

# **Turtle and Dugong Evaluation**

**Thursday Island**

**Preliminary Report**

**Prepared by**



**Feb 2009**

# 1. Introduction

This Torres Strait Dugong and Turtle Conservation project was funded jointly by the Fisheries Research Development Corporation (FRDC) and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). Turtle and Dugong evaluation is important because there is evidence<sup>1</sup> that Dugong and Turtle continue to be unsustainably harvested from Torres Strait.

This evaluation is part of a larger Dugong and Turtle Conservation project that includes development of a community resource comic book to raise awareness and encourage sustainable extraction of dugong and turtle in Torres Strait "Turtle Trails"<sup>2</sup>. The comic book part of the project is under development with a workshop to develop the storyline held in June 2008 and the final comic due in June 2009.

The evaluation part of the Dugong and Turtle Conservation project involves two community surveys.

The first survey held in June 2008 tested community attitudes towards the extraction, consumption and management of Dugong and Turtle by Torres Strait Islanders. The data and results of this survey are profiled in this preliminary report. The majority of respondents in this survey are adults above school age.

The second survey will be held in June 2009 in Torres Strait and will involve testing of the Dugong and Turtle Conservation comic on a school classroom group. The aim of this second survey will be to test the impact of the comic on attitudes towards Dugong and Turtle extraction, consumption and management amongst year 11 and 12 students who will complete a questionnaire before and after reading the comic.

Torres Strait community attitudes data from survey one will be contrasted with the Torres Strait school student data from survey two to provide a comprehensive cross section of attitudes towards Dugong and Turtle extraction, consumption and management. These will be summarised in a final evaluation report for DAFF and FRDC that will be submitted in August 2009.

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<sup>1</sup> Heinsohn, Lacy, Lindenmayer, Marsh, Kwan, Lawler (2004) Unsustainable harvest of dugongs in Torres Strait and Cape York (Australia) waters: two case studies using population viability analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Provisional Title of Comic Book

## 2. Data Collection

### Research methodology

Inception Strategies uses an *interpretivist*<sup>3</sup> model to research and evaluate data for our clients. The *interpretivist* approach uses a qualitative line of enquiry that values the personal responses and experiences of people who relate to and use Turtle and Dugong.

### Informed consent and payment

All Torres Strait Islander persons surveyed were explained the purpose of the survey and given a clear choice as to whether or not they wished to participate. All of those who chose to participate gave their information freely and where paid a \$20 honorarium for their time to answer the questions.

### Survey Method

The survey was broken up into two main sections. Section 1 comprised of a list of questions about Turtle while Section 2 asked the same questions, except in relation to Dugong. At the end of each section people were given the opportunity to make “any other comments”. We have included the list of questions in the appendix.

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<sup>3</sup> providing an interpretation of events in terms of how the people involved understand their experience

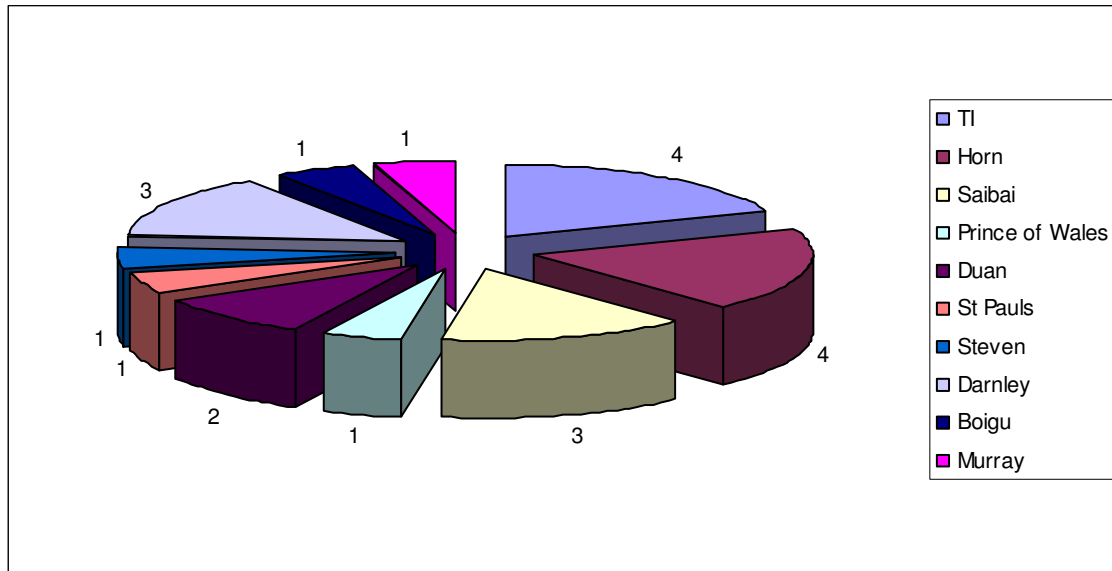
### 3. Survey 1

Survey 1 was held on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2008 at Thursday Island. Survey participants were recruited by a range of methods including main street canvassing, office enquiries and visits to local community workshops.

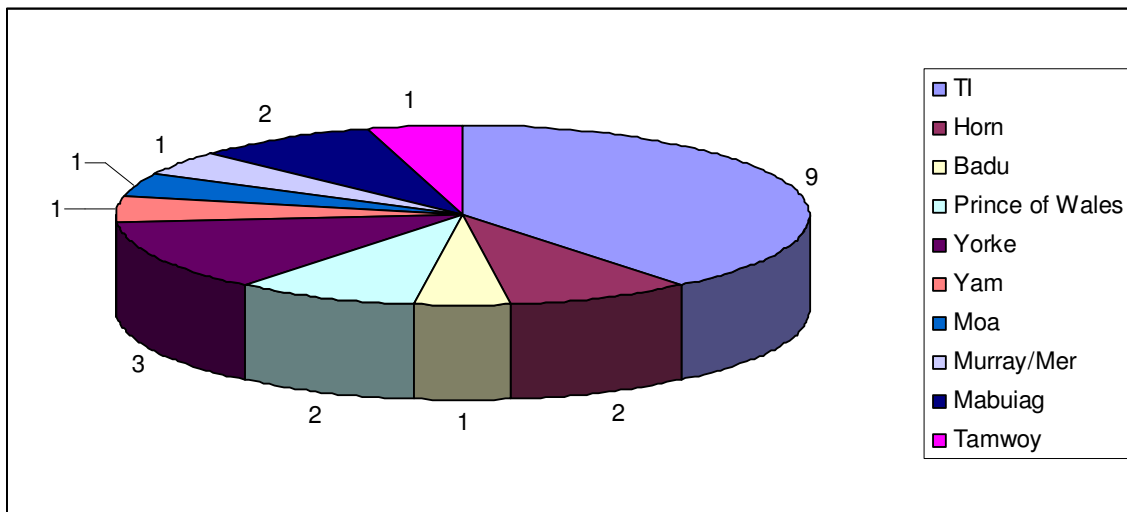
The overall sample size for survey 1 was 44 people comprising 21 women and 23 men. Here are some of their features:

- ***43% of women surveyed were aged between 19-29 years***
- ***62% of women surveyed were born on Thursday Island***
- ***30% of women surveyed that were born on Thursday Island, still lived there***
- ***43% of men surveyed were aged between 30-60 years***
- ***82% of men surveyed were born on Thursday Island***

