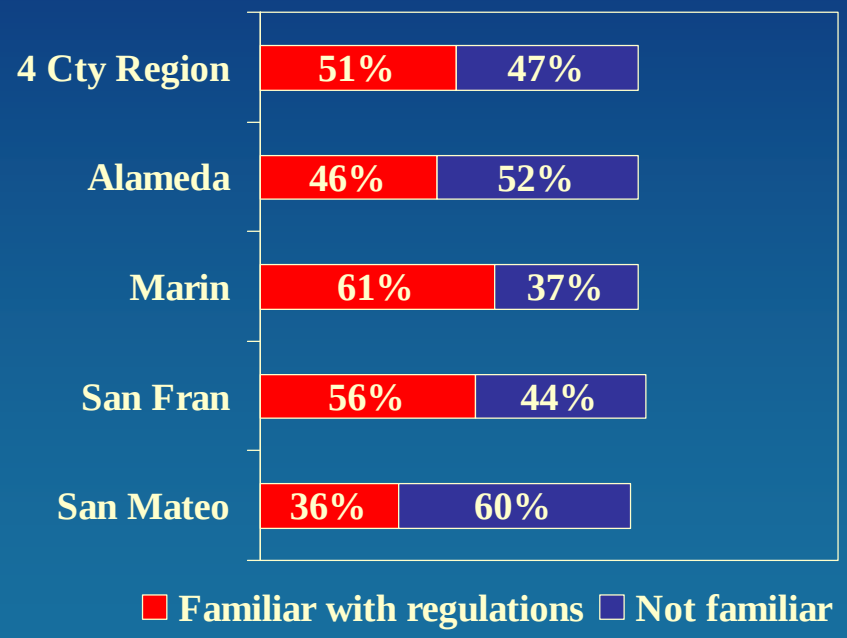
Experience by County

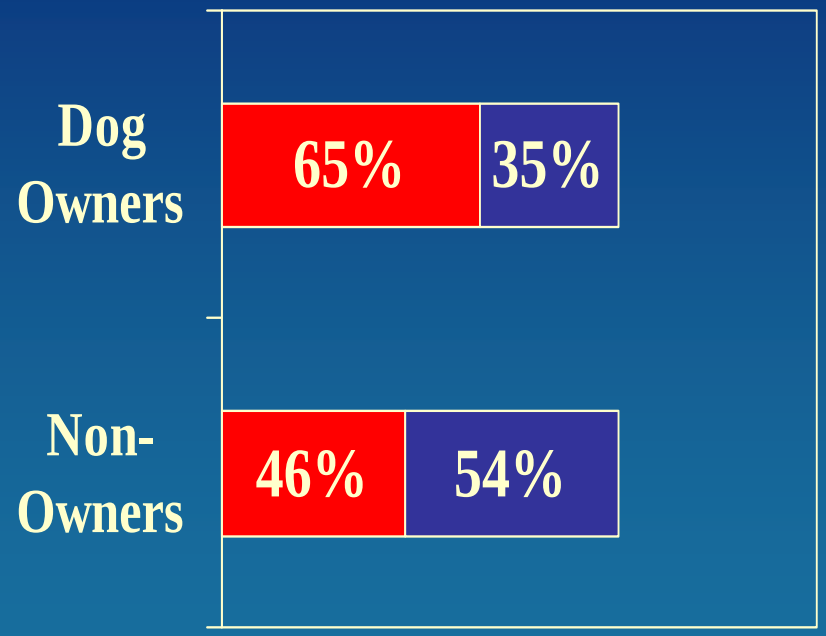


Impact of Experience with Dogs Off-Leash in GGNRA (cont.)



