



## **Executive Summary**

### **Cortes Island Housing Survey – 2026**

Prepared by the Cortes Housing Society in partnership with Strathcona Regional District Director Mark Vonesch.

#### **Overview**

The Cortes Housing Society, in collaboration with Strathcona Regional District Director Mark Vonesch, conducted a community housing survey to better understand housing conditions, affordability pressures, and potential solutions on Cortes Island. We were very grateful to see such high engagement from the community with 361 responses to the survey online and on paper, making up over 30% of our island population.

This survey builds on previous housing research conducted in 2023, which engaged more than 265 respondents—representing over 20% of the island’s population—and demonstrated strong community concern about housing availability and affordability.

The current survey collected responses from residents and property owners. The results confirm that housing affordability, rental supply, and access to land remain major issues affecting both renters and homeowners on Cortes Island. The data also indicates strong community support for policy and development solutions that increase housing supply while maintaining the island’s social fabric.

#### **Disclaimer:**

We have done our best to conduct an unbiased survey that provides useful data for the community of Cortes Island. This year we asked for personal information to ensure people weren’t filling it out multiple times, mailed paper copies to mailboxes, and extended the time period of the survey. We also attended community lunches and Friday markets to reach as many people as possible.

Both the Regional Director and the Cortes Housing Society plan to use the information contained in the survey responses to help guide our work and we recognize that not everyone’s voices were represented in the survey.

Thank you to everyone that took the time to fill it out. We are excited to share the results!

---

## Key Findings

### 1. Strong Demand for Affordable Home Ownership

A large majority of respondents expressed interest in affordable home ownership options.

- 40.4% said they would be interested
- 41.6% said they might be interested and wanted more information

Together, over **80% of respondents expressed potential interest in affordable ownership options.**

This finding highlights a significant gap between current housing availability and the aspirations of residents who wish to remain on Cortes long-term.

---

### 2. Renters Face Significant Affordability Challenges

Survey results indicate that many renters are financially stretched by housing costs.

- 53% of renters spend more than one-third of their income on housing, which is widely considered the threshold for housing affordability risk.
- Most renters reported that they can afford between **\$500 and \$1,500 per month in rent**, with very few able to pay above \$2,000.

These figures suggest that the current rental market exceeds what many residents can afford and reinforces the need for **non-profit and below-market housing options.**

---

### 3. Renters Want to Stay on Cortes Island

The survey indicates a strong desire among renters to remain in the community.

- **80.9% of renters said they would purchase land on Cortes if they could afford it.**

This finding demonstrates that many renters are not transient but are committed members of the community seeking long-term stability and the opportunity to invest in the island.

---

### 4. Community Support for Housing Policy Solutions

Respondents showed support for several policy tools aimed at increasing housing availability.

- Approximately **60% support an Empty Homes Tax** if revenues are directed toward non-profit housing projects.
- A majority also support regulations limiting short-term rentals to primary residences.

These responses indicate that residents recognize the structural nature of the housing challenge and are open to policy interventions to address it.

---

## **5. Property Owners Could Play a Role in Expanding Rental Supply**

The survey explored opportunities to increase housing supply using existing properties.

- **42.7% of property owners said they would consider renting space if the conditions were right.**
- However, only **16.4% said they would definitely do so**, with many expressing concerns about risks and management responsibilities.

This suggests that programs providing **intermediary support, tenant screening, or property management assistance** could help unlock additional rental housing on the island.

---

## **6. Property Sizes Suggest Opportunities for Additional Housing**

Survey data on property sizes shows that many parcels may have potential for additional housing.

- **41.6% of respondents own properties between 2–5 acres**
- **22.1% own properties larger than 10 acres**

These property sizes suggest opportunities for carefully planned solutions such as:

- secondary dwellings
- cottages or accessory units
- clustered rural housing

Such approaches could increase housing supply while respecting the island's rural character and protecting ecosystems.

---

## **7. Key Amenities Are Missing**

Survey data demonstrates that many residents on Cortes, both renters and owners are missing basic amenities in their living situations.

- 23% of respondents do not have an indoor toilet
- 19% don't have access to laundry in their homes
- 9% don't have bathing facilities in their homes.

## **8. Respondents Represent Long-Term Community Members**

The survey reflects the perspectives of many long-time residents.

- The largest group of respondents have lived on Cortes **for more than 21 years.**
- Many others have lived on the island **10–20 years.**

This indicates that housing concerns are being voiced not only by newcomers but by **long-standing members of the community** who have witnessed significant changes in the housing market.