### Women Place of Residence

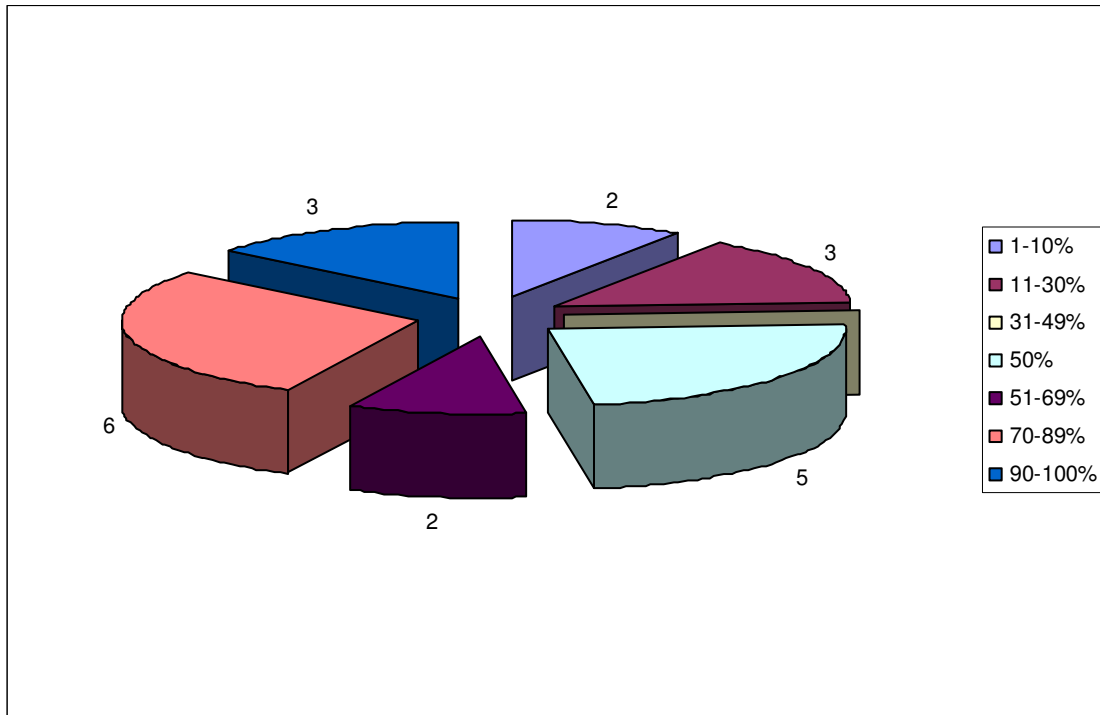


### Men Place of Residence

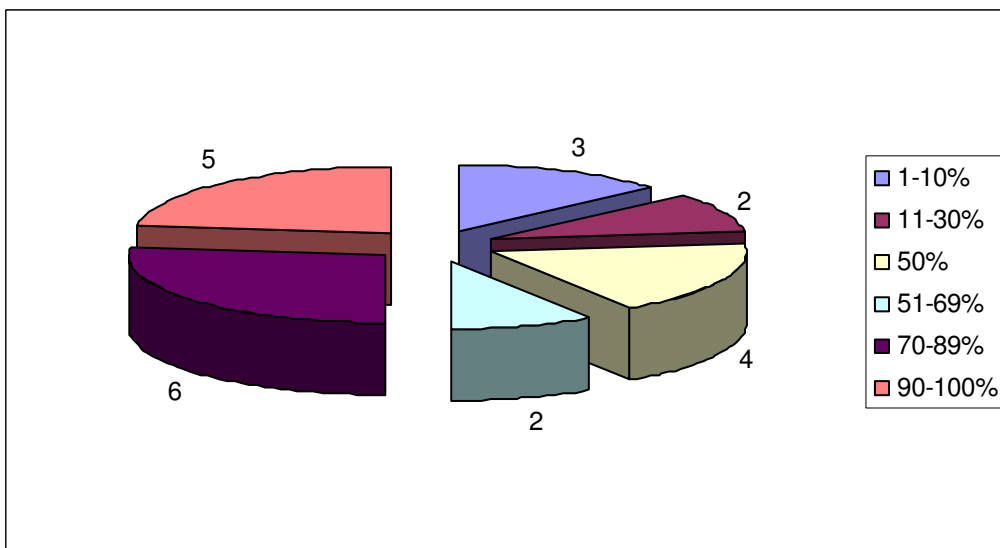


## 4. Turtle Results

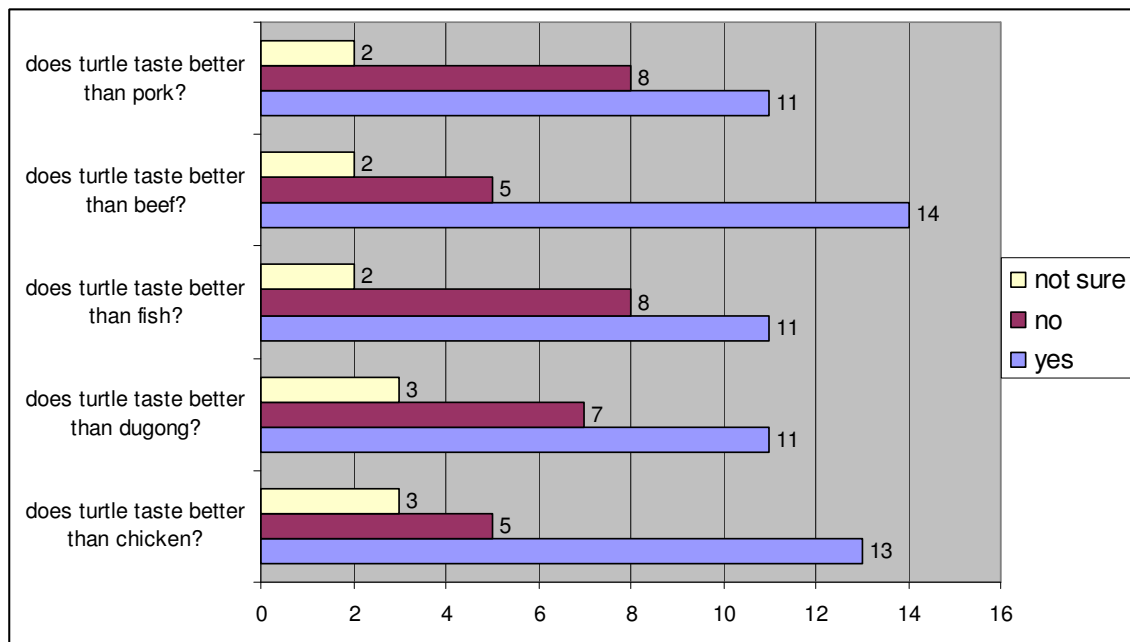
### Women – Turtle Consumption for cultural/ceremonial purposes