Familiarity with NPS Pet Management Regulations



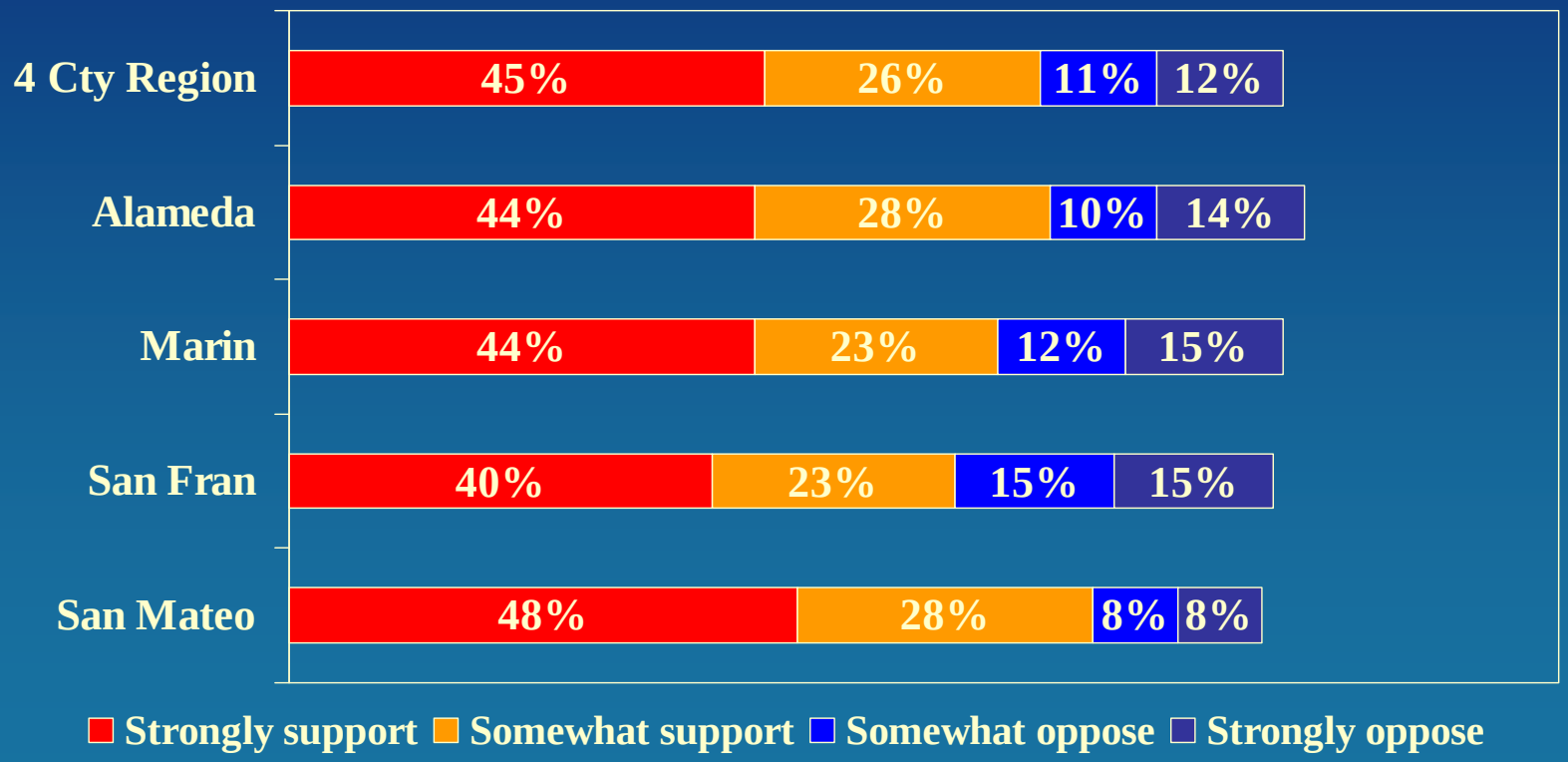


Statement Read to Respondents

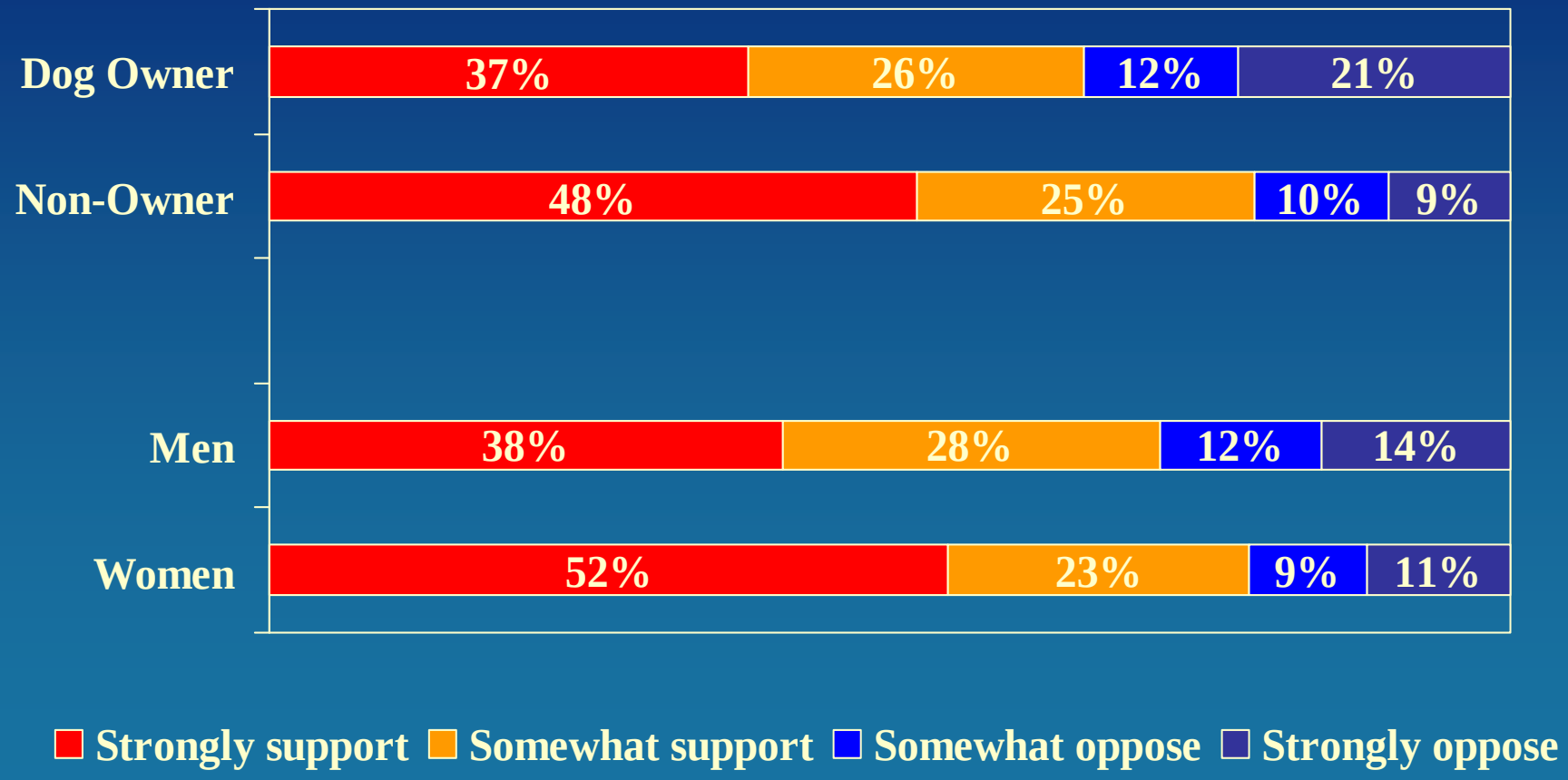
"Current NPS regulations allow for walking dogs on-leash at most GGNRA sites; AND, prohibit any off-leash dog-walking."

Do you support or oppose this current regulation?