---

## **Housing Context on Cortes Island**

The findings of this survey align closely with earlier research and community discussions. Previous housing surveys and forums have highlighted rising property values, limited rental opportunities, and a growing number of homes used seasonally rather than year-round.

Together, these trends have made it increasingly difficult for workers, families, and young people to secure stable housing on the island.

**Comparison with the 2023 Cortes Housing Survey** The 2026 Cortes Housing Survey builds on a similar survey conducted in 2023.

Overall, the 2026 survey results are highly consistent with the findings from 2023, confirming that housing affordability and availability remain major concerns for the community.

Both surveys show strong demand for affordable housing and ownership opportunities. In 2023, more than 80% of respondents expressed interest in purchasing land if it were affordable. Similarly, the 2026 survey found that over 80% of respondents are interested in affordable home ownership options.

Support for policy tools that increase housing availability also remains strong. Both surveys indicate significant community support for measures such as limiting short-term rentals to primary residences and implementing an empty homes tax if revenues are used to support non-profit housing initiatives.

The surveys also highlight continued interest in expanding housing supply through existing properties, with many property owners indicating they may be willing to rent space or accommodate additional housing if appropriate conditions or support programs are in place.

## 8 KEY TAKE AWAYS

- 1. 81% of respondents expressed interest in affordable home ownership.**
- 2. 53% of renters spend more than one-third of their income on housing.**
- 3. 80.9% of renters would purchase land on Cortes if it were affordable.**
- 4. Nearly 70% of survey respondents are homeowners-demonstrating broad community support for housing solutions.**
- 5. More than two-thirds of respondents have lived on Cortes for over 10 years.**
- 6. 42.7% of property owners say they might be willing to rent space if the conditions were right.**
- 7. About 60% support an empty homes tax to fund nonprofit housing.**
- 8. 19% of people don't have laundry in their homes and 23% of people don't have toilets in their homes.**

Finally, both surveys reflect the perspectives of long-term residents, many of whom have lived on Cortes Island for more than a decade. This suggests that housing concerns are being voiced not only by newcomers but by deeply rooted members of the community.

Taken together, the results of the 2023 and 2026 surveys show that the housing challenges identified in earlier research remain unresolved and continue to affect the stability and sustainability of the Cortes Island community.

## Conclusion

The survey results reinforce the conclusion that Cortes Island faces a significant housing challenge affecting renters, prospective homeowners, and the long-term sustainability of the community.

Key themes emerging from the data include:

- Strong demand for affordable housing and ownership opportunities
- Financial strain for many renters and some property owners due to high rent or mortgage payments
- A strong desire among residents to remain on the island
- Community openness to policy tools and housing solutions
- Opportunities to increase housing supply through both new development and better use of existing properties

Addressing these challenges will require a combination of **community-led housing development, supportive policy measures, and innovative approaches to expanding housing supply.**

Projects such as the **Rainbow Ridge affordable housing initiative** represent important steps toward ensuring that Cortes Island remains a vibrant and inclusive community where residents of all ages and incomes can live and thrive.