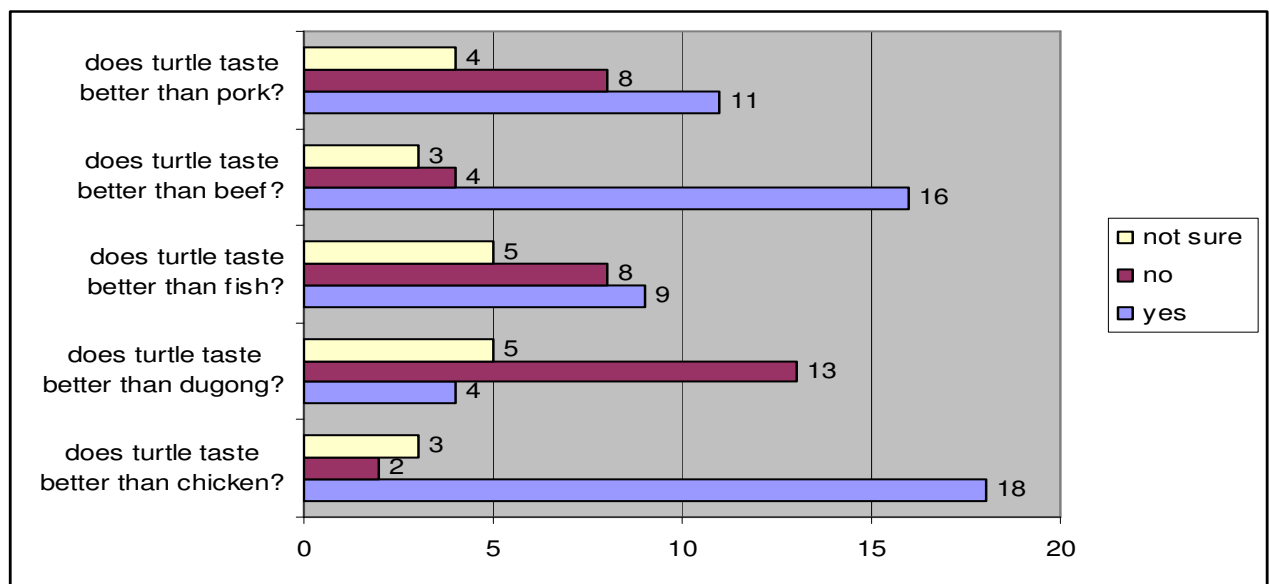
### Men – Turtle Consumption for cultural/ceremonial purposes

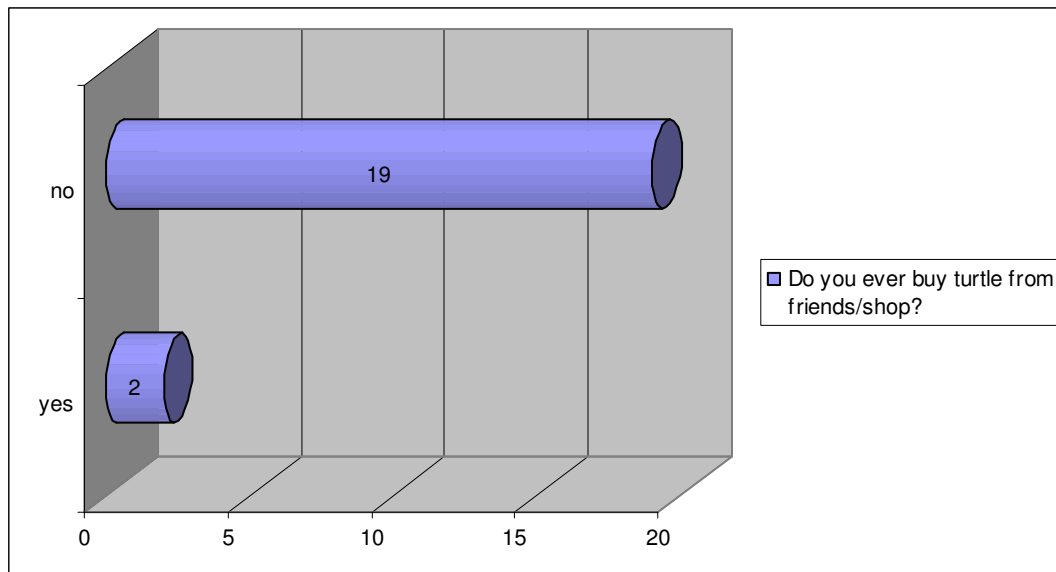
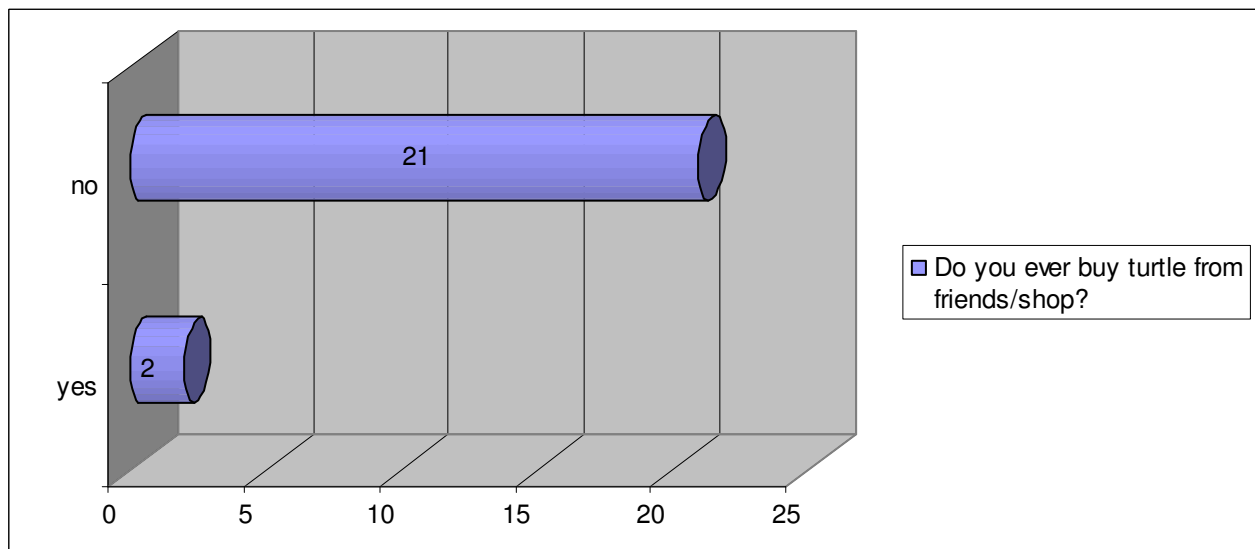


## Women – Taste preferences for Turtle Meat



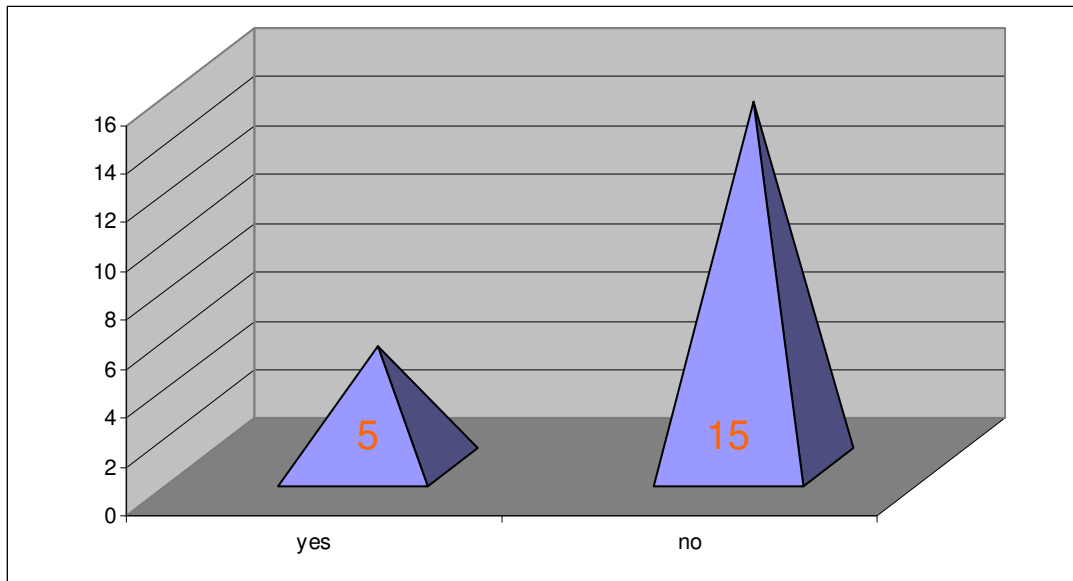
## Men – Taste preferences for Turtle Meat



