



# Operation DBAD

**DON'T BE A DUMPER**

As a part of Output 3 of Operation: Don't Be A Dumper (DBAD), the DBAD team ran a public survey (14 January to 24 March 2025) to collect local knowledge and gauge community concerns about illegal dumping from the Alice Springs population.

The survey saw participation from over 200 respondents, providing a diverse cross-section of the Alice Springs community.

## Synopsis

The survey conducted as part of Operation: Don't Be A Dumper (DBAD) provides valuable insights into illegal dumping in Alice Springs, helping to identify community concerns, behaviours, and perceptions. Key takeaways include:

- **Community engagement:** Over 200 respondents participated, representing a diverse cross-section of the Alice Springs population, with 75% being long-term residents. This indicates strong community interest and a wealth of local knowledge.
- **Public concern:** An overwhelming 95% of respondents view illegal dumping as a major issue, highlighting its significance as an environmental and social problem.
- **Perceived enforcement gap:** Only 12% believe there are significant legal consequences for illegal dumping, and nearly half (48%) think there are no consequences at all. This suggests a need for better communication about existing laws and penalties to enhance deterrence.
- **Reporting behaviour:** While 31% of respondents have reported illegal dumping, 69% have not, potentially due to lack of awareness or scepticism about enforcement outcomes. The Alice Springs Town Council is the primary reporting channel, emphasising its role in addressing the issue.
- **Types of waste dumped:** Household waste, white goods, and furniture account for 67% of reported illegal dumping, aligning with aerial imagery data. However, residents are more concerned about visible items like furniture and white goods than construction debris.
- **Causes of illegal dumping:** Key factors include the cost of disposal (27%), perceived lack of enforcement (25%), and absence of a hard rubbish collection service (20%). Broader logistical and financial barriers, such as limited access to bins may contribute to the problem.
- **Admissions of illegal dumping:** Only 3% admitted to illegal dumping, with reasons mirroring broader survey findings. Notably, uncertainty about legal disposal options was cited three times more often by this group, underscoring the need for clearer education on proper waste disposal practices.

# Survey participation and demographics

A significant majority of participants (75%) identified themselves as being long-term residents, having lived in the area for more than 10 years. Another 19% of respondents had been residents for a period ranging from two to ten years (Figure 1), suggesting that most participants had an established connection to the region. The length of residence is an important factor in understanding attitudes towards illegal dumping, as long-term residents may have observed changes in waste management and enforcement over time.