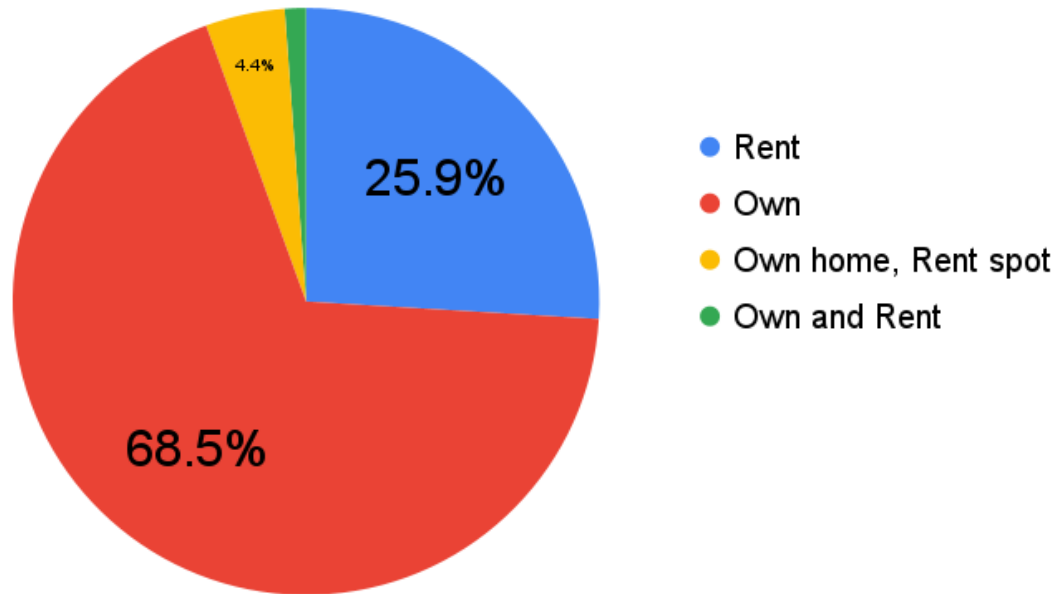
---

## Survey Responses:

### Demographic Questions

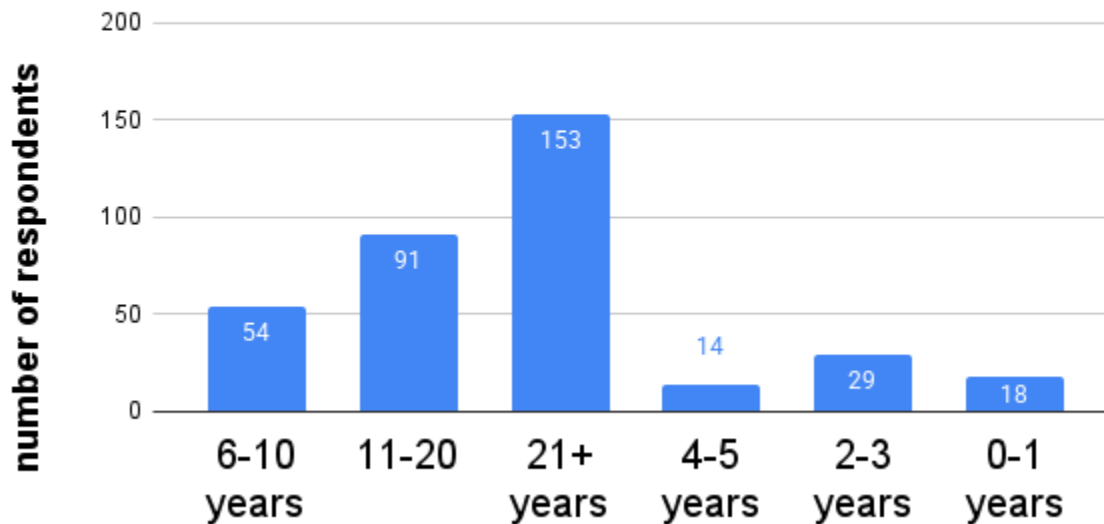
#### If you are housed, do you rent or own?

Total Answers = 343



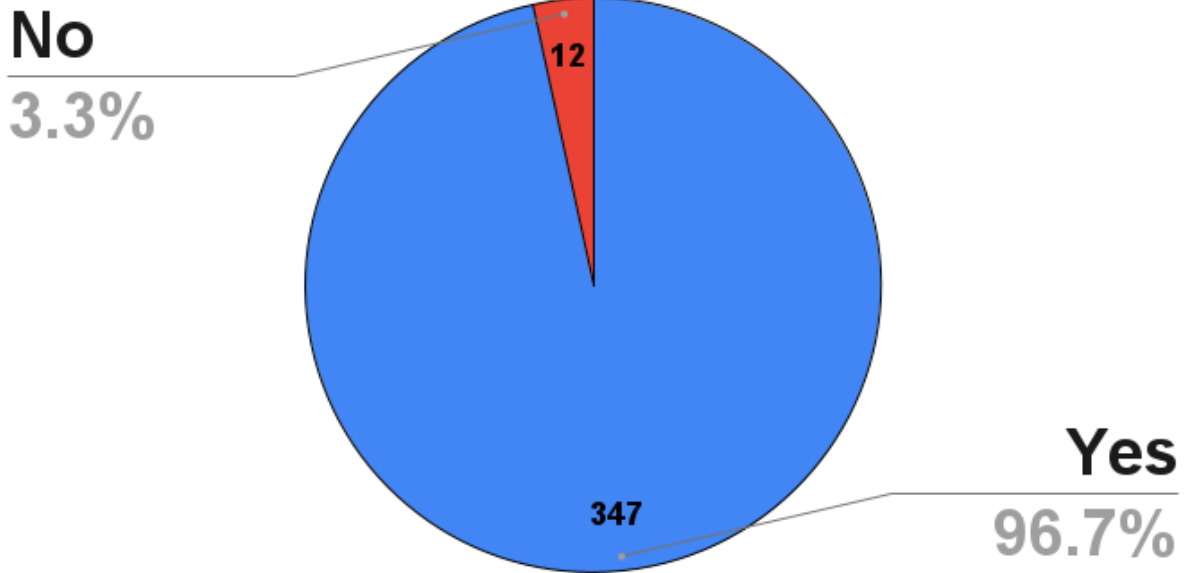
#### How long have you lived on Cortes?

