



COVID-19

Bike Shop Survey

June/July 2020

In June/July Velo Canada Bikes sent out a survey to bike shops across Canada. The intent of the survey was to get a snapshot of what business was like in the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and business shutdowns in Canada. Following VCB' work to ensure that provinces designated bike shops as "essential services" during the lockdown, it was important to understand what the impacts were.

Some cities during the pandemic have responded by opening up streets to cyclists and pedestrians and limiting car travel. Others have extended existing cycling infrastructure and bike lanes. Cities have also created many temporary bike lanes and cycle tracks. The impetus behind the city response was to allow more room for cyclists and pedestrians to get out and maintain social distancing.

The result is an increase in cycling in cities from coast to coast to coast. There were many media reports over the months of lockdown about the increase in cycling and the desire of city residents to have safe space to use in their respective cities.

What was the experience of the bike shops? If their city opened streets and expanded safe cycling infrastructure, did that impact sales? As small businesses have been struggling during the economic lockdown, what has it been like for bike shops, which are small businesses themselves.

In a very non-scientific way, Vélo Canada Bikes set out to get a snapshot to answer some of these questions.

A survey was sent to a total of 560 bike shops in Canada, from coast to coast. The survey consisted of only 7 questions and should have taken no more than 5 minutes to complete. **We heard back from 64 bike shops from Victoria to Halifax.**

Of note, and an important indicator, of the 12 bike shops that reported a decrease in revenue year over year, 4 were either closed during the pandemic or had changed their business model from the previous year. That left 8 shops with decreased sales. Of those, 6 shops are located in cities that have taken no action to improve cycling infrastructure, while only 2 are in cities that have responded with expanded cycling facilities.

Of further note, bike shops indicated they are selling out of bicycles. As the pandemic continues, it would be expected that this would impact their sales and revenue. Indeed, many shops indicated that they have run out of inventory. In conversations with manufacturers and distributors in the cycling industry, there is a significant backlog in supply throughout the supply chain. In other words, they could sell way more bikes, if they had them!

While the survey was completely unscientific, there was one interesting correlation that showed up.

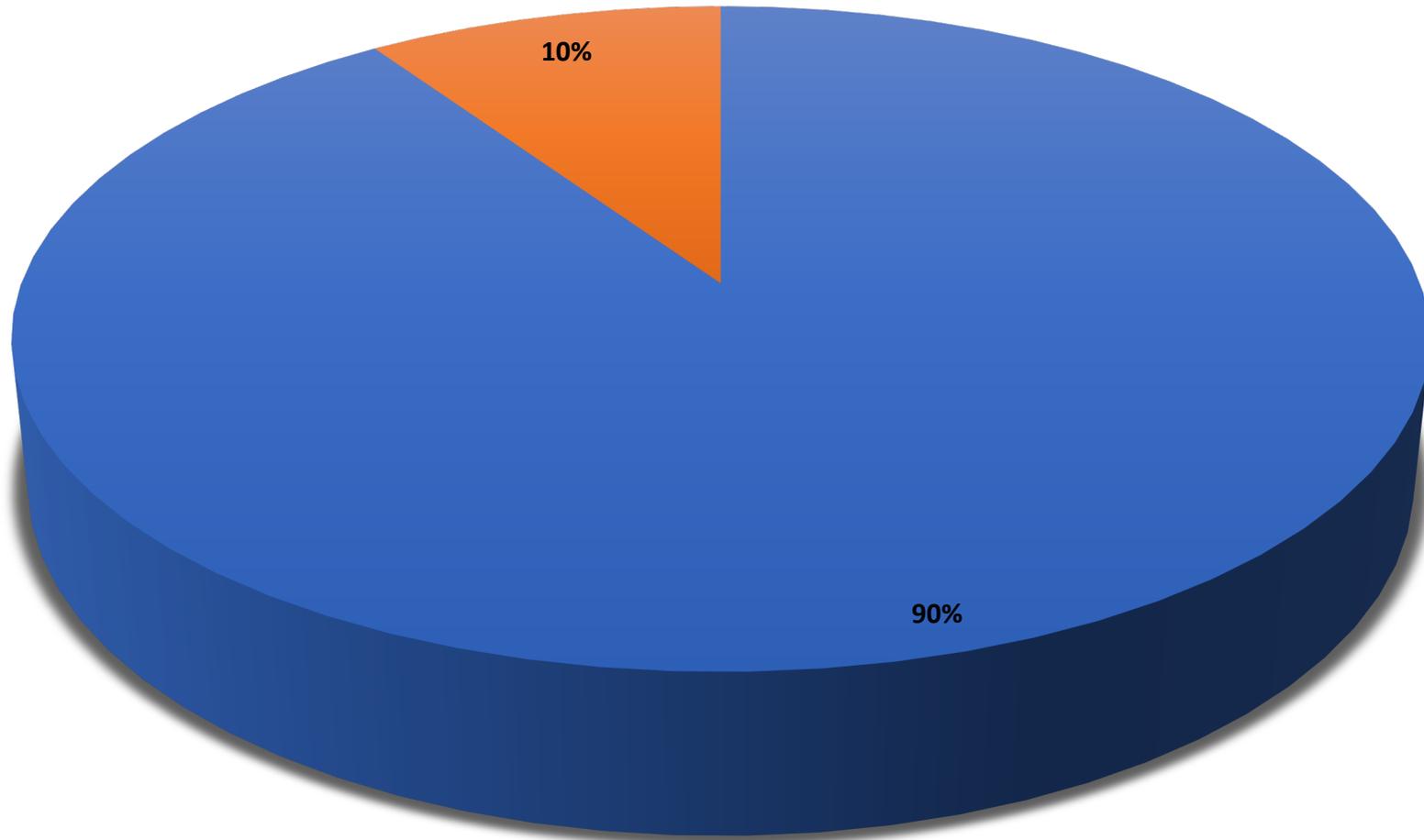
Of the bike shops that saw a decrease in sales activity, 75% of them are located in areas that have not responded to COVID with opening streets to more cyclists.