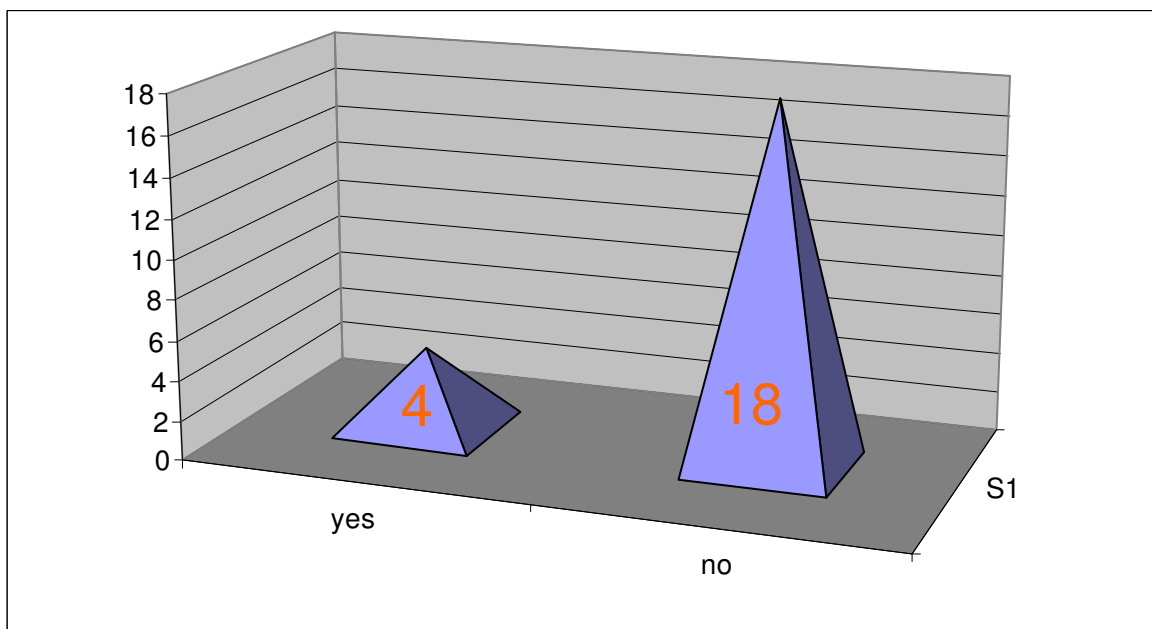
**Women – Do you ever buy Turtle?****Men – Do you ever buy Turtle?**

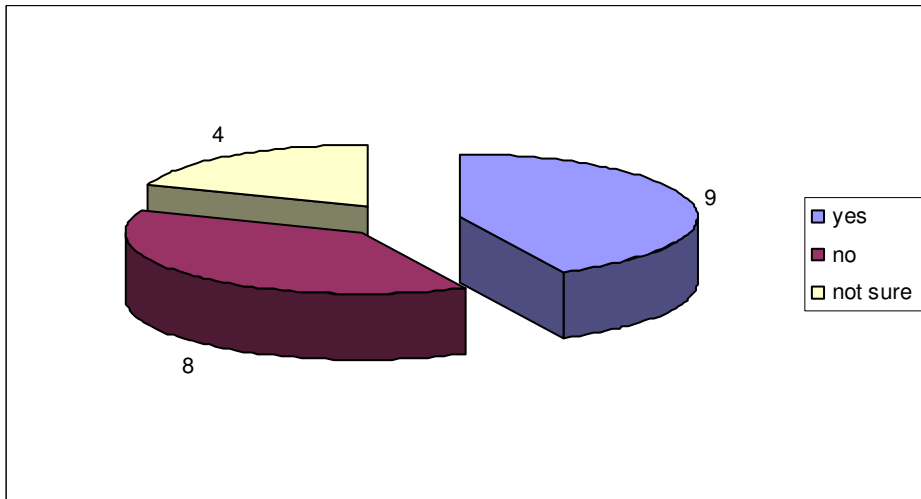
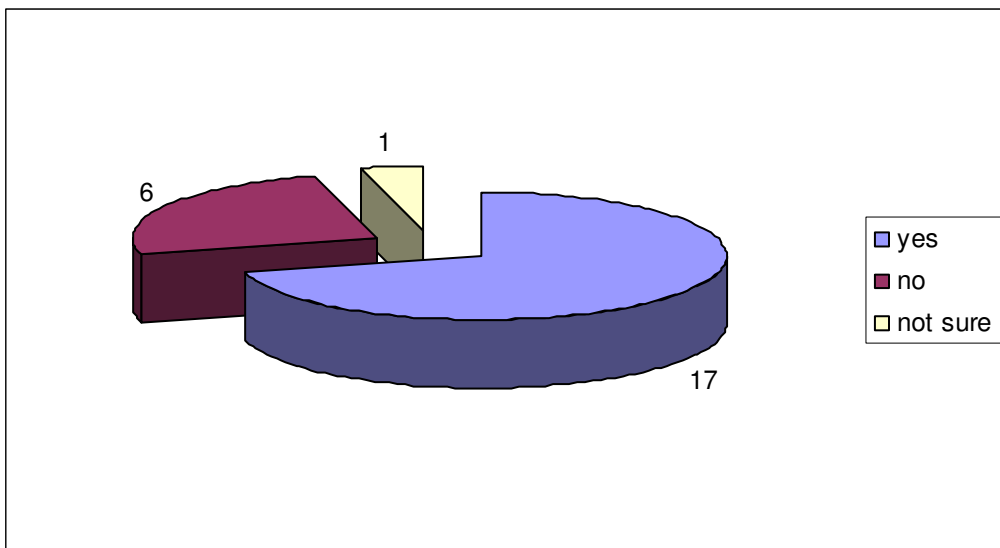