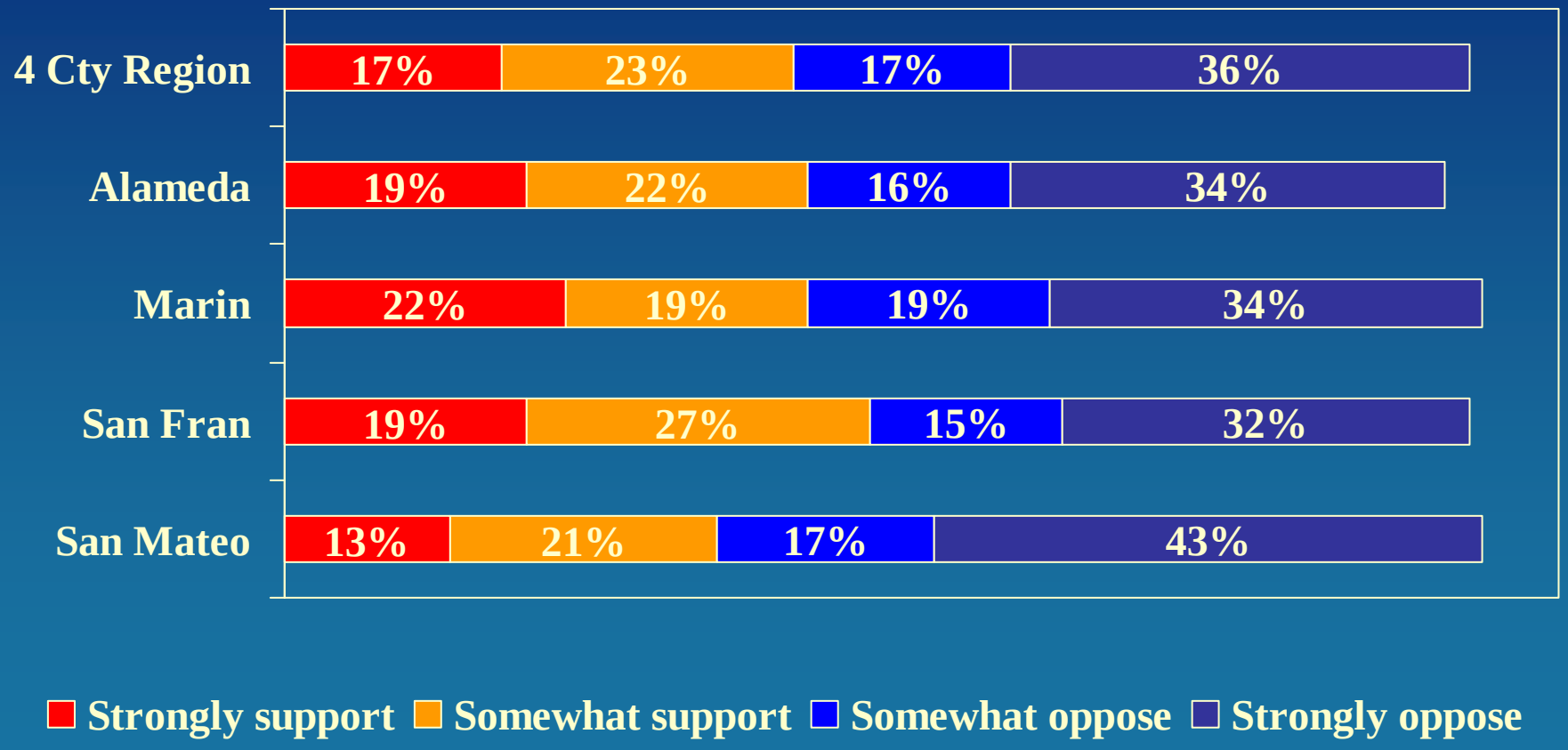
Position on Current NPS Leash Regulations



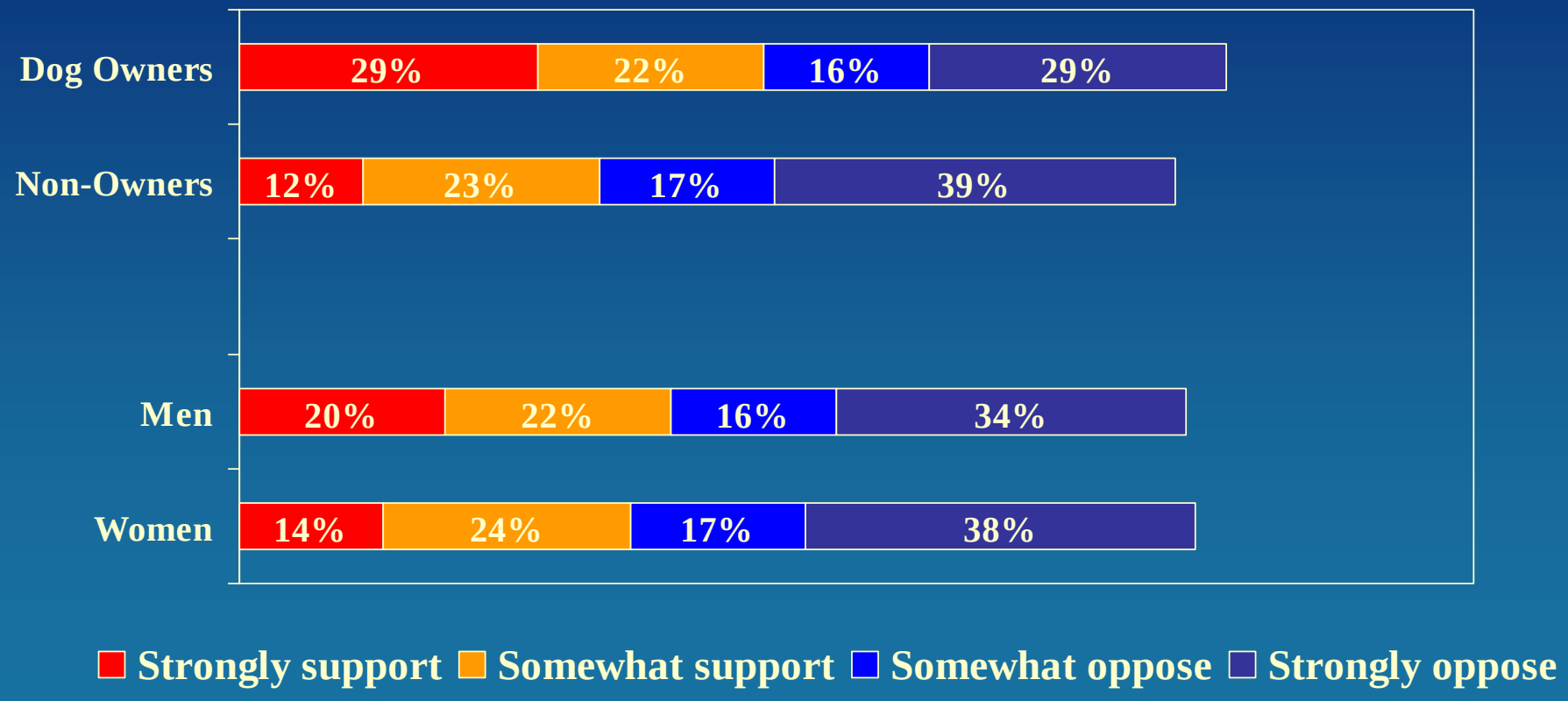
Position on Current NPS Leash Regulations (cont.)