Total Answers = 359



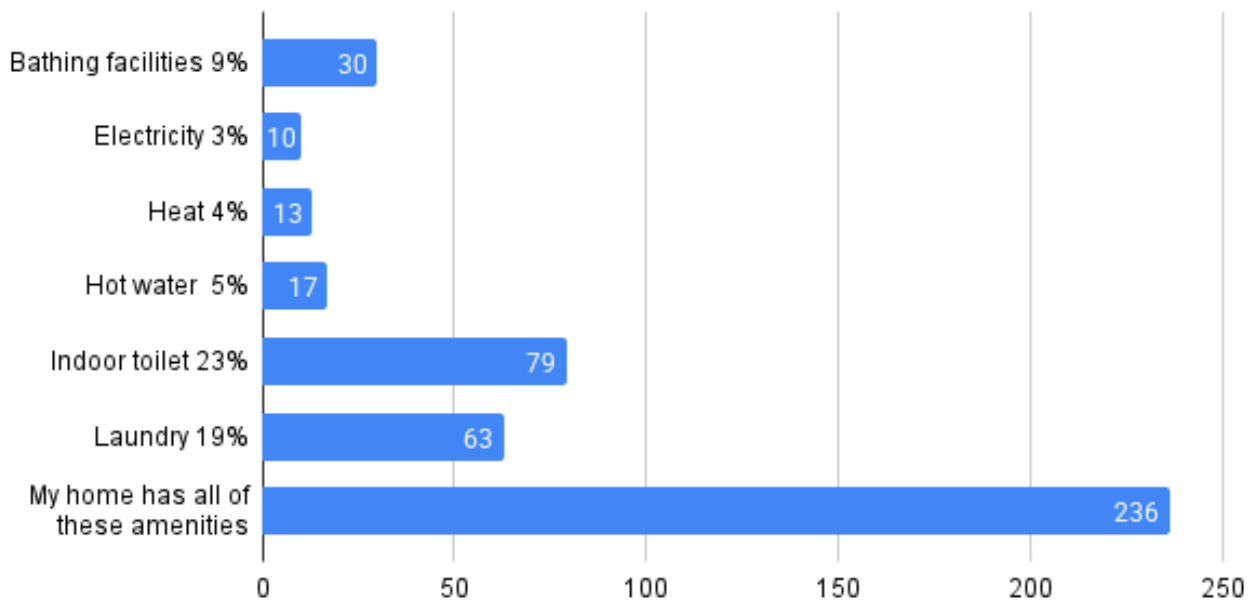
## Are you currently housed?

Total Answers = 359



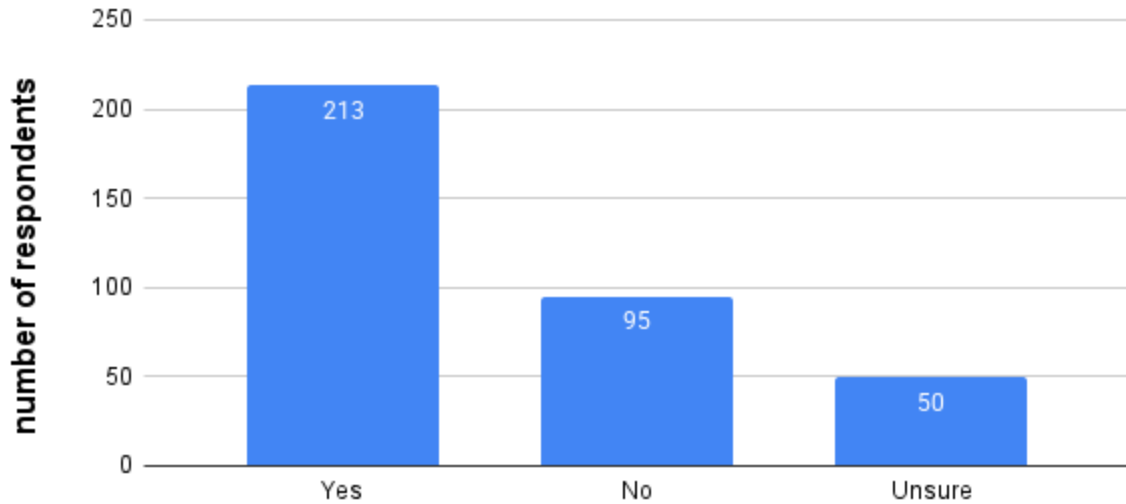
## What amenities is your home missing?