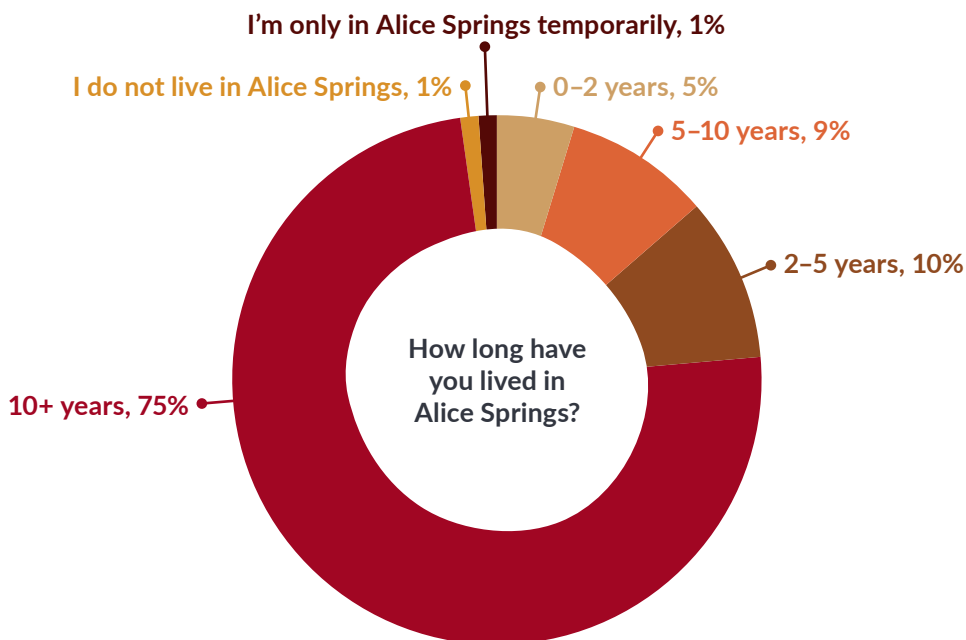


Figure 1 - Length of stay in Alice Springs

## Housing situation of respondents

A vast majority of respondents (86%) reported living in a house, while 12% resided in a multiple-unit dwelling (MUD), such as apartments or townhouses. A small proportion (2%) identified other living arrangements, which may include caravan parks or temporary housing (Figure 2). Housing type can influence waste disposal behaviours, with those in MUDs potentially facing greater challenges in waste disposal due to shared facilities, limited storage space, and varying access to collection services.

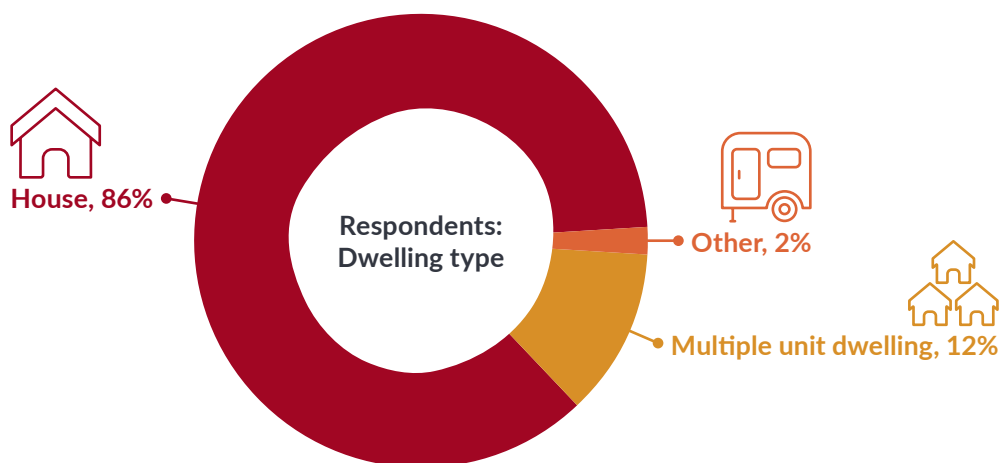


Figure 2 - Housing type

# Public perception of illegal dumping

An overwhelming 95% of respondents indicated that illegal dumping is a major issue in Alice Springs, signifying widespread concern about the environmental and social impacts of improper waste disposal (Figure 3). However, despite the high level of concern, only 12% believed there were significant legal consequences for illegal dumping (Figure 4). This stark contrast suggests a potential gap in enforcement visibility or a lack of awareness regarding penalties for offenders.

When asked about potential consequences for illegal dumping (Figure 5), nearly half (48%) of respondents believed there were no consequences at all, while 34% assumed that fines were imposed. The remaining respondents provided varied answers, with some referencing punitive measures such as jail time, community service or warning letters, while others admitted they were unsure of the legal repercussions. This highlights a need for clearer communication on existing laws, penalties, and enforcement actions to enhance deterrence.