Position on Off-Leash Dog Walking

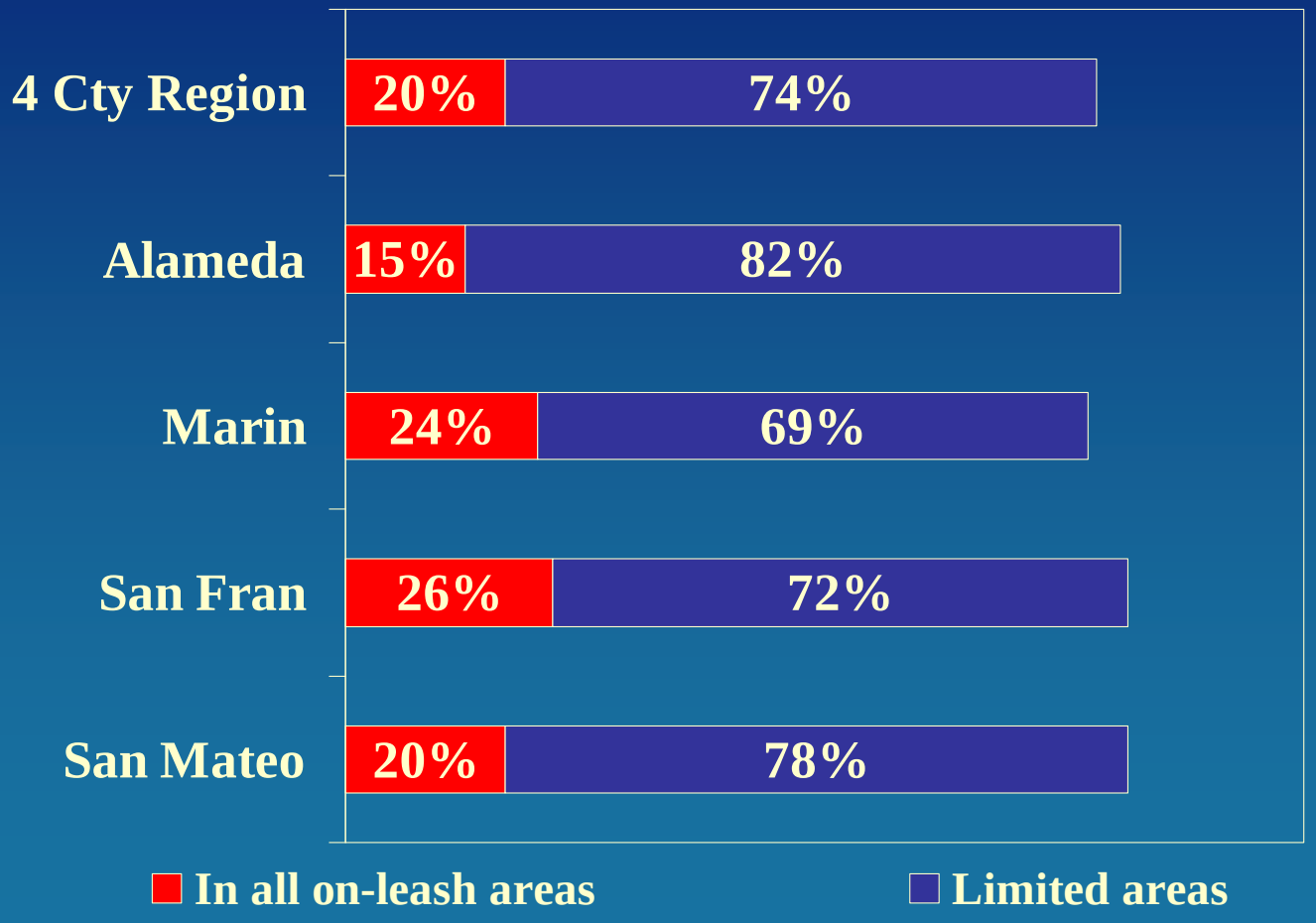


Position on Off-Leash Dog Walking (cont.)



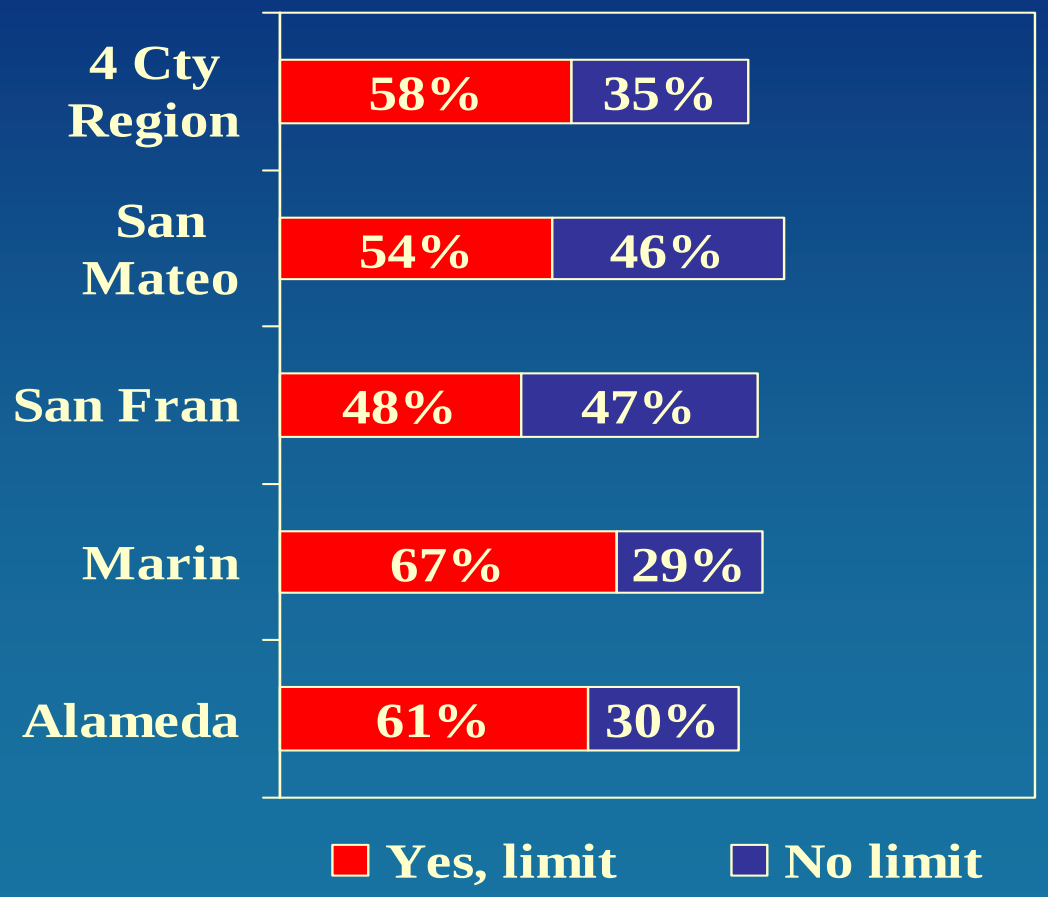
Preferences for Off-Leash Options

(among supporters of off-leash dog-walking – 40% of total resp.)



Limit the Number of Dogs Walked?

