

# Rural Affairs and Islands Committee

12<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday, 26 April

## Petition PE1758: End greyhound racing in Scotland

### Summary of call for views

1. The Rural Affairs and Islands Committee ran a call for views as part of its consideration of a petition calling on an end to greyhound racing in Scotland.
2. The call for views ran between 17 March and 7 April. The public were asked to respond to three questions:
  - Q1. What is your view about the welfare of greyhounds used for racing in Scotland?**
  - Q2. Do you agree with the petition which calls for a ban on greyhound racing in Scotland? Please explain your reasons for your answer.**
  - Q3. Do you agree with the recommendations of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission report? Please explain your reasons for your answer.**
3. This summary, produced by SPICe and the Participation and Communities Team (PACT), presents the findings of the call for views. The Committee received 1,314 responses in total, 32 from organisations and 1,284 from individuals.
4. Responses to the call for views are [published on the Parliament website](#).
5. The nature of the debate around greyhound racing meant that participants and campaigns were able to amplify their views by encouraging multiple similar submissions. Therefore, data gathered from this exercise *is not intended to be a representative sample of the population*, but rather give a snapshot of some of the experiences, opinions, questions, improvements, comments and concerns the public who responded to the call for views have about the subject matter of the petition.
6. The data was reviewed and a small minority of users who created multiple submissions had duplicate submissions removed. While there was evidence of some participants using a campaign template to assist with their response, most

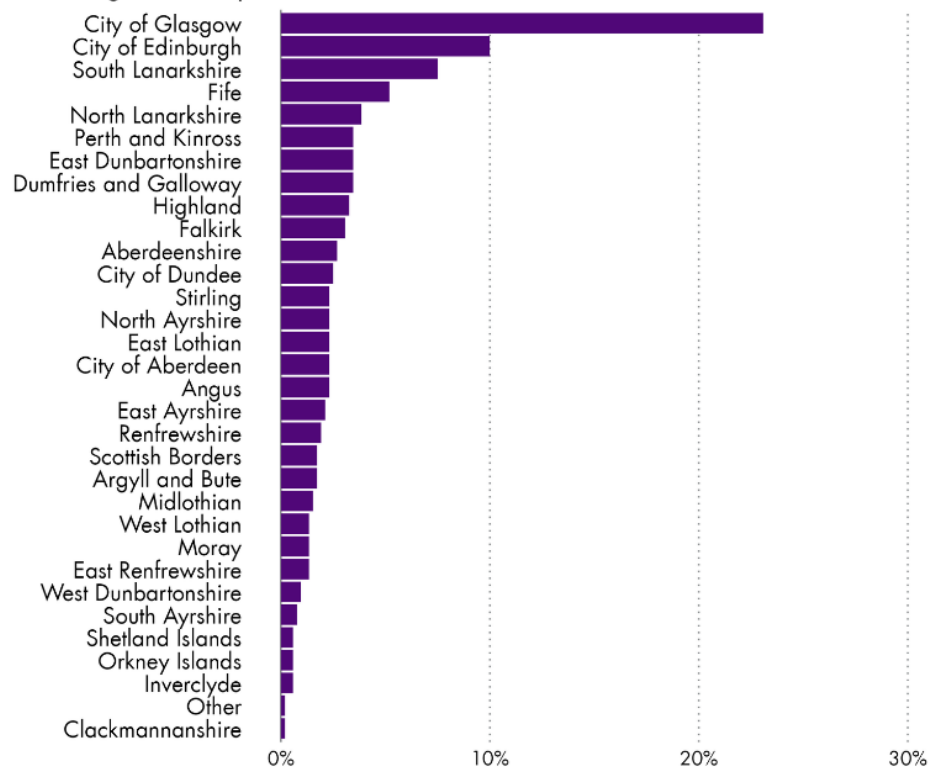
participants responded to the call for views in their own words. The following analysis is based on 1,289 submissions.

## Where did respondents come from?

7. While the data is not intended to be representative, the engagement activity achieved strong levels of participation with users from 31 out of the 32 Scottish local authority area taking part (no responses were received from people in Na h-Eileanan Siar (Western Isles)). The data also shows significant interest in the petition from outside of Scotland with over 59% of respondents indicating that they live outside of Scotland.
8. We also carried out periodic checks to confirm the location of responses being received to give us confidence in the data being gathered and to identify responses made in Scotland.
9. Therefore, much of the analysis is based on the 530 responses we received from participants who indicated that they live in Scotland.
10. Detail of the location of participants based in Scotland is outlined below:

### Which local authority area do you currently live in?

Percentage of all responses from Scotland



# Results: Summary of Responses

11. SPICe carried out automated textual analysis of Scottish based submissions to identify key themes and words used by respondents in favour of and against the petition.