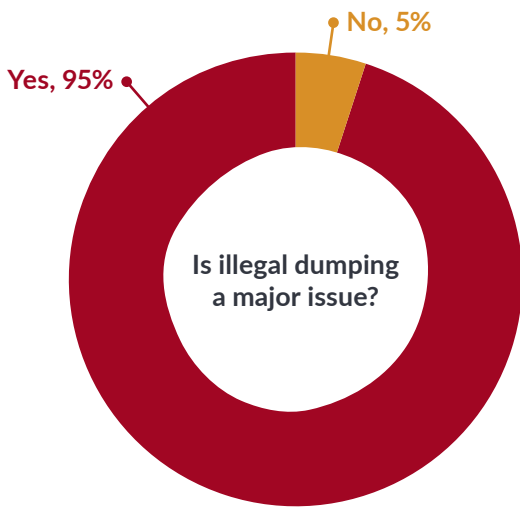


Figure 3

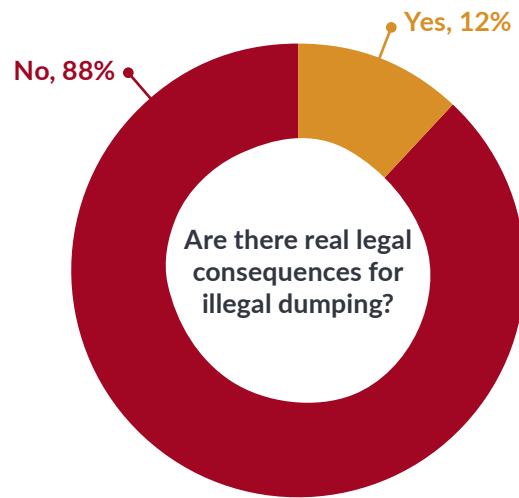


Figure 4

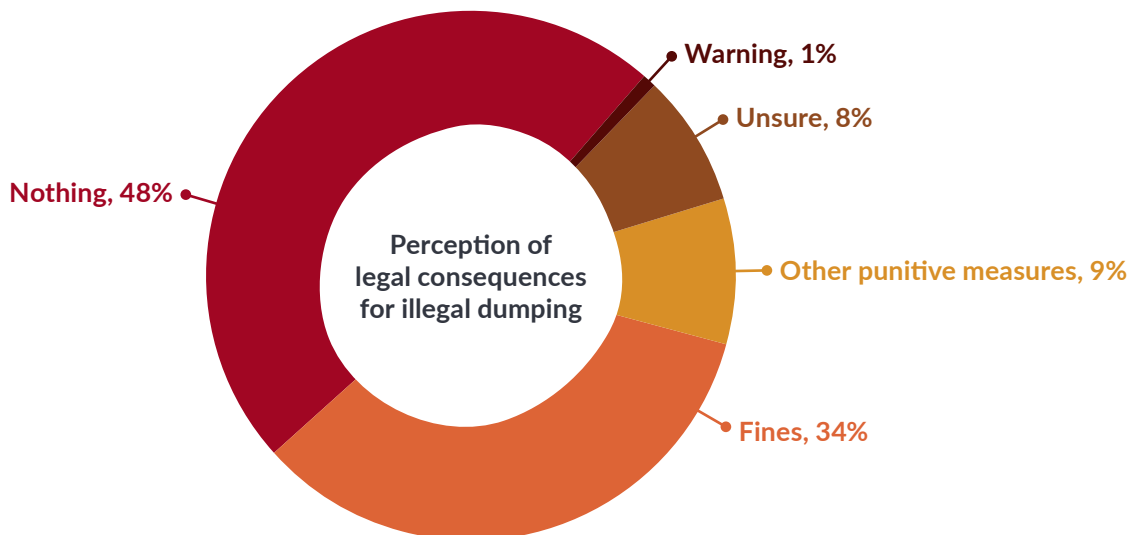


Figure 5 – Consequences (legal)

# Reporting behaviour and awareness

A notable 31% of respondents had previously reported illegal dumping, suggesting a willingness among a segment of the population to engage in civic action against waste issues (Figure 6).

Of those who had reported incidents, the majority (48%) used the Alice Springs Town Council as their primary reporting channel (Figure 7). This emphasises the council's key role in handling illegal dumping complaints and responding to community concerns. However, the data also suggests that nearly 70% of respondents had never reported illegal dumping, potentially due to a lack of awareness about reporting mechanisms, scepticism about enforcement outcomes, or a sense of futility in reporting.