(asked of all respondents)



The Mission of the GGNRA

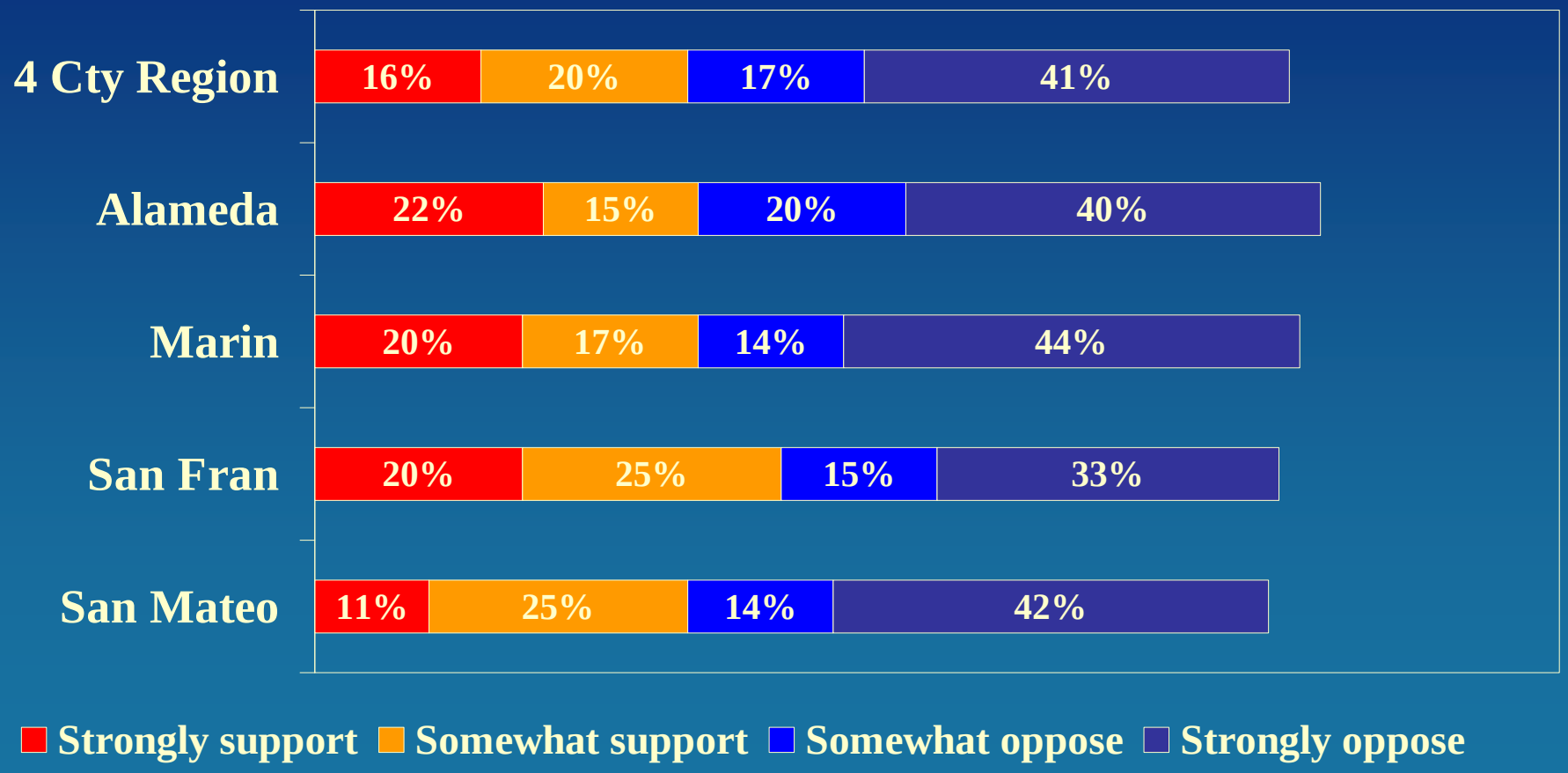
All respondents were read an abbreviated version of the NPS GGNRA mission statement:

"The mission of the GGNRA is the preservation, unimpaired, of the natural and cultural resources, and scenic and recreation values, of the park for present and future generations to enjoy."

After being read this statement, residents were asked if they "support or oppose" off-leash dog walking in GGNRA sites.