## Question 1: What is your view about the welfare of greyhounds used for racing in Scotland?

12. We received 1,262 responses to this qualitative question. 504 responses were received from respondents based in Scotland.

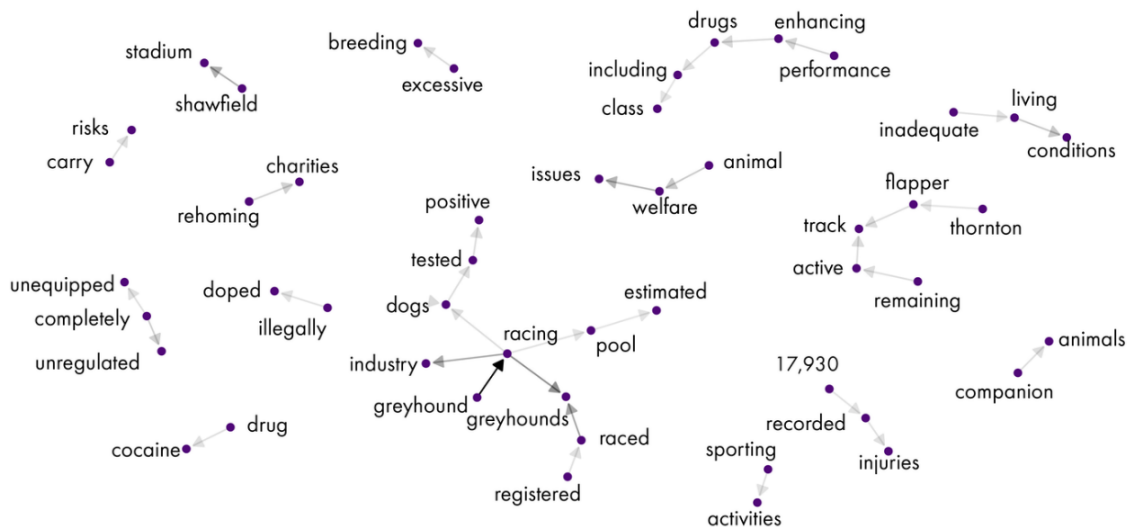
13. A summary of key words and phrases is outlined below:

### What is your view about the welfare of greyhounds used for racing in Scotland?

This wordcloud shows the frequency of words used in responses



This network map below shows the relationship between words used in those responses.



14. Those who **supported the petition** indicated that they felt that the welfare of greyhounds used for racing in Scotland is “poor”, “appalling”, “barbaric” “cruel” and “abusive”.

15. Key issues raised included:

- “Animal welfare issues”
- “Inadequate living conditions” as racing dogs “spend most of their time in kennels” “of poor quality with bare minimum legal requirements of water and shelter only, with nothing to enrich the quality of life of the dogs who generally spend approximately 22 hours a day on their own with no other company or interaction”
- “Risk of injury” to racing dogs which could result in them being “discarded”
- That “profit”, “gambling” and “entertainment” are seen as more important than the welfare of greyhounds and that the “dogs have been regarded as merely ‘cash cows’” and “treated as commodities rather than domestic pets”
- “Excessive breeding” which leads to “pressure on rehoming charities” and “euthanasia”
- Instances of “doping” including the use of “performance enhancing drugs such as steroids and caffeine-based substances” and “exposure to illegal substances” such as “cocaine”
- Although the last regulated track, Shawfield Stadium, closed in 2020, “the last remaining track of Thornton in Fife is completely unregulated, meaning there are no drug tests performed, no traceability of the dogs used there, and there's never a vet present at the tracks. There is also no injury or retirement data for this unregulated track.”