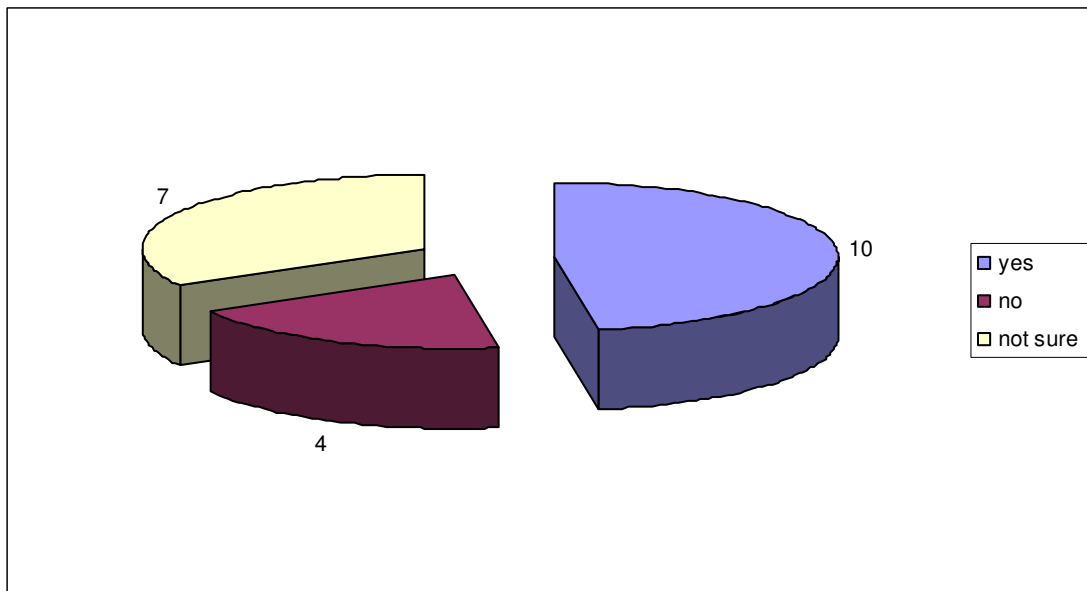
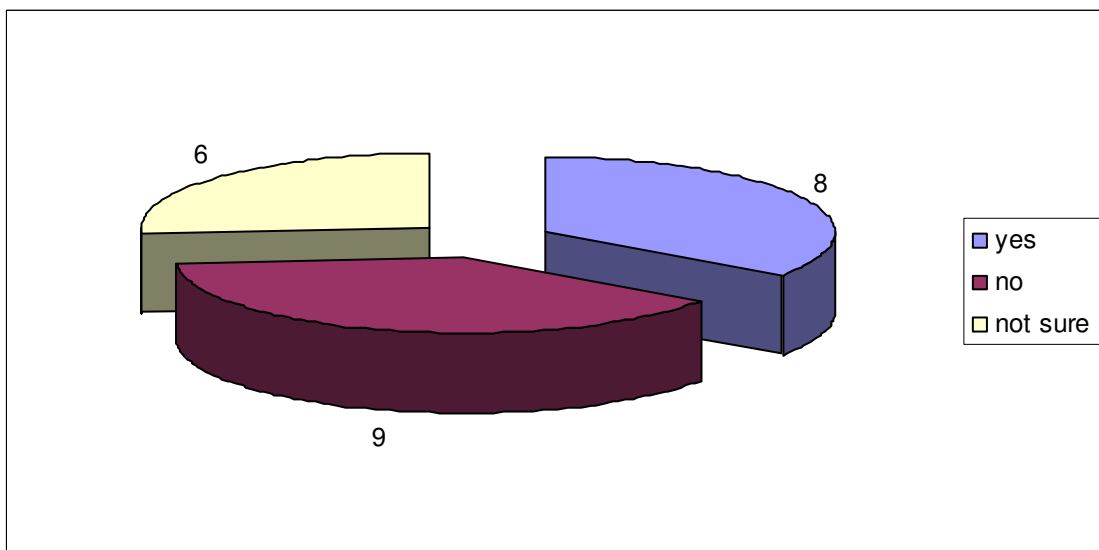
**Women – If Turtle meat was for commonly available for sale, and priced at the same price as other meat would you buy it?**



**Men – If Turtle meat was for commonly available for sale, and priced at the same price as other meat would you buy it?**



**Women – do we need to worry about no more turtle?****Men – do we need to worry about no more turtle?**

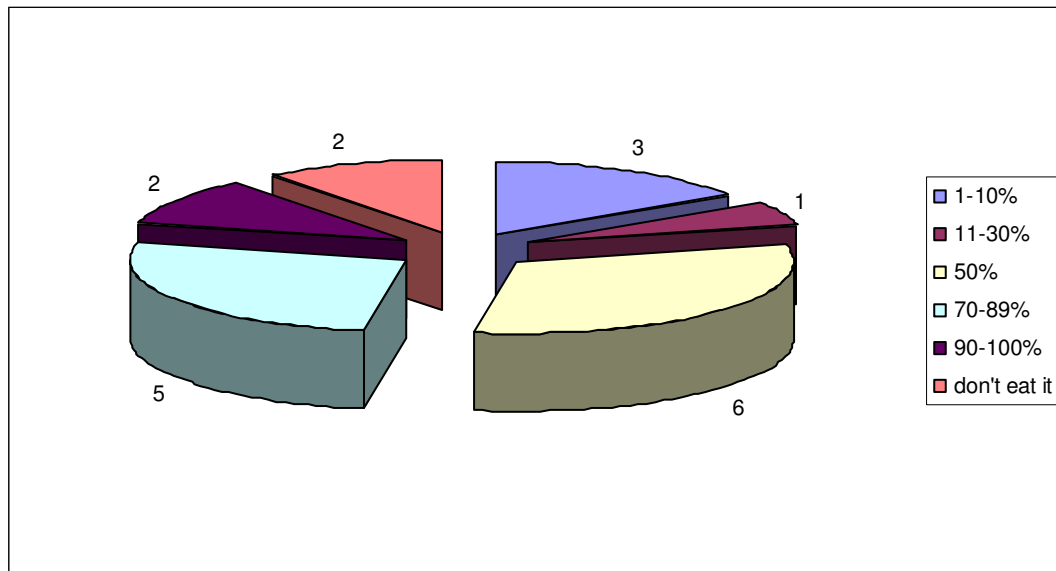
**Women – Are people taking more turtle now compared with last year?****Men – Are people taking more turtle now compared with last year?****Are there cultural events where you must have turtle?**

95% of Men said yes

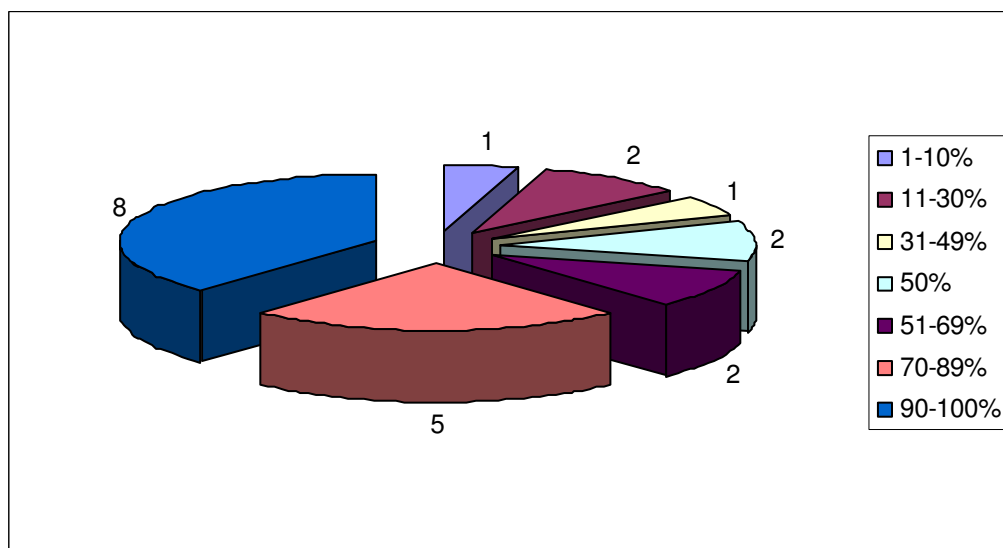
86% of Women said yes

## 5. Dugong Results

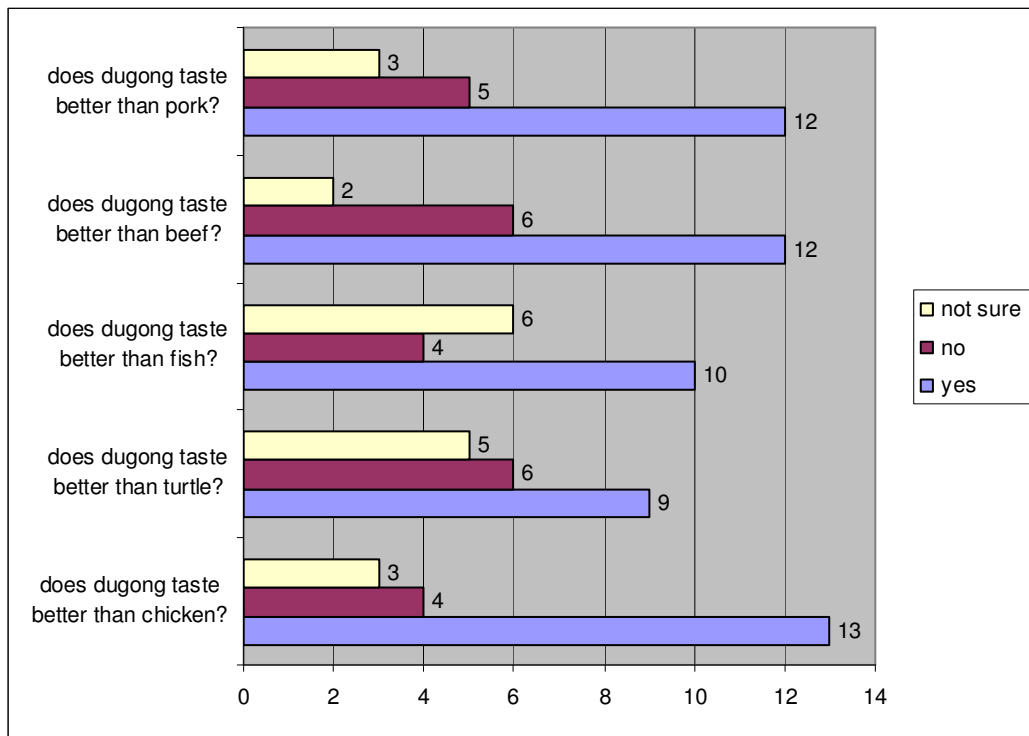
### Women – Dugong Consumption for cultural/ceremonial purposes