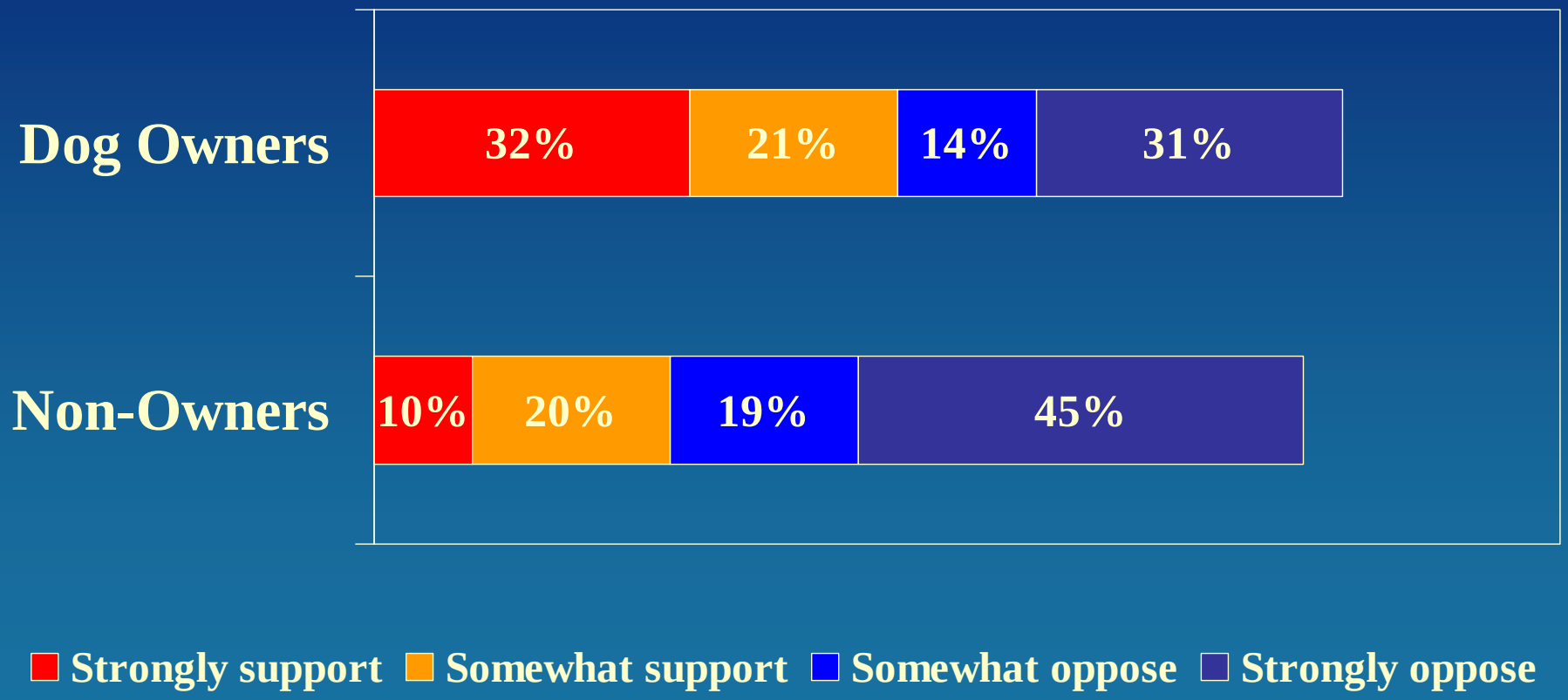
Position on Off-Leash Dog Walking

(After mission statement was read)



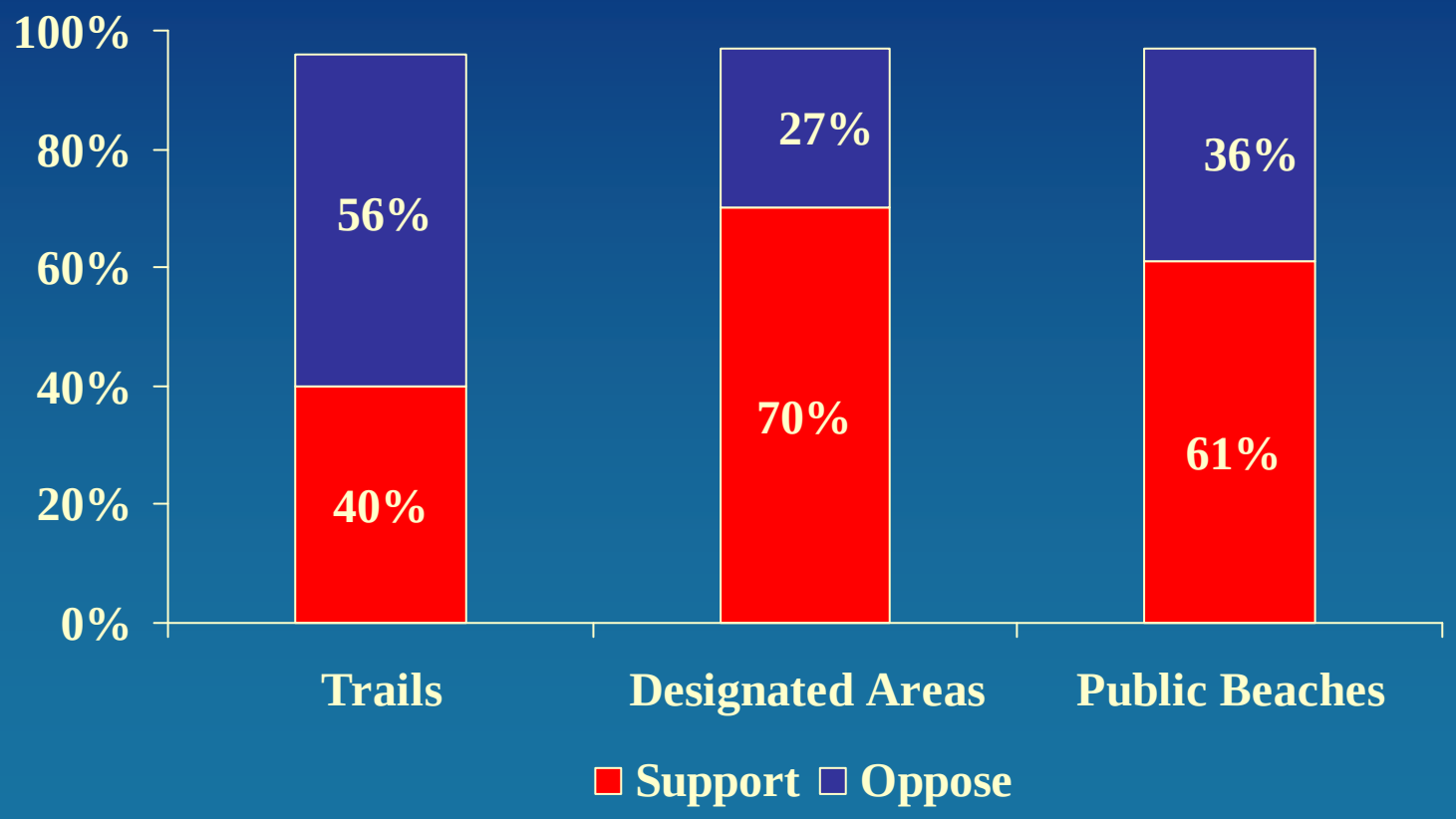
Position on Off-Leash Dog Walking

(After mission statement was read)



Support for Off-Leash Scenarios

(asked of those not strongly opposed to off-leash dog-walking -- 54% of all respondents)



Discussion

- Three survey questions directly address the central issue of the study: NPS pet management regulations.

First Question

- "Current regulations allow for walking dogs on-leash at most GGNRA sites and prohibit any off-leash dog walking. Do you support or oppose this current regulation?"
- 71% support current regulations (including 45% strongly supporting current regulations).
- Support is consistent across all demographic groups.

Second Question

- "Do you support or oppose allowing off-leash dog walking in GGNRA sites?" (no context given)
- 53% oppose off-leash dog-walking (including 36% strongly opposing off-leash dog-walking). 40% support off-leash dog-walking.
- All demographic groups except dog owners lean toward opposition to off-leash dog-walking.

Third Question

- GGNRA mission is read. "Knowing this, do you support or oppose allowing off-leash dog walking in GGNRA sites?"

- 58% oppose off-leash dog-walking (including 41% strongly opposing off-leash dog-walking).