16. Those **who did not support the petition** stated that:

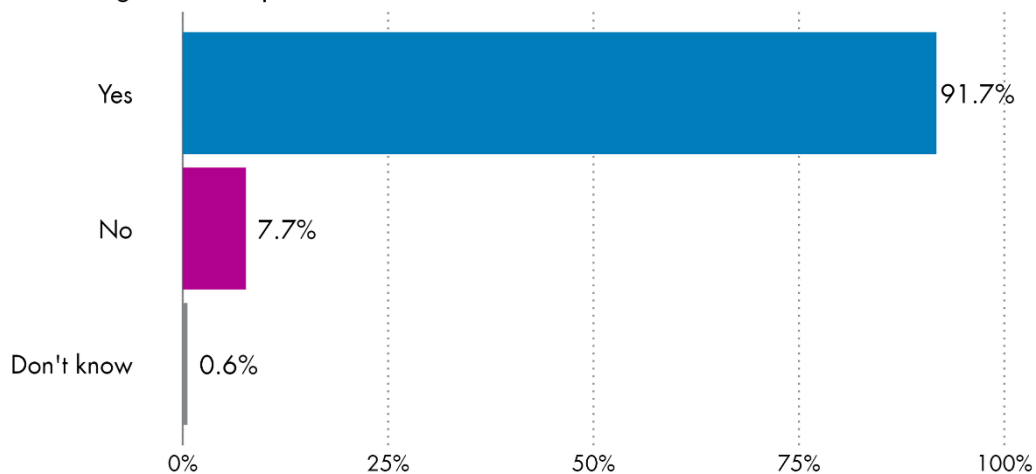
- “Racing greyhounds are well fed and exercised as they need to be at peak fitness to race”
- Greyhounds are “taken care of by loving owners and trainers”
- “When a dog is finished racing, most are rehomed or kept for breeding”
- “They are medically looked after so that they can continue to race, these dogs are in better physical health than the majority of household pets”
- “GBGB [Greyhound Board of Great Britain] kennels are independently inspected” and “every GBGB kennel must meet the required standards to be licensed and anyone wishing to handle any of the dogs in that kennel must also have a GBGB licence”.
- “There are over 200 rules of racing that GBGB racers must follow. The GBGB has had many welfare initiatives and training for greyhound trainers and kennel hands.”

## Question 2: Do you agree with the petition which calls for a ban on greyhound racing in Scotland?

17. We received 530 responses from respondents based in Scotland. 91.7% of Scottish respondents were in favour of a ban on greyhound racing. This is similar to the overall total of 91.4% across all responses received.
18. 7.7% of Scottish respondents disagreed with the petition. Again, this is similar to the overall total of 8.3% across all responses received.

### Do you agree with the petition which calls for a ban on greyhound racing in Scotland?

Percentage of all responses from Scotland



19. Respondents were given the option to give reasons for their answers. We received 411 responses from respondents based in Scotland.

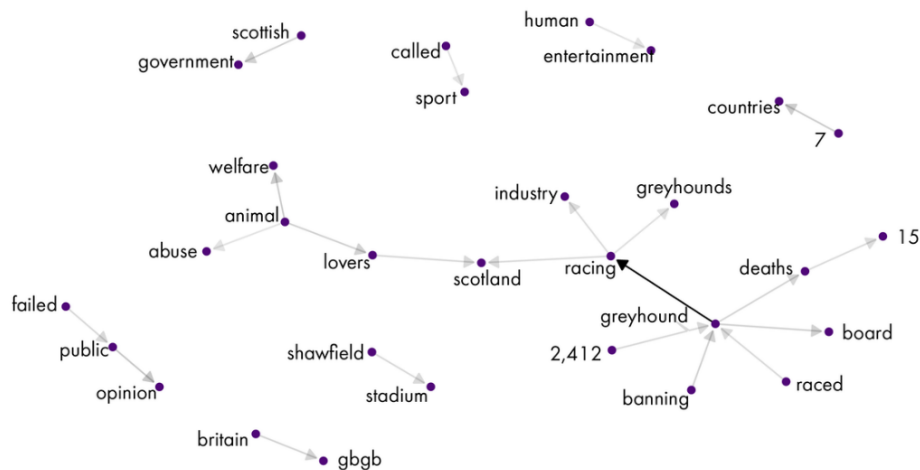
20. A summary of key words and phrases is outlined below:

### Do you agree with the petition which calls for a ban on greyhound racing in Scotland? - Yes

This wordcloud shows the frequency of words used in responses



This network map below shows the relationship between words used in those responses.