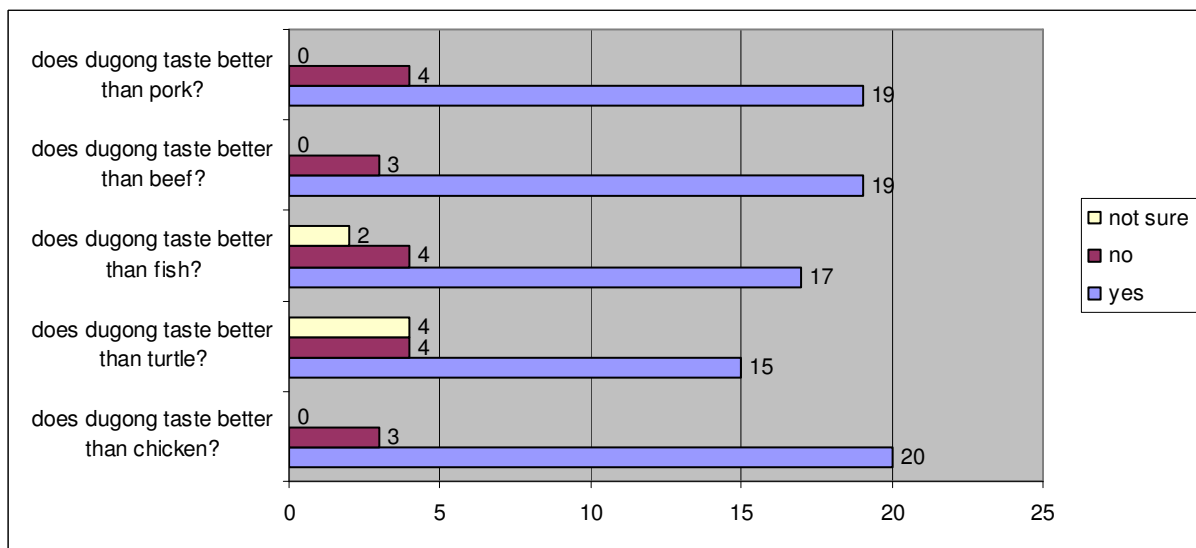
### Men – Dugong Consumption for cultural/ceremonial purposes

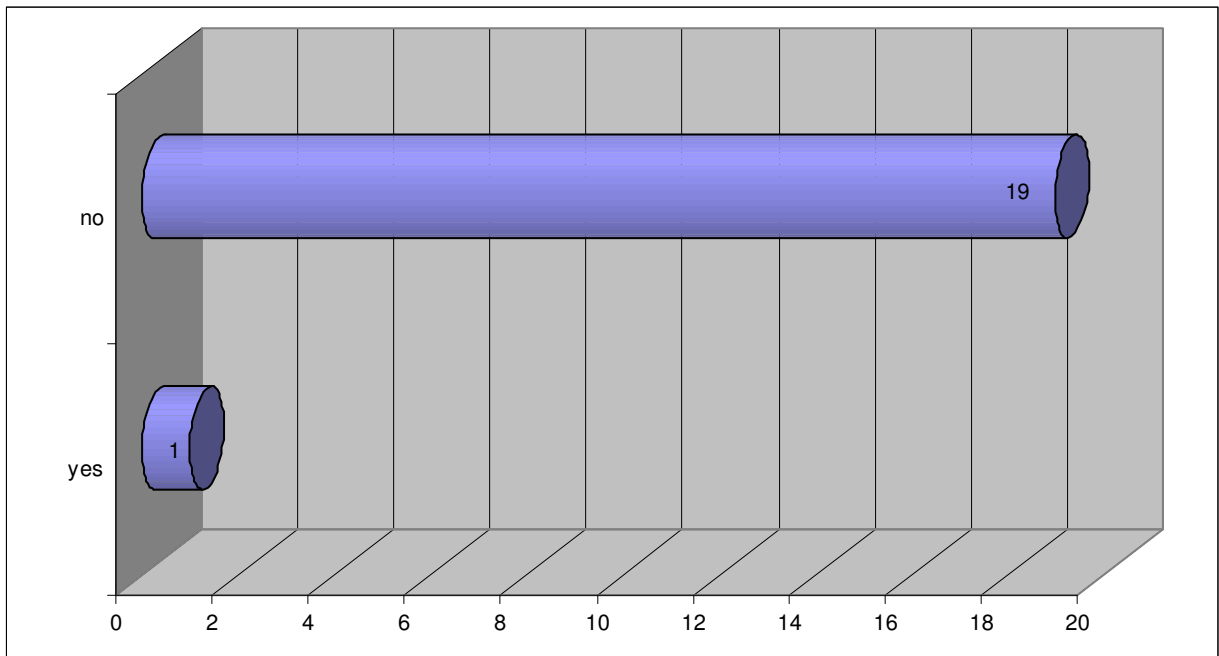
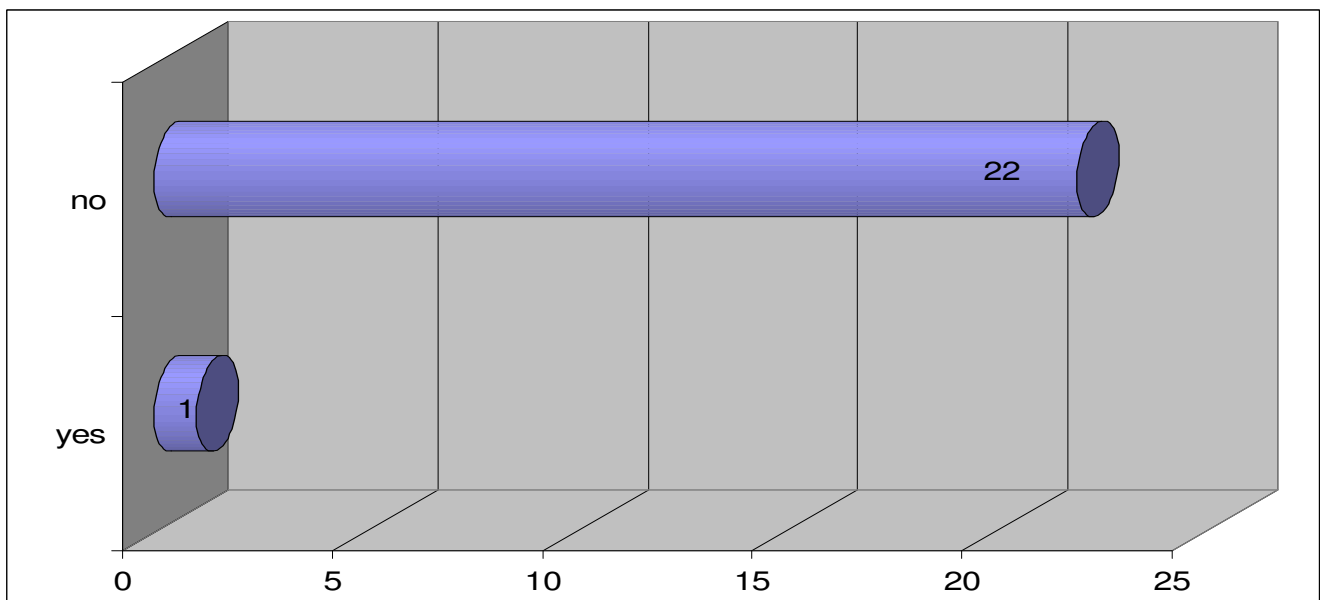