Vélo Canada Bikes has a crowd-sourced COVID response tracking [spreadsheet](#).



Did you stay open?

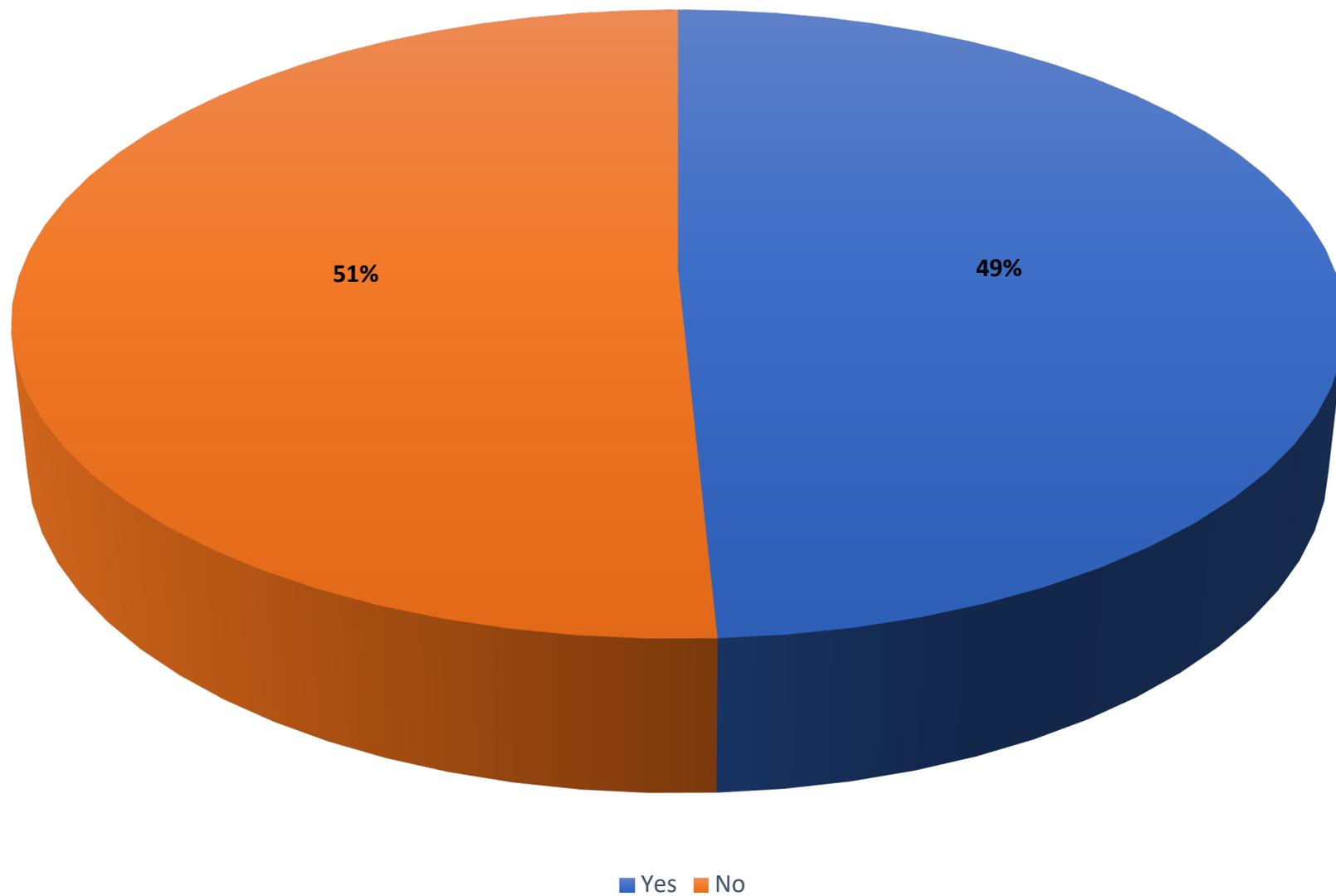
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■ Yes ■ No