Number of Answers=344



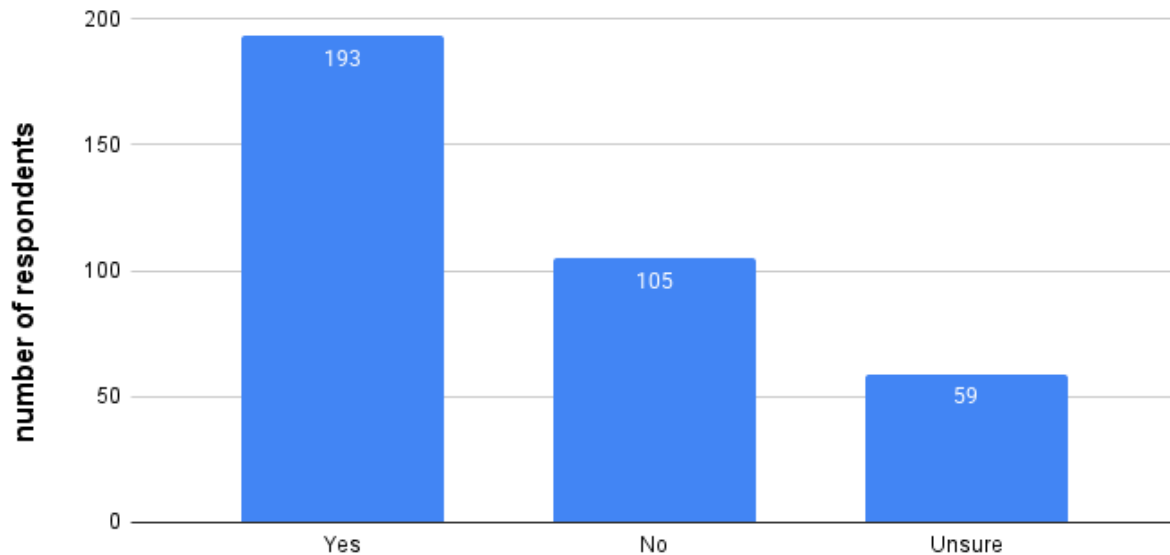
## Would you support an empty homes tax if the funds were used for non profit housing projects on Cortes?

Total Answers = 358



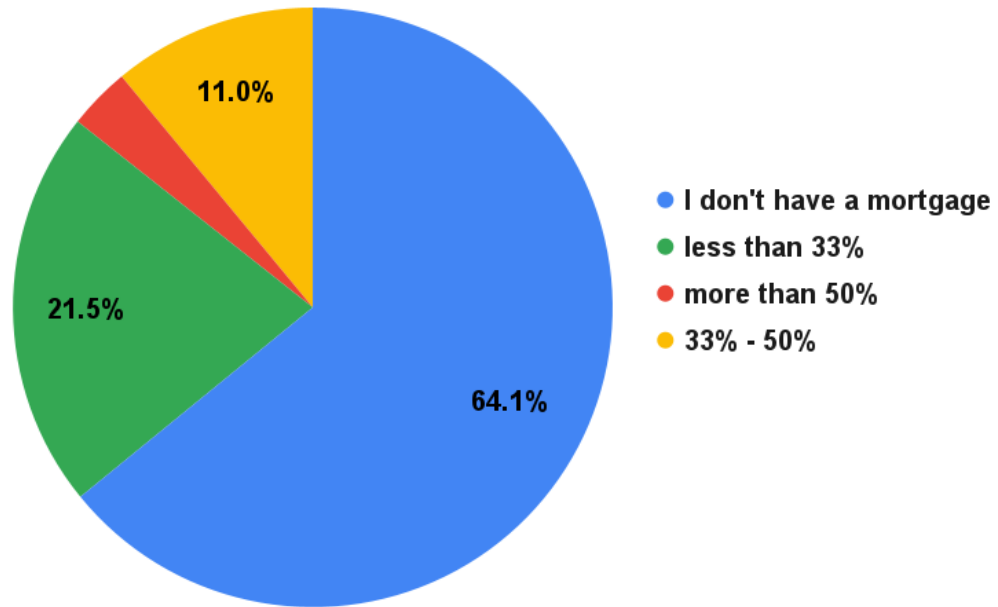
## Do you support Cortes Island opting into the BC government legislation so people can only operate short term rentals on land that includes their primary residence?