### Women – Taste preferences for Dugong Meat

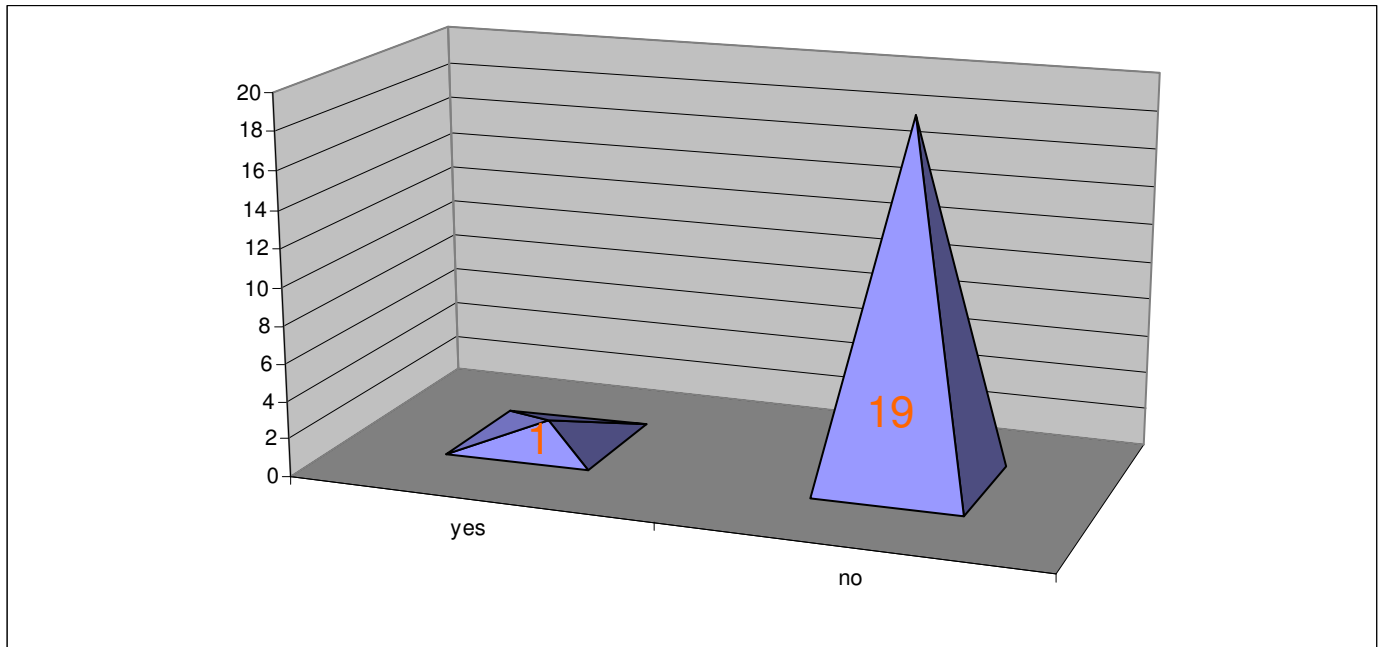


### Men – Taste preferences for Dugong Meat

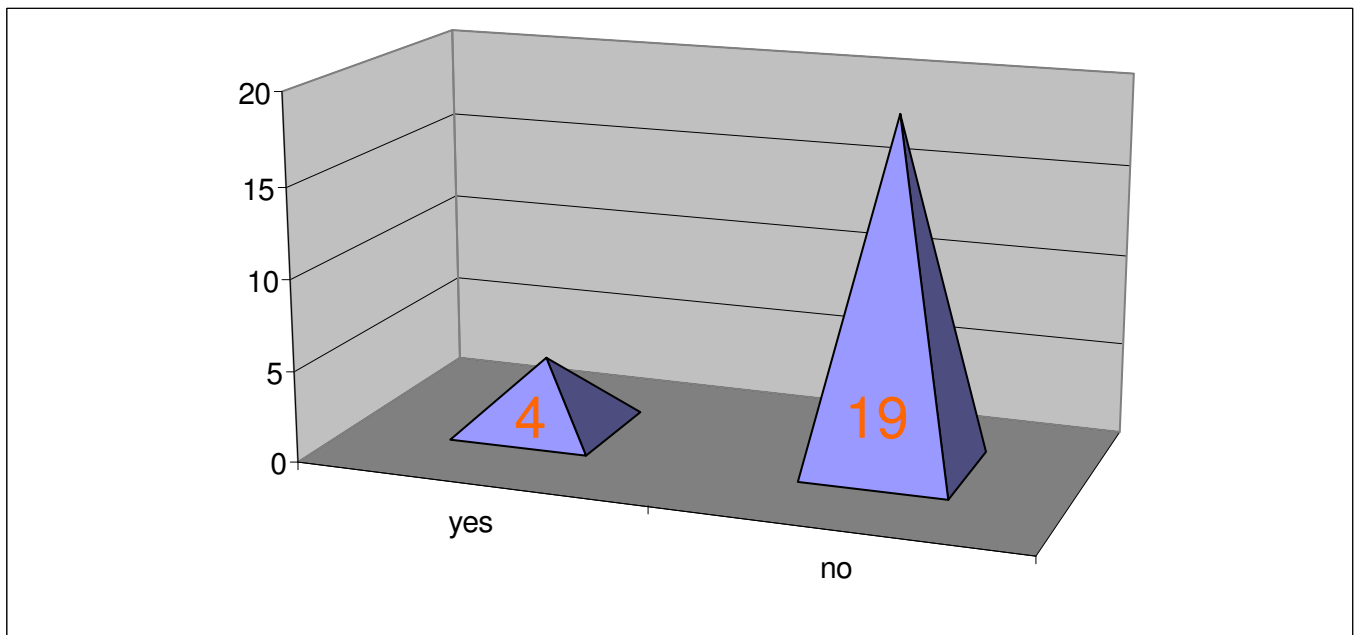


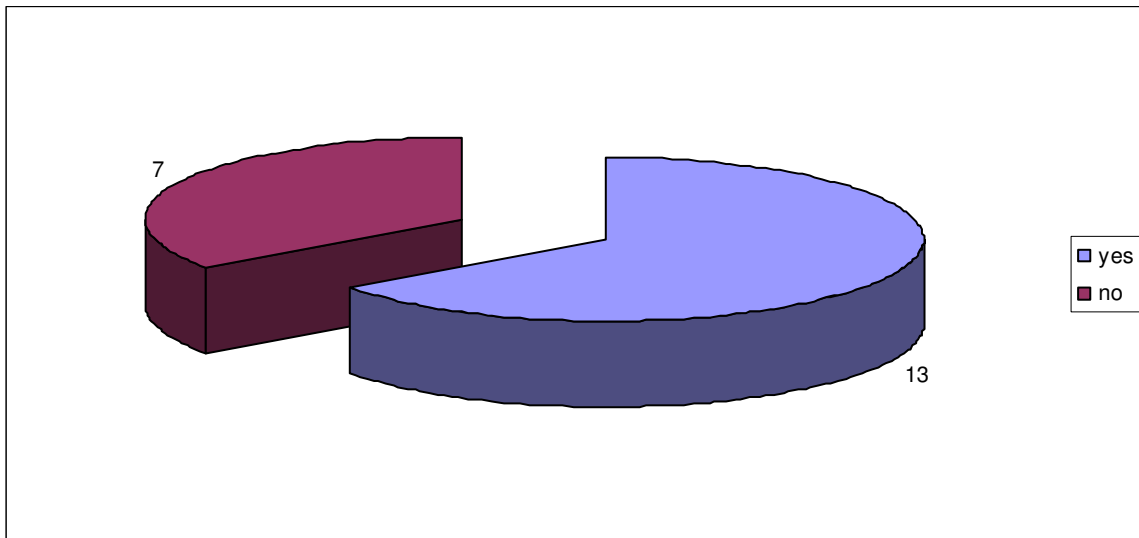
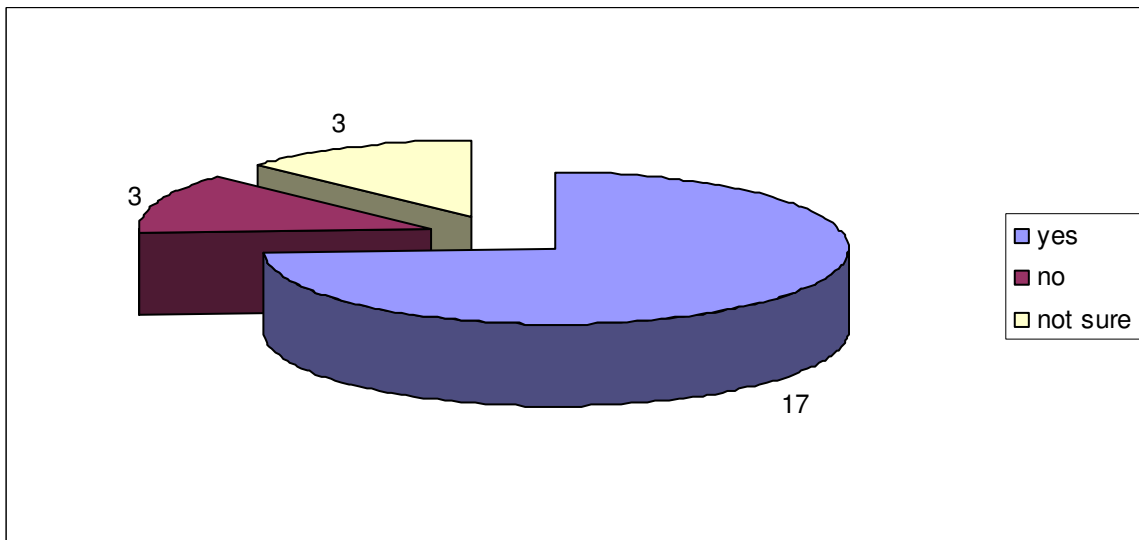
**Women – Do you ever buy Dugong?****Men – Do you ever buy Dugong?**

**Women – If Dugong meat was for commonly available for