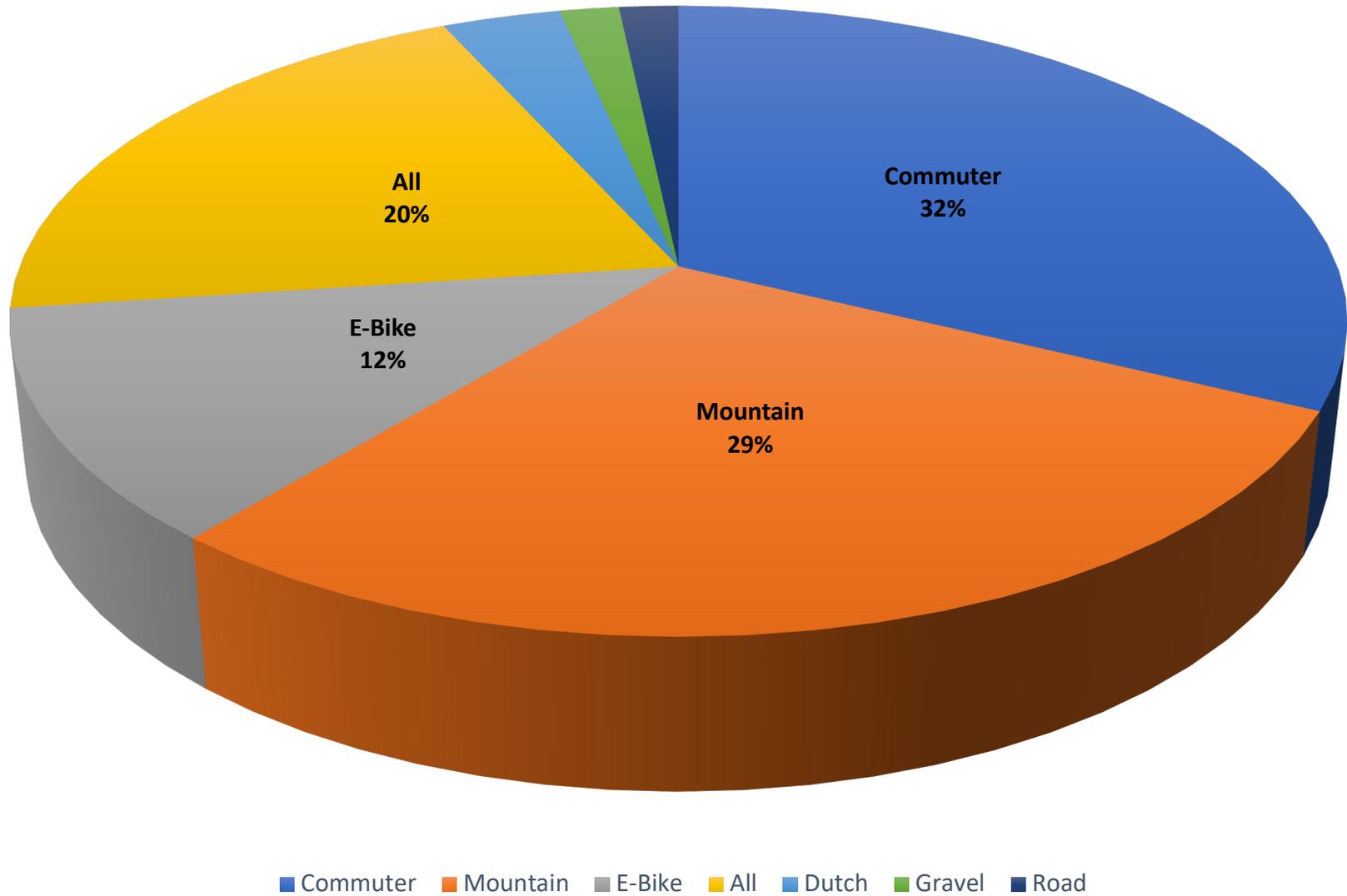
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Has your municipality added open streets?