21. Those who **supported the petition** gave reasons including that:

- The dog racing “industry is morally wrong” as “dogs are treated as commodities”
- “The welfare of animals must come before their entertainment value”
- “It’s a cruel sport the dogs are forced to run causing injuries” and “death”
- “Public opinion has changed as a nation we should be leading the way in banning these so-called sports”
- Self-regulation has “failed”
- Scotland is one of only “7 countries” where greyhound racing is legal
- “Greyhound racing no longer fits in with the idea of a modern Scotland”



not liking the idea of animals competing, for our benefit, it is unfair to use distorted facts to impose their will on other people.”

- “I do not feel it is for the people of other countries to vote on what is debated in our own parliament it should be for the people of Scotland.”

23. Comments from those in Scotland who answered “**Don’t know**” to the question included:

- “A properly regulated sport has to be evidenced by independent regulator”
- “I agree that dogs should not be forced to race but I also think that without the racing industry the greyhound would become an endangered breed. I am very torn”
- “Any legislative or regulatory measures in this area should derive from robust evidence supporting the proposed measures. There appears to be insufficient evidence at this stage to suggest that a complete ban will improve animal welfare... It would remain legal to breed, train, and race in England and Wales... The aim of any government intervention should not be to displace an unwanted activity, but to regulate to promote better outcomes. Whilst there are emotive and subjective arguments for a ban, to adequately legislate in this area these ought to be supported by sufficient data and analysis of any potential consequences – e.g., a fuller economic impact assessment, or proposals to implement a ban without taking into consideration displacement or the welfare of the animals currently in the industry.”

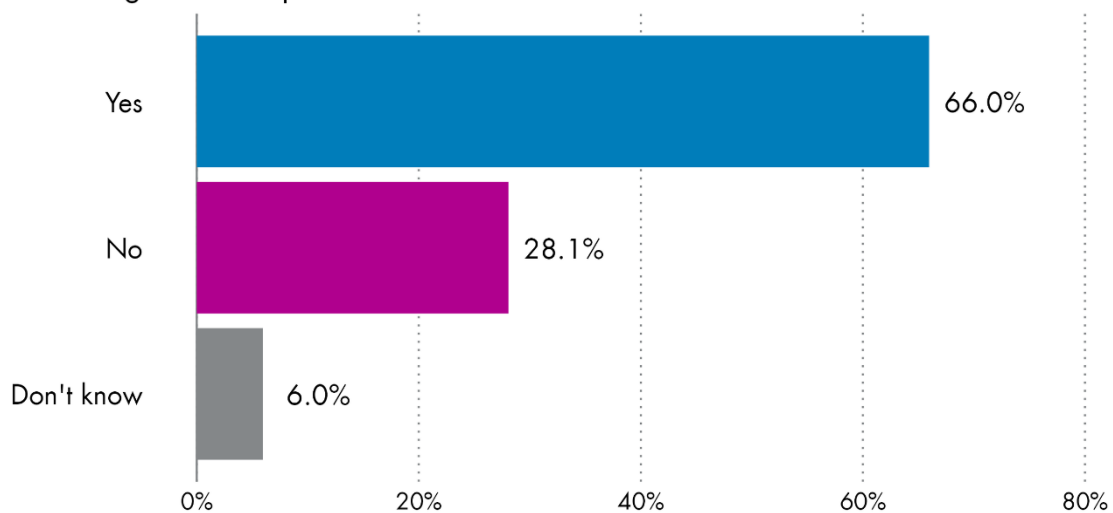


### Question 3: Do you agree with the recommendations of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission report?

24. We received 530 responses from respondents based in Scotland. 66% of Scottish respondents were in favour of the SAWC report recommendations.
25. 28% of Scottish respondents disagreed with SAWC report recommendations. 6% of Scottish respondents indicated that they “don’t know” if they agree or disagree with the SAWC report recommendations.