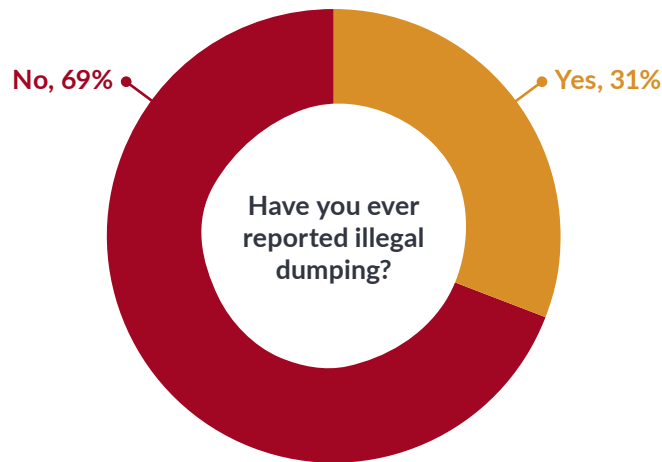


Figure 6 - Reporting

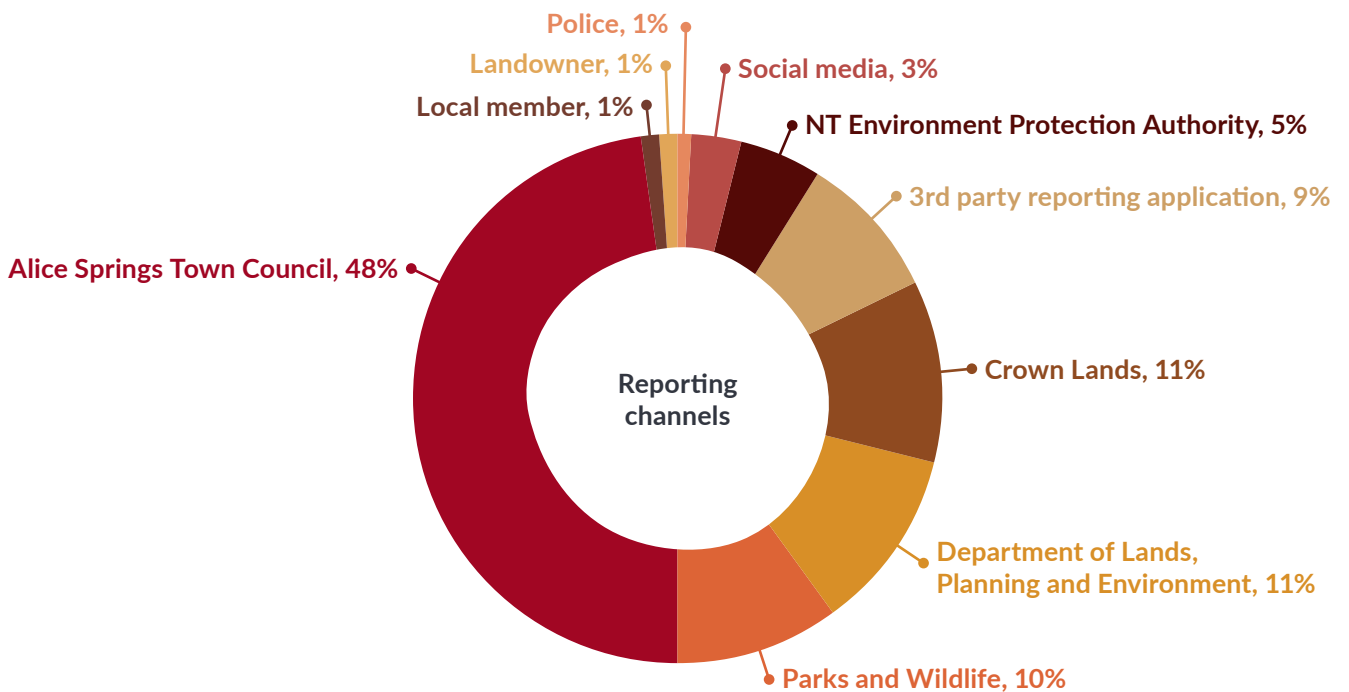


Figure 7

# Types of waste dumped

The survey identified general household waste (27%), white goods (24%), and furniture (16%) as the most frequently observed types of illegally dumped waste. When consolidated into a broader “domestic waste” category, these items accounted for 67% of total waste reported (Figure 8). There was very little difference between results from respondent who lived in houses versus those that lived in MUDs or other dwellings.