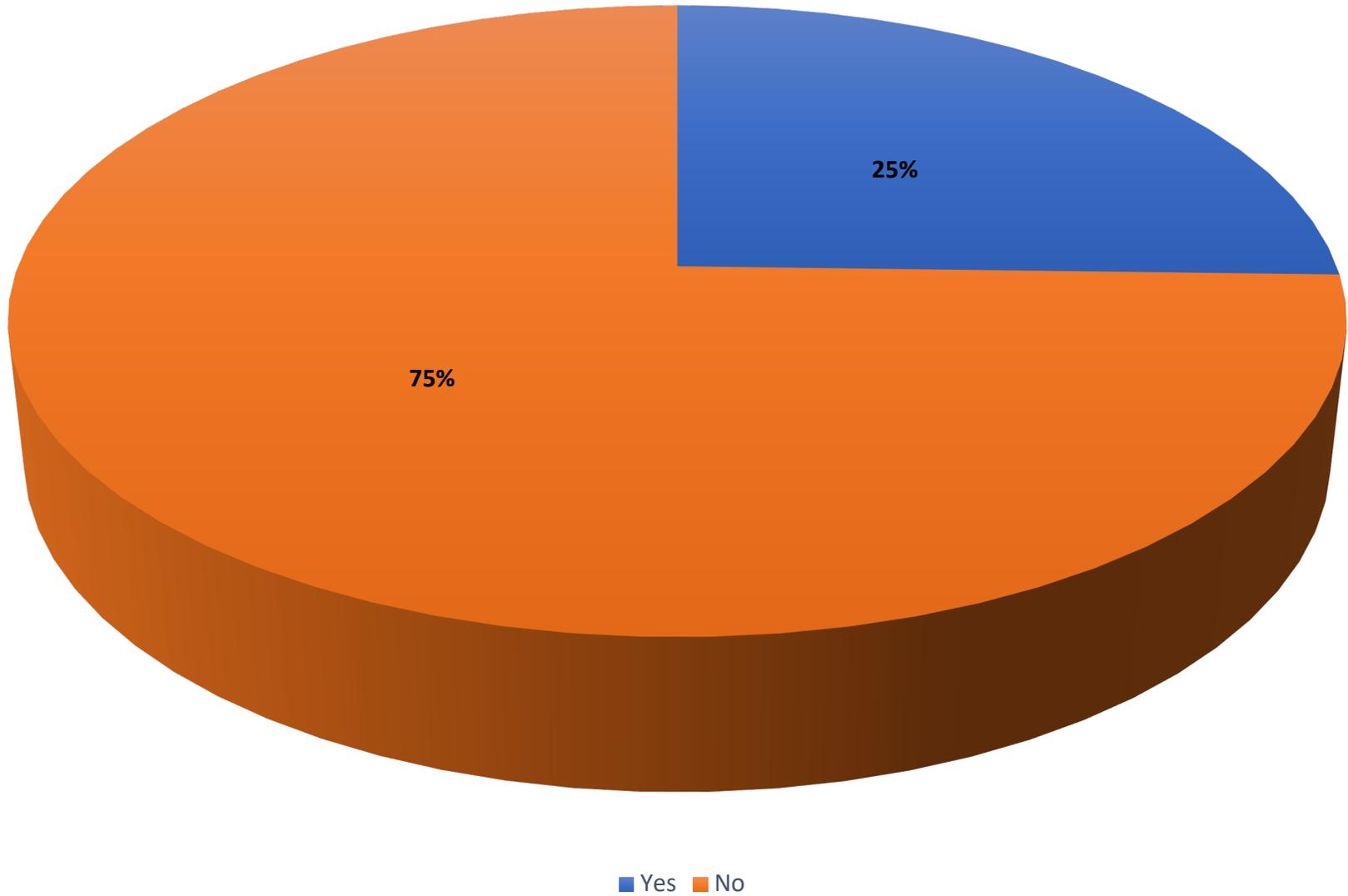
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What type are you selling most?