Public Comment Analysis

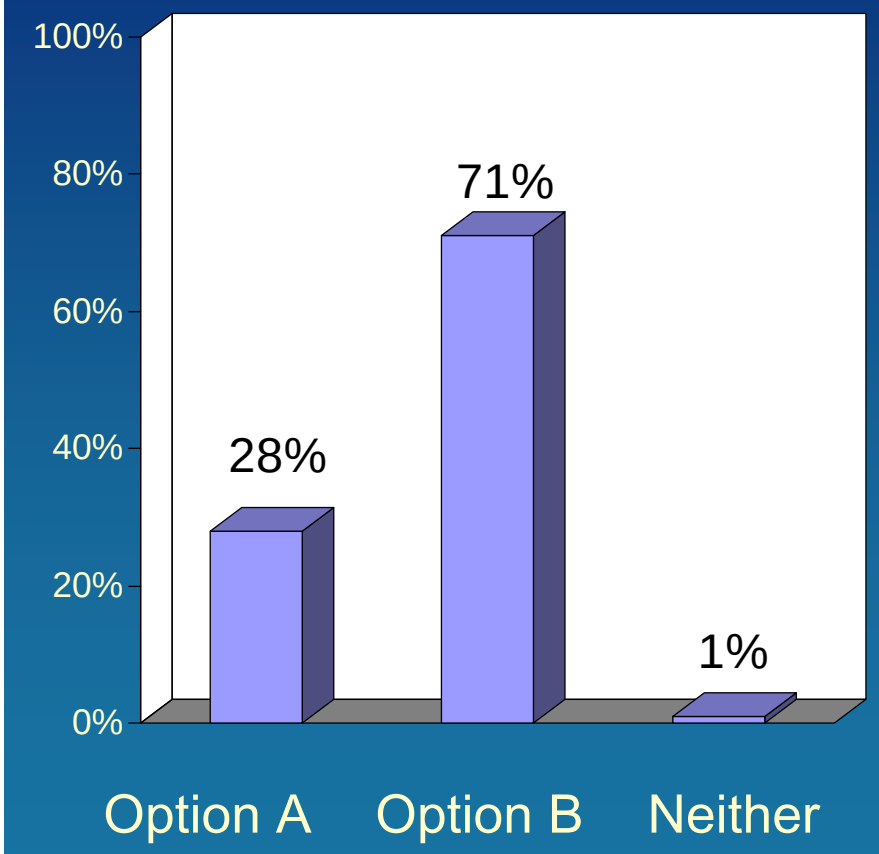
Methodology

- Coding took place June 13-28, 2002.
- 8,580 documents were coded by the SRL.
- Each document was coded for 16 categories.
- Random sample of documents double-checked by SRL supervisors.
- Methodology approved by GGNRA personnel.

Coding Categories

- Document number
- Number of pages
- Location
- Document type
- Substantive comment
- Government agency
- Organization affiliation
- Dog ownership status
- Park sites mentioned
- Position on off-leash
- Position on on-leash
- Position justifications
- Suggestions
- Number of signatures
- Problems
- Illustrative quotes

Support for Options A and B



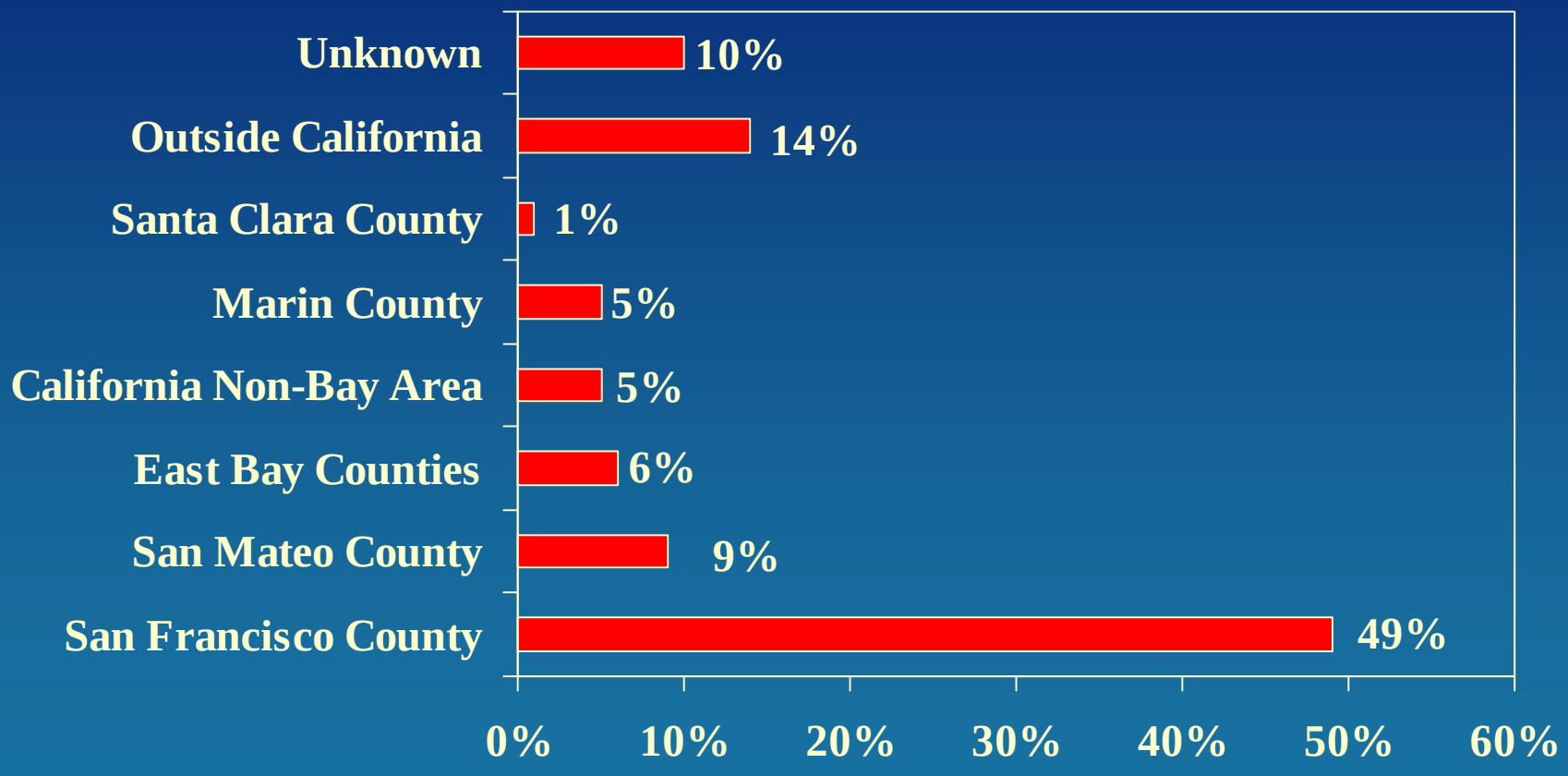
- Option A: Enforce existing regulations requiring dogs to be on-leash.
- Option B: Allow off-leash dog walking in specific locations.

Support for Options A and B: Comment Type

- Among those submitting form letters, there was greater support for Option A (67%).