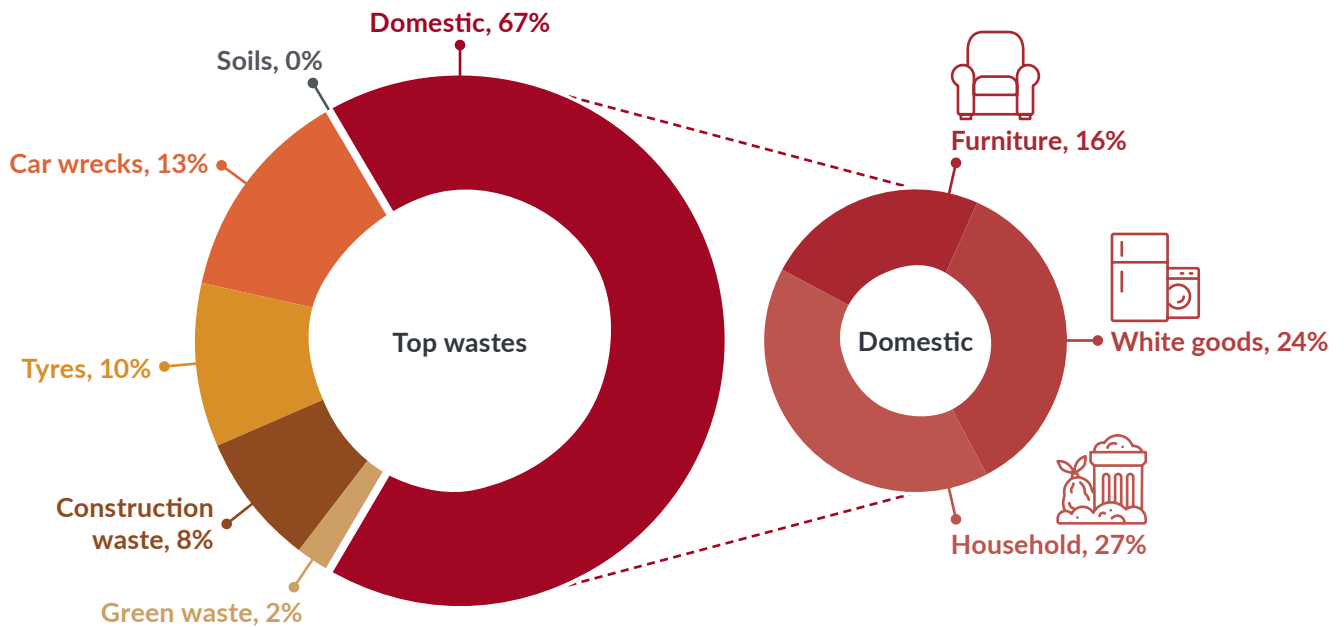


Figure 8

This finding aligns with aerial imagery analysis (Output 2 data, Figure 9), confirming that household waste is the predominant category of illegally dumped material. However, a key difference between public perception and aerial data is the heightened concern over discarded white goods and furniture in the survey responses, whereas construction waste – more prevalent in aerial imagery – was reported at lower levels in the survey.