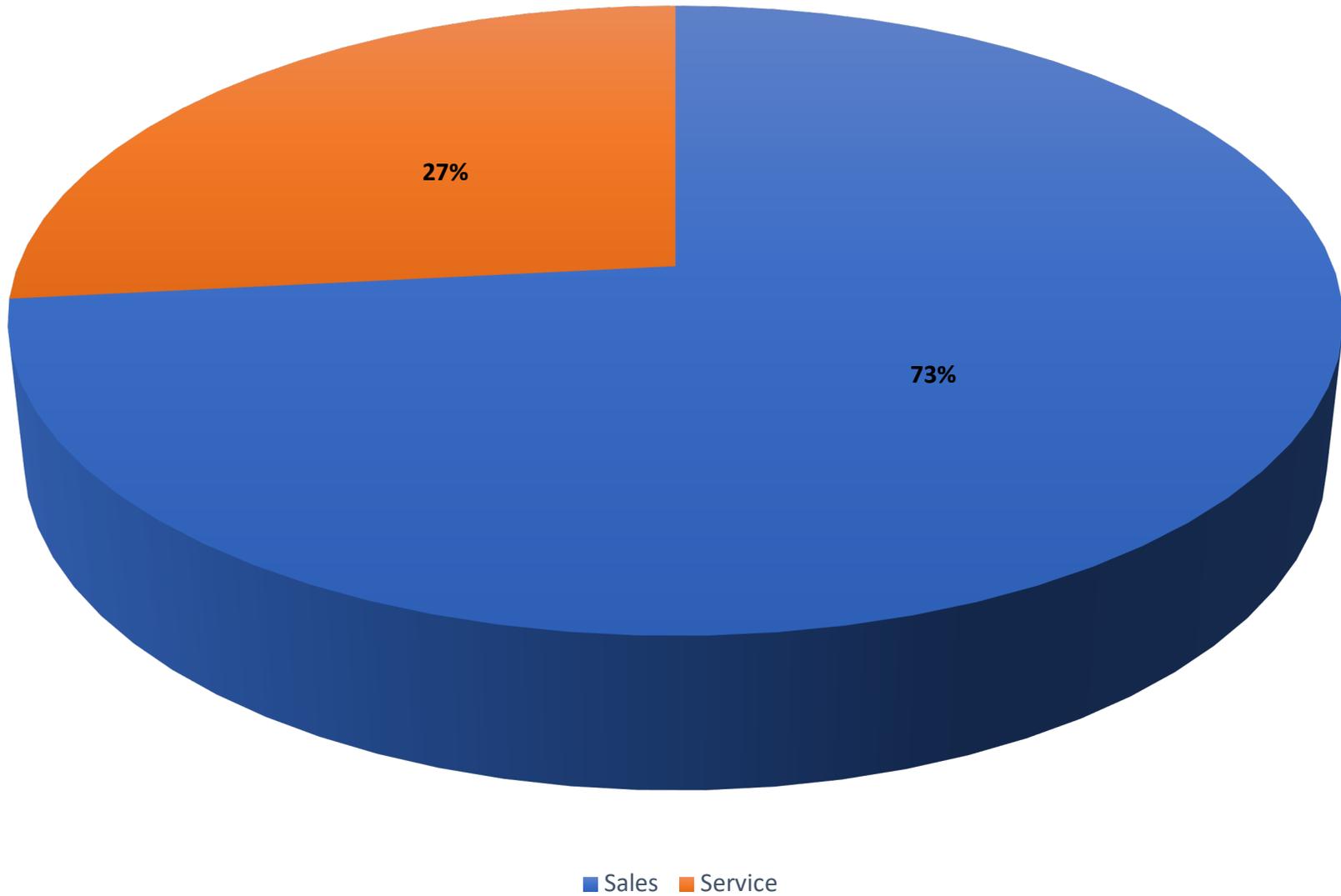
Increase in "gendered" bike sales?