### Do you agree with the recommendations of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission report?

Percentage of all responses from Scotland



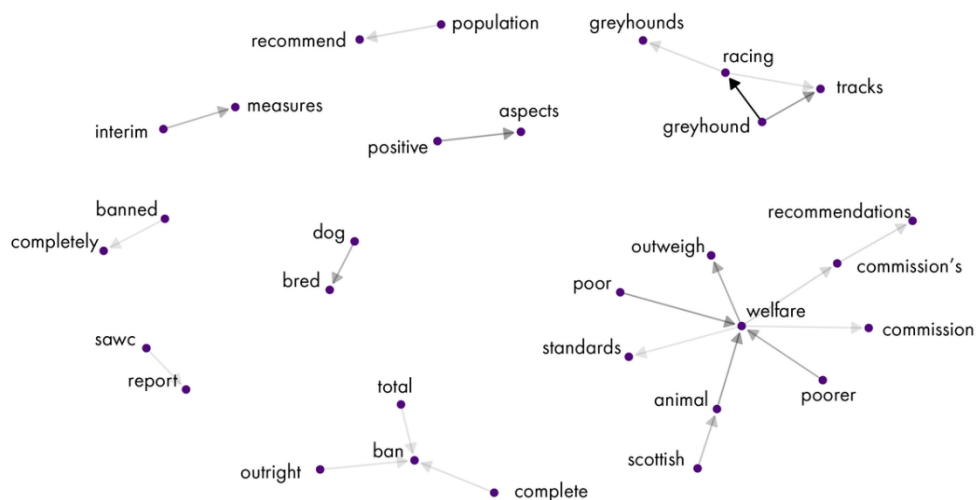
26. A summary of key words and phrases is outlined below:

### Do you agree with the recommendations of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission report? - Yes

This wordcloud shows the frequency of words used in responses



This network map below shows the relationship between words used in those responses.



27. Those who agreed with the SAWC report recommendations included comments such as:

- “The report clearly demonstrates that dog racing has risks which outweigh any possible benefit”
- (The report) considers “the overall welfare of greyhounds”
- “Negligence and abuse of animals should not be allowed just because it is somebody’s source of income. Anything can be made profitable, doesn’t mean it is right to do so”
- “I agree that no new tracks should open in Scotland. Vet being present does not help a dog who lives a miserable life”

28. However, many respondents stated that, while they agreed with the findings of the report, they believed it “does not go far enough” and that an “outright”,

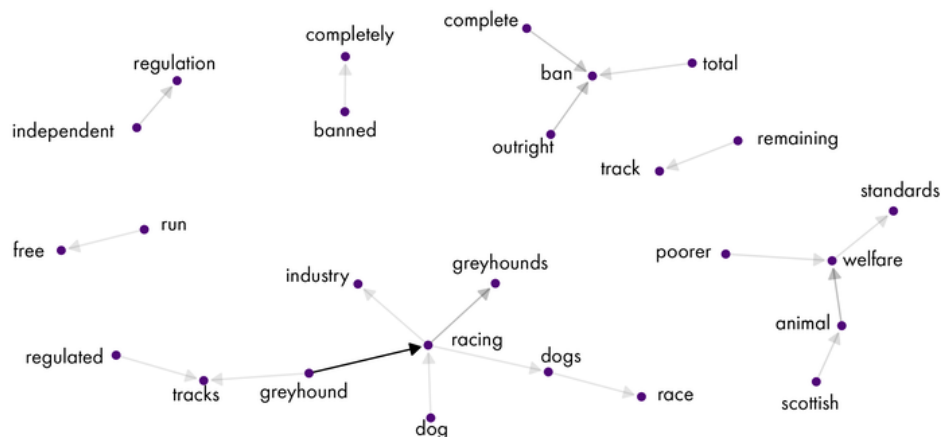
“complete”, or “total ban” would be “the only way to ensure the welfare” for greyhounds in Scotland.

## Do you agree with the recommendations of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission report? - No

This wordcloud shows the frequency of words used in responses



This network map below shows the relationship between words used in those responses.



29. Many who disagreed with the report recommendations said they did so because the “recommendations don’t far enough” and “greyhound racing should be banned rather than managed” as “loopholes” could be exploited. There was also a call for an “immediate” ban rather than “waiting another 3-5 years”.
30. Others **disagreed** with the report recommendations because:
- “The recommendations are biased and do not relate to the facts of greyhound racing in Scotland. The Animal Health and Welfare Scotland (Act) 2006 covers all animals in Scotland, why does SAWC seem to think that greyhounds are different?”

- “The GBGB already has independent assessment for their greyhound kennels... I do not believe that currently another body could maintain the same level of oversight that the GBGB provides”
- “I don't agree that racing dogs have poorer outcomes than other dogs. Do you have statistics for other working dogs?” and “What evidence is there that greyhounds fare poorer than other dogs?”
- “I would not ban new tracks outright simply because this would not allow for existing facilities to be modernised and upgraded to improve welfare standards”

**SPICe and Participation and Communities Team**  
**April 2023**