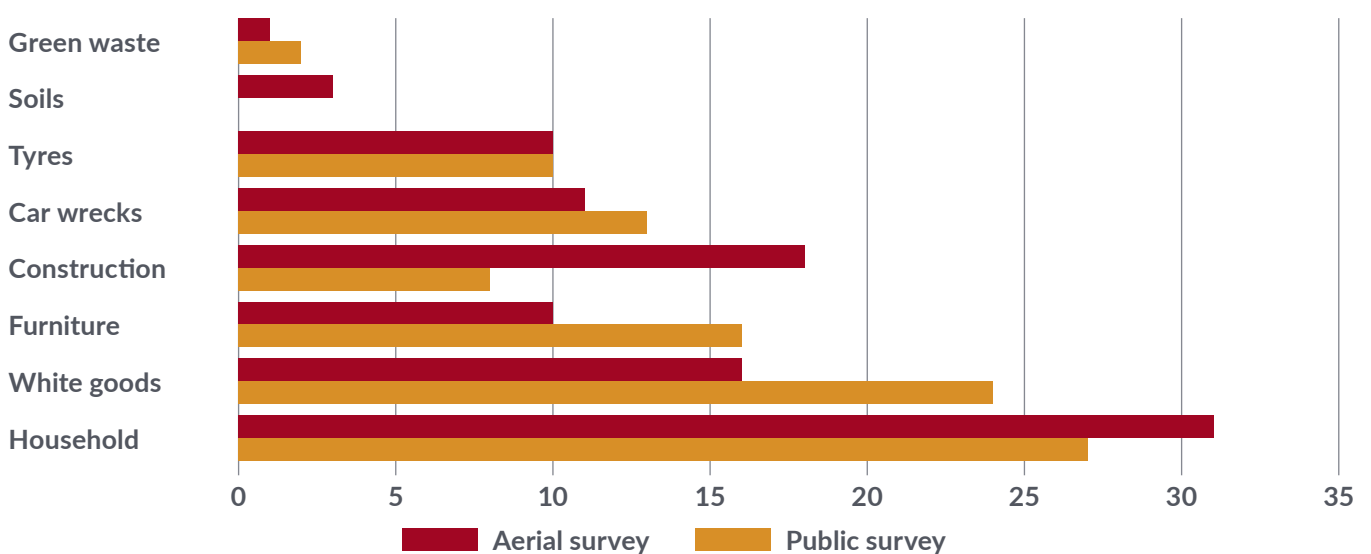
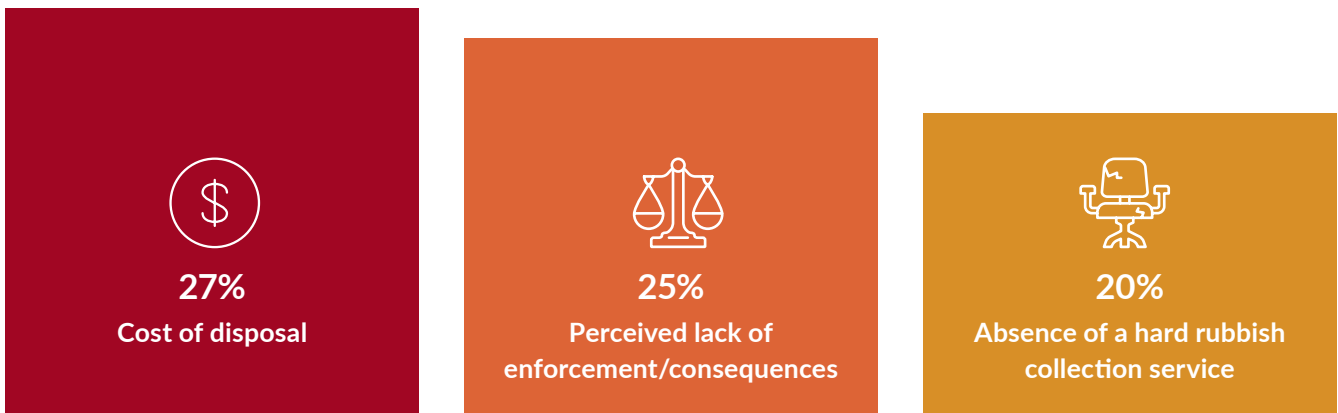


Figure 9 - Aerial survey vs public survey results

This may indicate that residents are more acutely aware of, or impacted by, abandoned household items rather than construction debris, which may be dumped in less visible locations.

# Perceived causes of illegal dumping

Respondents identified several key factors contributing to illegal dumping in Alice Springs (Figure 10), with the three largest factors being:



Upon analysis, a broader theme of “**difficulty of disposal**” can be inferred (Figure 11), encompassing issues such as limited access to bins (5%), distance to the landfill (4%), lack of knowledge on legal disposal methods (7%), and the absence of a “hard rubbish” pickup (20%). Combined, these factors accounted for 40% of total responses, reinforcing the notion that logistical and financial barriers play a significant role in illegal dumping behaviour.

The data suggests that many residents struggle with disposing of large or bulky waste items, which may not be accommodated by existing waste collection services.