n:60



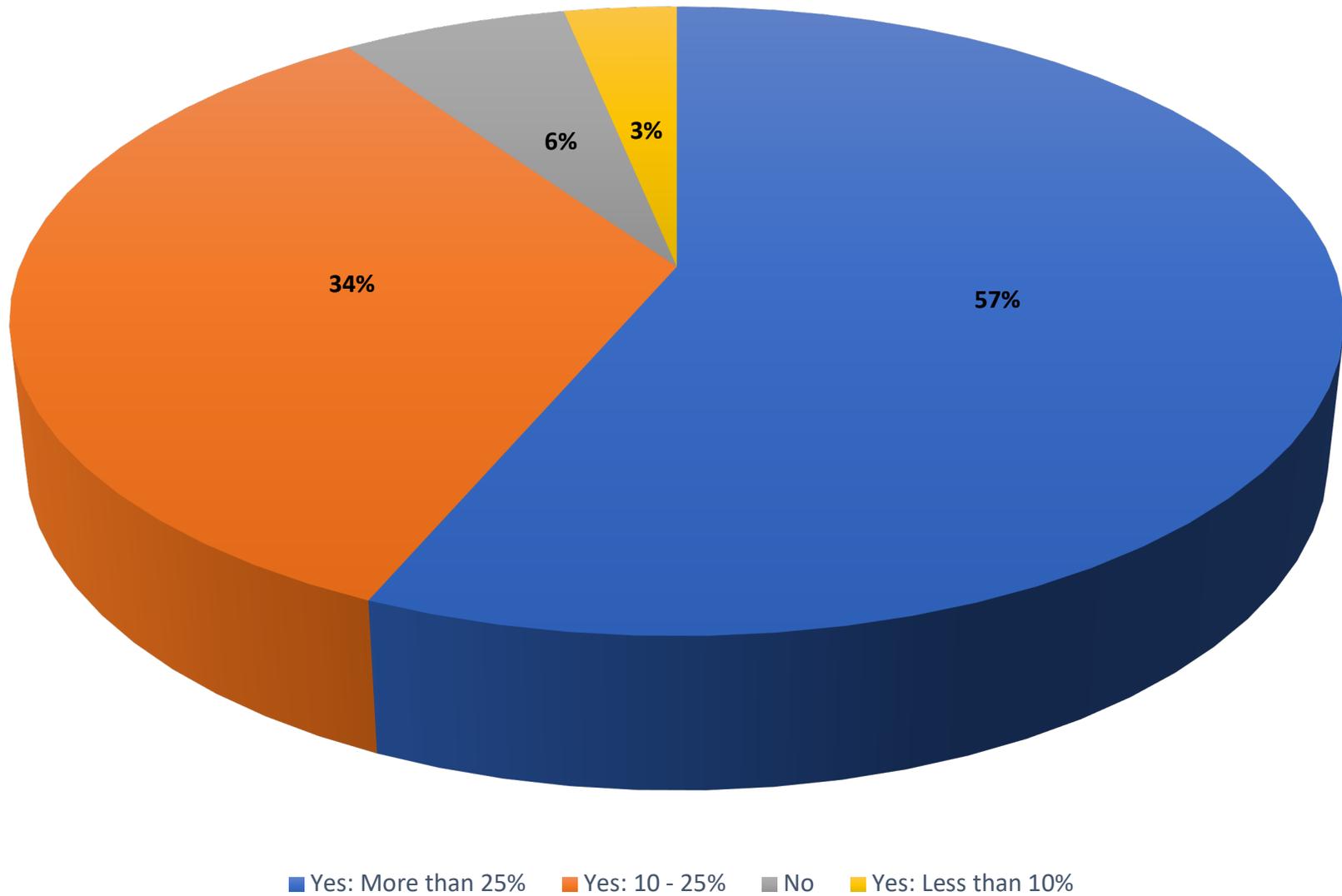
Where has been the greatest activity?