Total Answers = 357



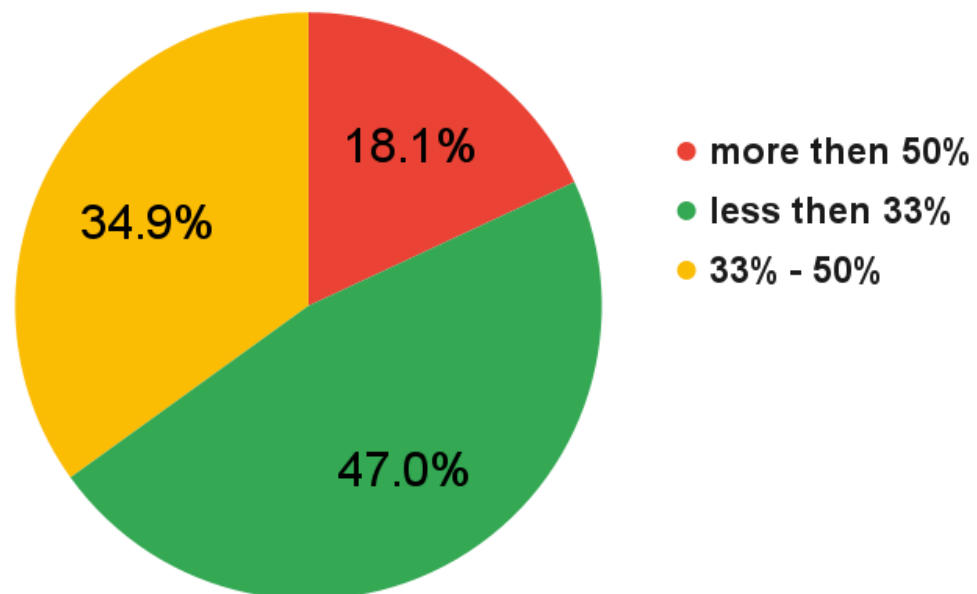
## Owners: What percentage of your income goes to paying your mortgage?

Total Answers = 209



## Renters: What percentage of your income goes to rent?

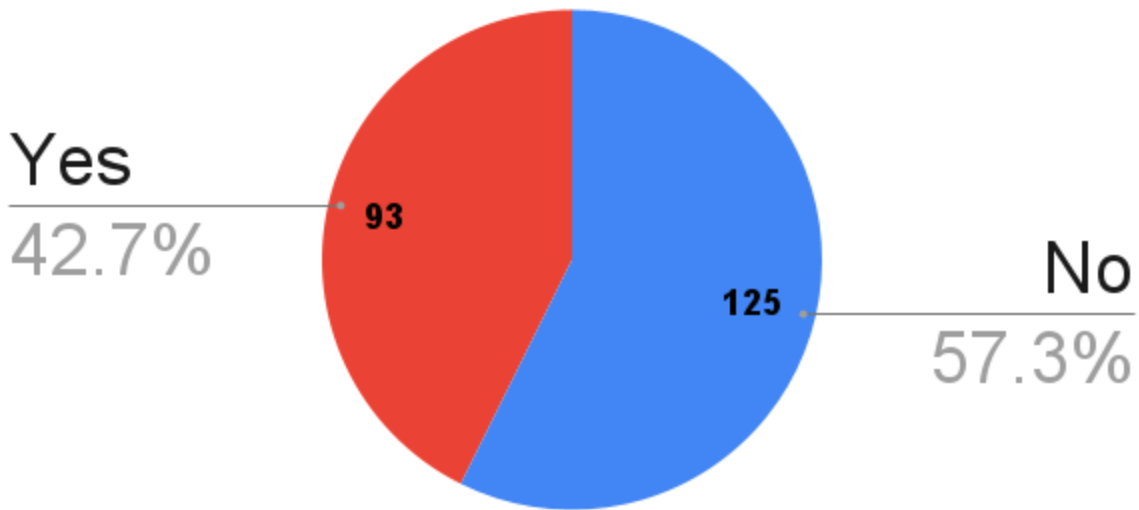
Total Answers = 83



Questions for People who Own Property:

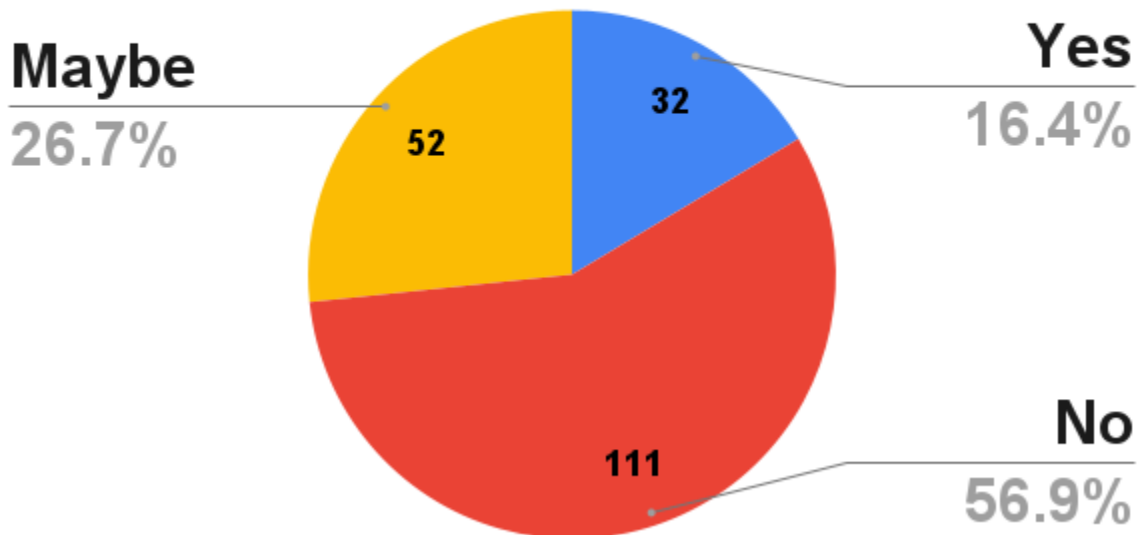
**Do you have space that you would be open to renting if the conditions were right?**

Total Answers = 218



**If you have space available but are worried about renting, would you be more willing to if an intermediary agency handled the risk of renting it out?**

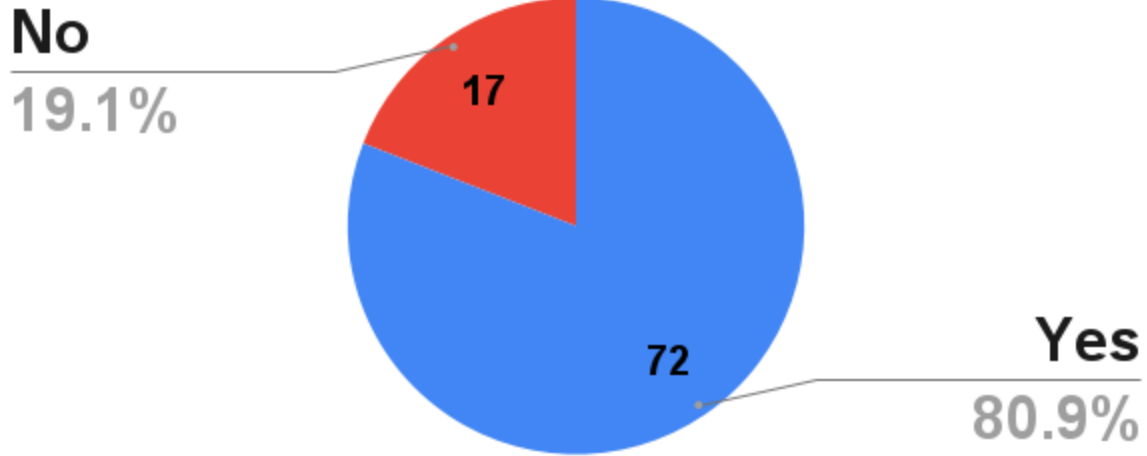
Total Answers = 195



Questions to People who Rent on Cortes:

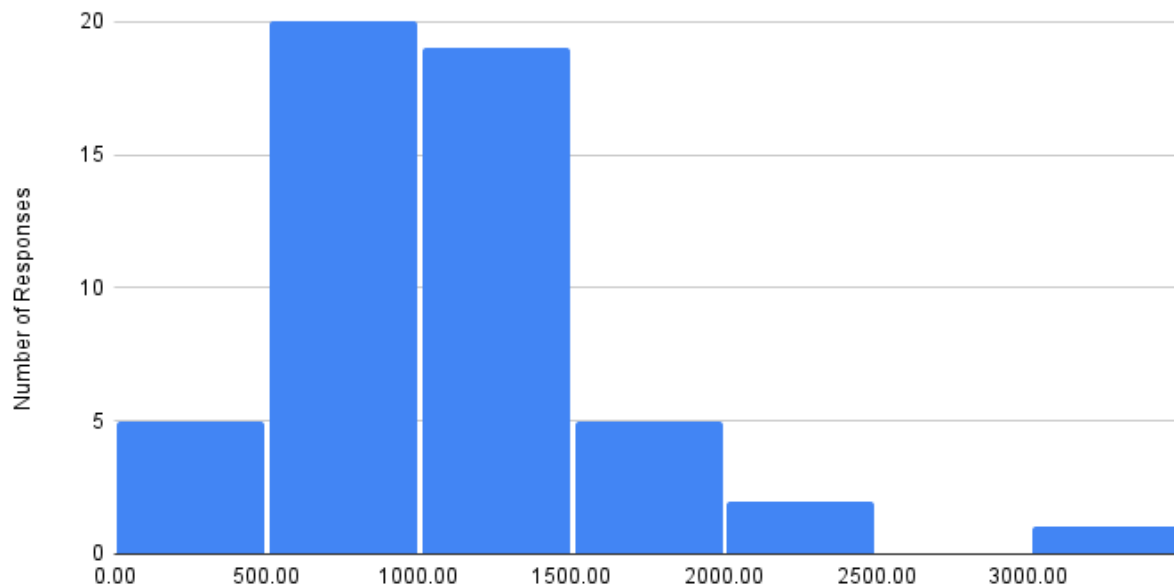
## Renters: If you could afford it, would you want to purchase land on Cortes?

Total Answers = 89



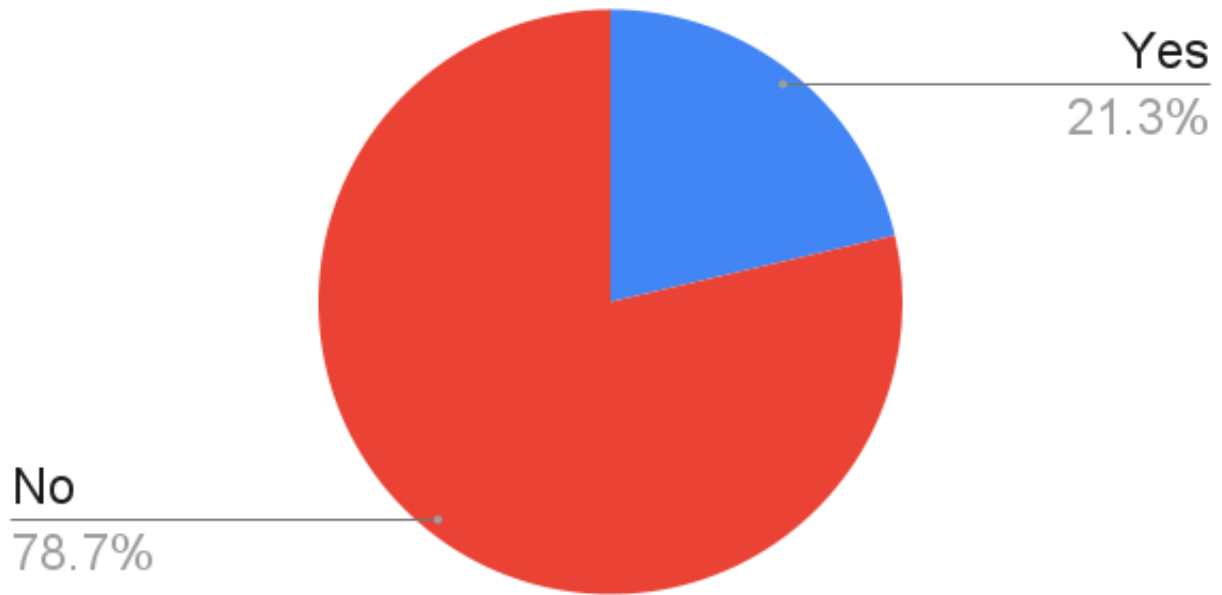
## Renters: How much rent can you afford to pay?

Number of Answers=53



## Are you on the waiting list for Rainbow Ridge?

Number of Answers=91



## Interested in Affordable Home Ownership?

Number of Answers = 91