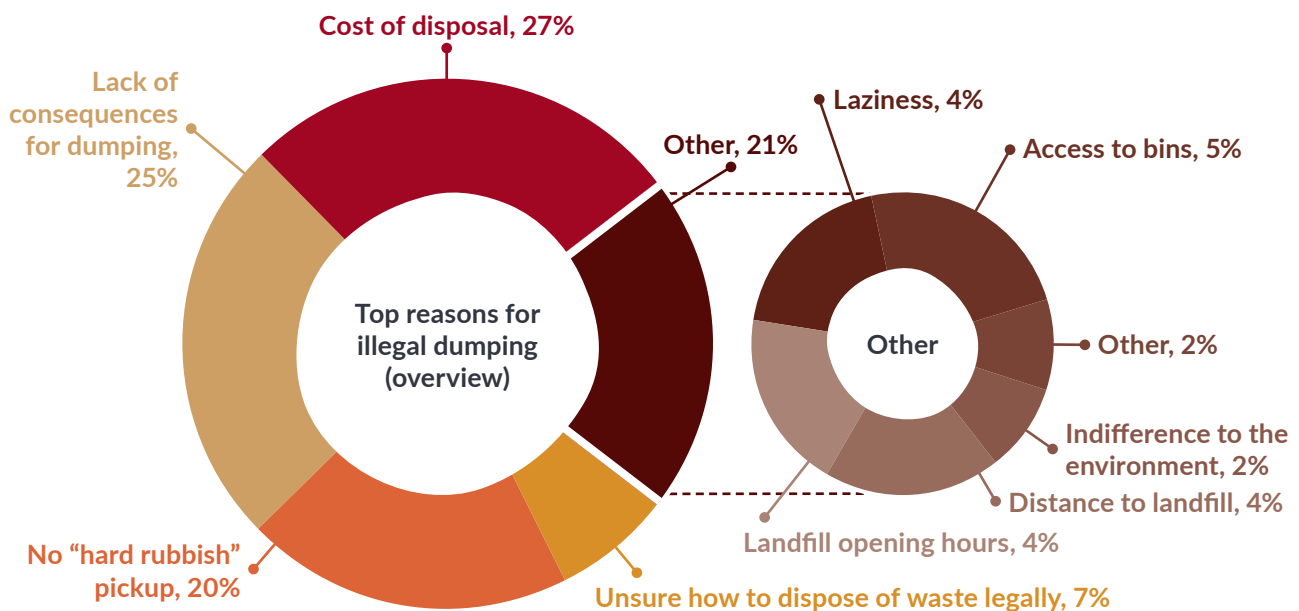


Figure 10

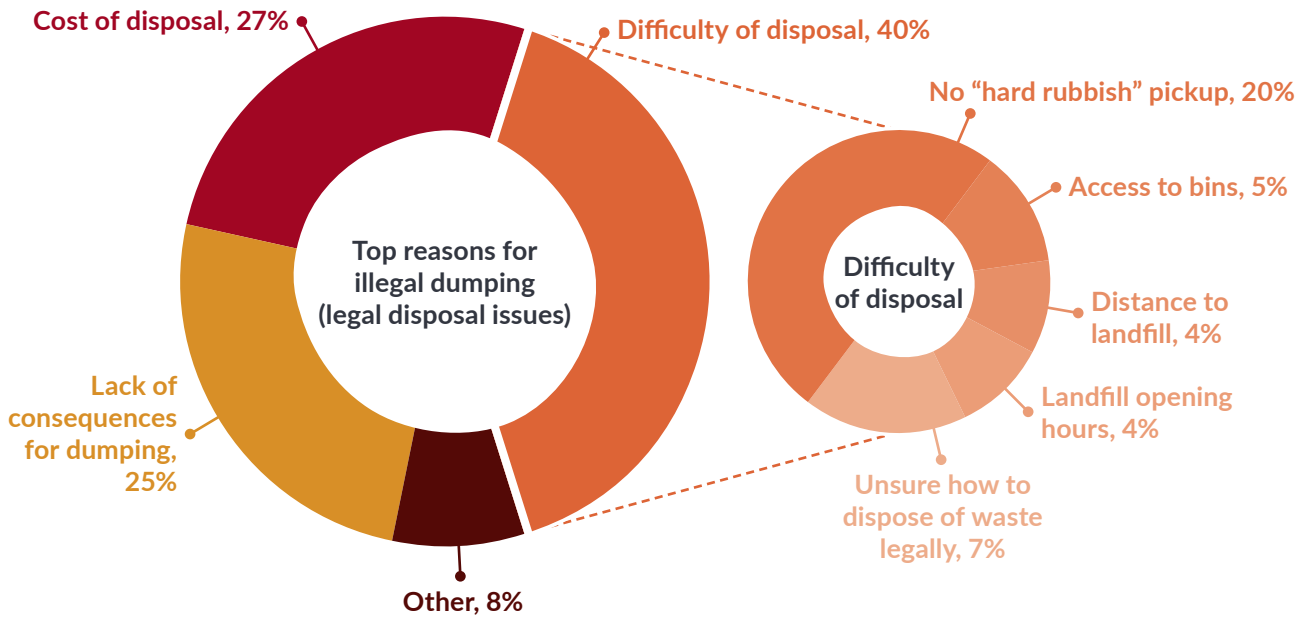


Figure 11



# Admissions of illegal dumping

A small proportion of respondents (3%) admitted to having engaged in illegal dumping in the past (Figure 12). While it is difficult to draw hard conclusions with such a small sample size, the reasons for dumping waste mirrored those of the broader survey population, with cost, lack of consequences, and disposal difficulty being primary factors (Figure 13).