n: 59



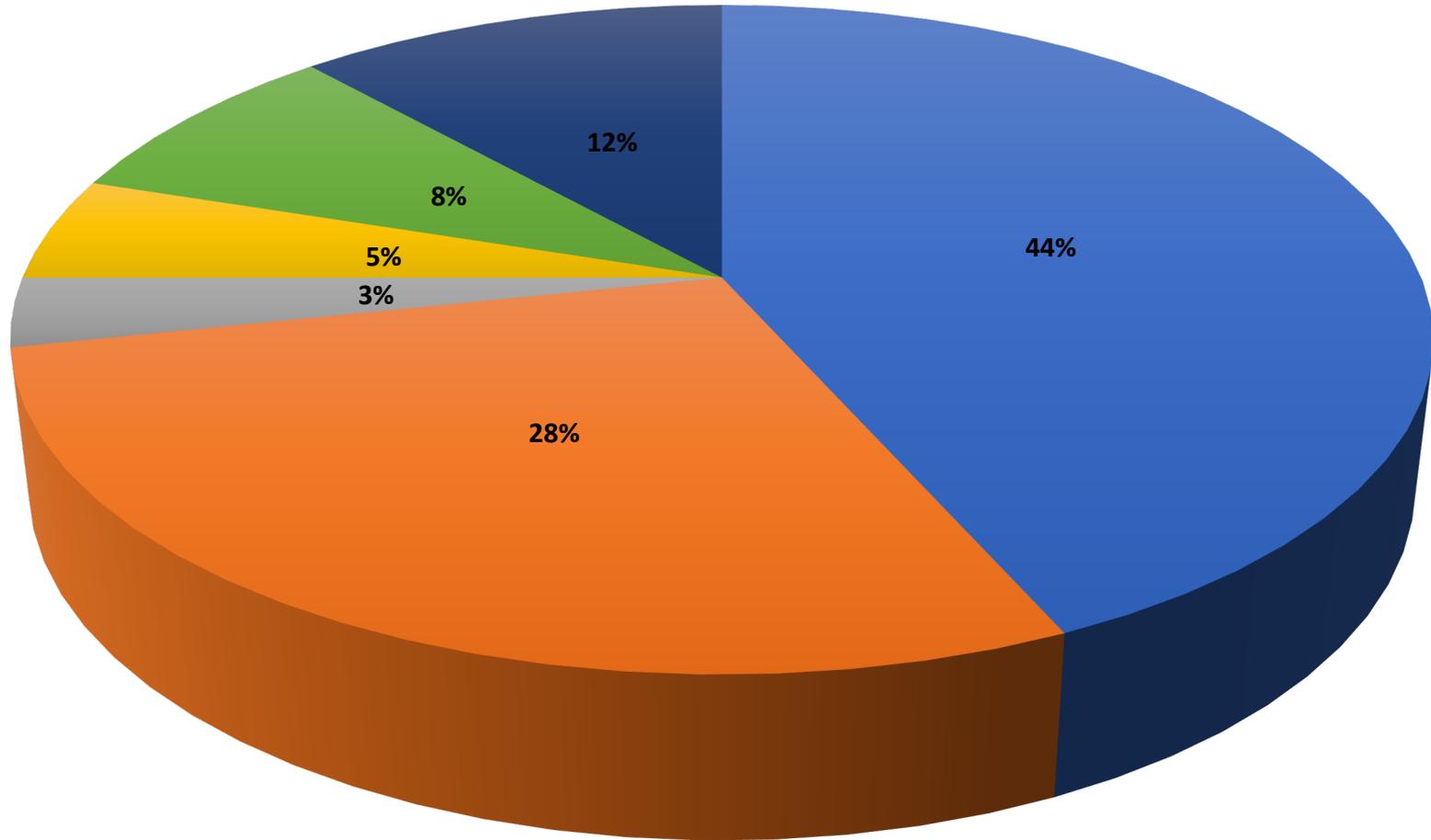
n: 62

Increase in new customers?



n: 61

Sales compared to last year?



- Increased: More than 25%
- Increased: 10 - 25%
- Increased: less than 10%
- About the Same
- Decreased: less than 10%
- Decreased: 10 - 25%
- Decreased: More than 25%

In conclusion, designating bike shops as an essential service has been key to both allow for the survival of most shops, but also to meet the new demand that residents are putting on municipalities to create safe cycling infrastructure. The Covid-19 pandemic is leading to both residents and cities to re-examine transportation and transportation options. There appears to be a significant growing interest in active transportation, and in cycling in particular.

This has been good for the economy as well as good for residents and neighbourhoods. The saw of induced demand when it comes to car traffic applies to cycling as well. If you build the capacity, it will be filled. The very same rules apply to cycling infrastructure.

Separated bike lanes, bike parking, shopping districts that are bike friendly, safe routes for people to use in their everyday pursuits are being expected and demanded by city residents. Those cities that are listening and responding are seeing the success immediately.