- Among respondents who signed petitions, made comments at public meetings, submitted form letters or cards with additional comments, and wrote letters that were not form letters, there was greater support for Option B.

Geographic Origin of Comments



Support for Options A and B: Geographic Location

- 86% of documents received from Bay Area residents favor Option B.
- 88% of documents received from outside the Bay Area favor Option A.

Support for Options A and B: Dog-Ownership (self-identified)

	Option A	Option B	Neither	Total	N
Dog Owner	2%	98%	--	100%	4079
Non-Dog Owner	28%	71%	1%	100%	582
Unspecified	56%	43%	1%	100%	3918
Total	28%	71%	1%	100%	8580

Support for Option A: Enforce existing regulations requiring dogs to be on-leash

Support for Option A

1. Off-leash dogs harm wildlife.

   2030 documents, 84% of Option A supporters, 24% of total

2. Off-leash dogs have a negative impact on the environment.

   1996 documents, 83% of Option A supporters, 23% of total

3. Altering NPS pet management regulations would set a negative precedent.

   1184 documents, 49% of Option A supporters, 14% of total

Support for Option A (cont.)

4. Dogs are dangerous/threatening.

   1156 documents, 48% of Option A supporters, 13% of total

5. Off-leash dogs make parks unsafe for visitors.

   1126 documents, 47% of Option A supporters, 13% of total

6. Off-leash dogs discourage park use by minorities, the elderly, children, and people with special needs.

   954 documents, 39% of Option A supporters, 11% of total

Support for Option A (cont.)

7. The presence of off-leash dogs increases the need for rescue and intervention efforts.

   910 documents, 38% of Option A supporters, 11% of total

8. Allowing off-leash dogs would violate the National Park Service's mandate.

   307 documents, 13% of Option A supporters, 4% of total

9. Dog owners are selfish/inconsiderate.

   155 documents, 6% of Option A supporters, 2% of total

Support for Option B: Allow off-leash dog walking in specific locations and ways.

Support for Option B

1. Exercise benefits for off-leash dogs.

   1654 documents, 27% of Option B supporters, 19% of total

2. GGNRA land was given by the city with the understanding that existing uses, including off-leash dog walking, would continue.

   1059 documents, 17% of Option B supporters, 12% of total

3. Sociability benefits for off-leash dogs.

   984 documents, 16% of Option B supporters, 12% of total

Support for Option B (cont.)

4. Health benefits of off-leash dog walking for people.

   917 documents, 15% of Option B supporters, 11% of total

5. Sociability benefits for people walking off-leash dogs.

   842 documents, 14% of Option B supporters, 10% of total

6. Dog owners are responsible/self-regulating.

   841 documents, 14% of Option B supporters, 10% of total

Support for Option B (cont.)

7. Freedom/right to walk dogs off-leash.

   508 documents, 8% of Option B supporters, 6% of total

8. Only a small portion of GGNRA land is used for off-leash dog walking .

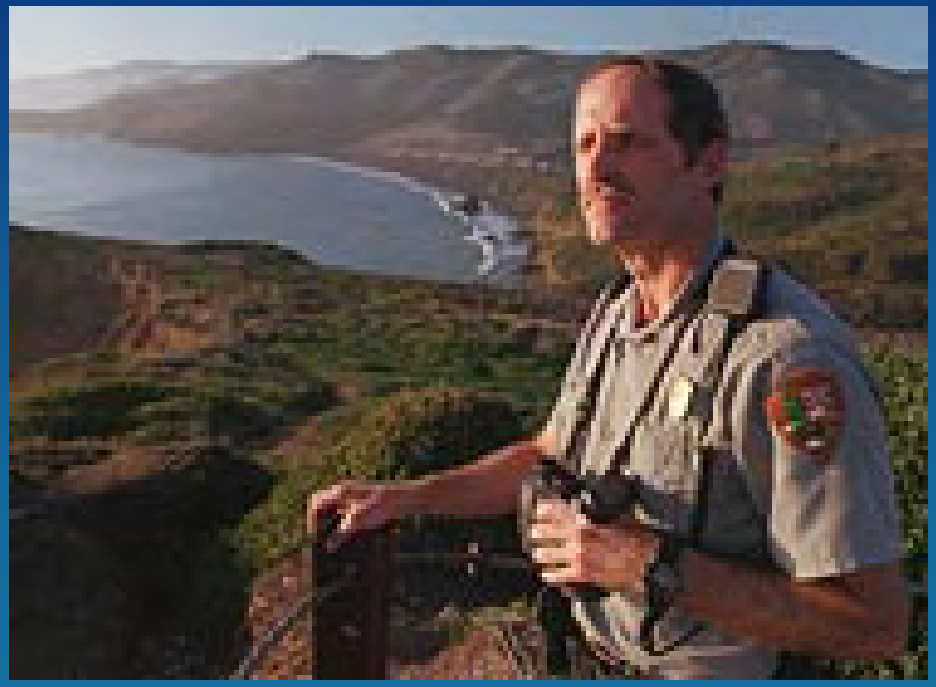
   475 documents, 8% of Option B supporters, 6% of total

9. Dogs are friendly/enjoyable.

   392 documents, 6% of Option B supporters, 5% of total

Suggestions

- Suggestions regarding pet management at GGNRA sites were coded.



Suggestions

1. Limit off-leash dog walking to specific, designated (not fenced) areas.

   411 documents, 5% of all documents

2. Cite only irresponsible dog owners.

   334 documents, 4% of all documents

3. Schedule specific times for off-leash dog walking.

   139 documents, 2% of all documents

Suggestions (cont.)

4. Create separate and/or fenced areas for off-leash dogs.

   132 documents, 2% of all documents

5. Create a licensing process for off-leash dogs.

   102 documents, 1% of all documents

6. Fence environmentally sensitive areas to reduce environmental impacts of off-leash dogs.

   90 documents, 1% of all documents

Comparison of Two Studies

- Phone survey is conducted with a representative sample of the population, while public comment analysis is conducted with self-selected sample.
- Phone survey reflects breadth of understanding; public comment analysis reflects depth of understanding in specific areas of inquiry.

Comparison of Two Studies

- Telephone survey reflects opinions of all area residents, regardless of interest level in pet management. Public comment analysis reflects opinions of people with a vested interest in pet management issues in the GGNRA.

- Public comment analysis brings texture to position justifications. The value of the analysis is in understanding the context of support for Option A or Option B.

Observations

- Option A supporters have greater unity in their understanding of the issue. Option B supporters are more diverse in their position justifications.
- Option A supporters are most concerned with impacts on the environment and wildlife, policy implications, and safety issues.
- Option B supporters are most concerned with the social and physical benefits for dogs and humans, and policy implications.