However, one notable distinction was that nearly three times as many of these respondents' cited uncertainty about legal disposal options. This may suggest that confusing disposal procedures or a lack of education on proper waste disposal practices may directly contribute to illegal dumping behaviour.

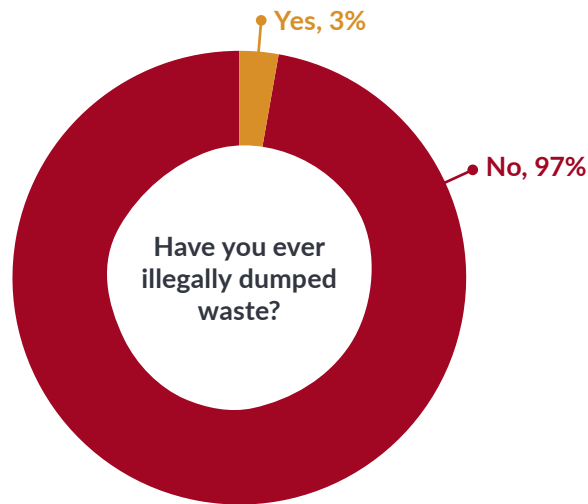


Figure 12

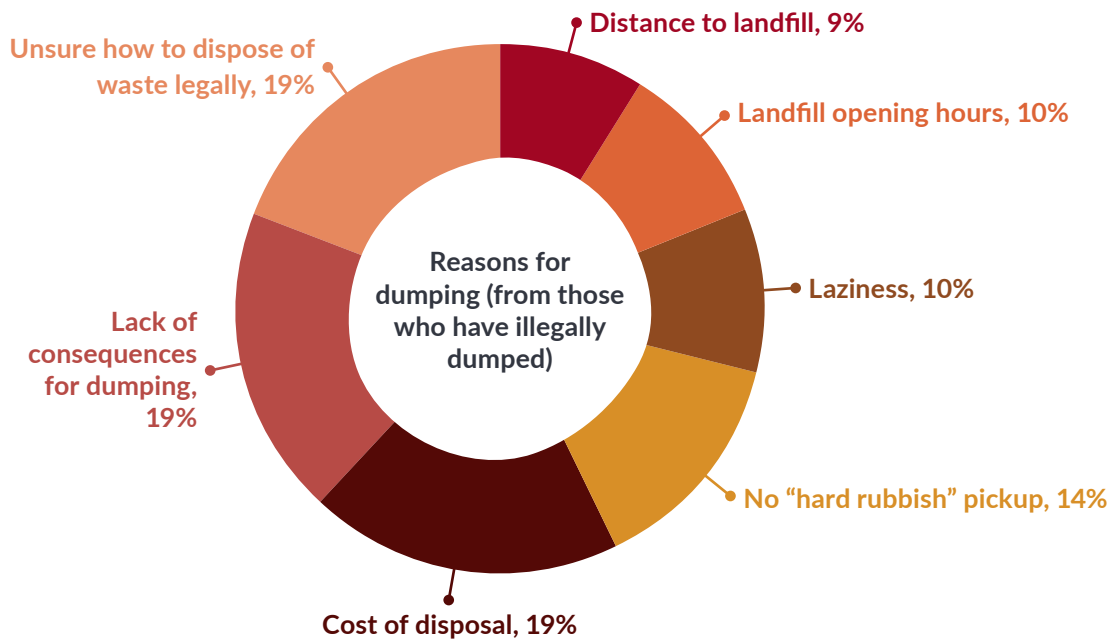


Figure 13

## Next Steps

The information gathered through this survey highlights several key areas where targeted intervention is critically needed. By identifying the specific issues associated with illegal dumping in Alice Springs, we are better equipped to focus our resources where they will have the greatest impact.

The insights gained from this survey will directly inform the ongoing development of Operation: Don't Be A Dumper, and feed directly to the delivery of Output 5 - "Prevention and Deterrence".