sale, and priced at the same price as other meat would you buy it?**

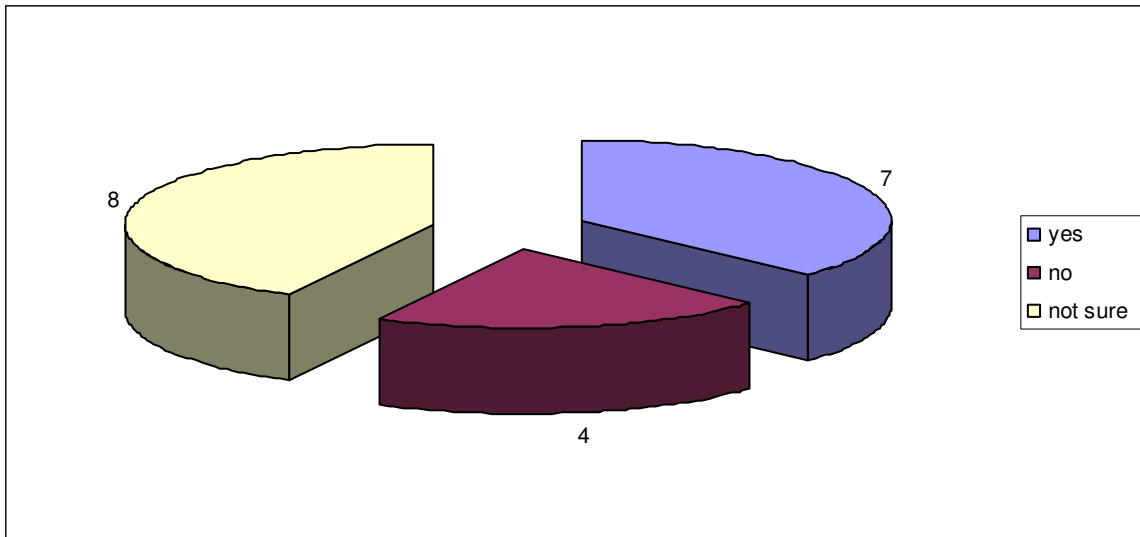
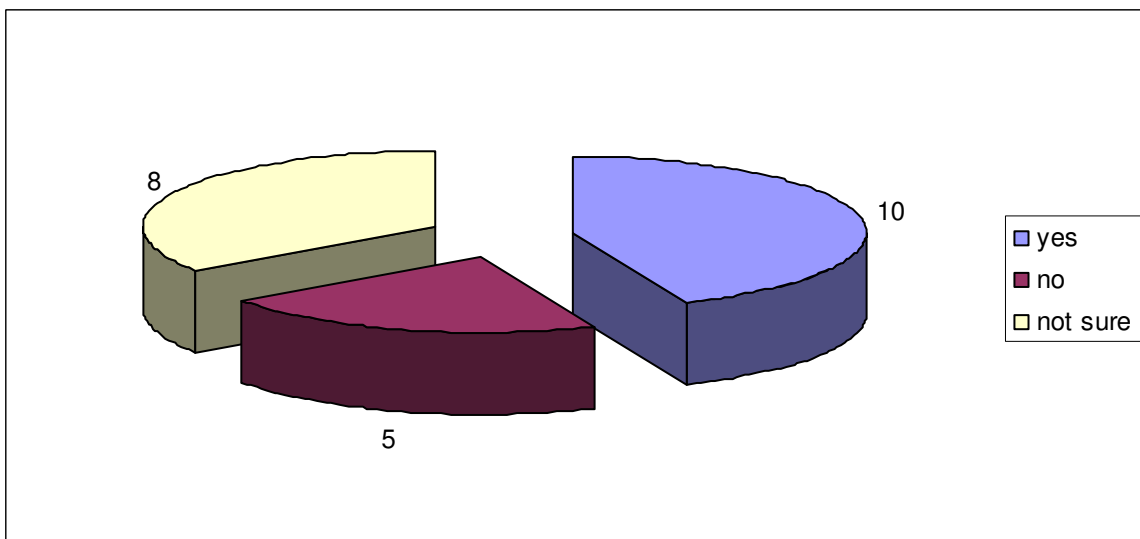


**Men – If Dugong meat was for commonly available for sale, and priced at the same price as other meat would you buy it?**



**Women – do we need to worry about no more dugong?****Men – do we need to worry about no more dugong?**



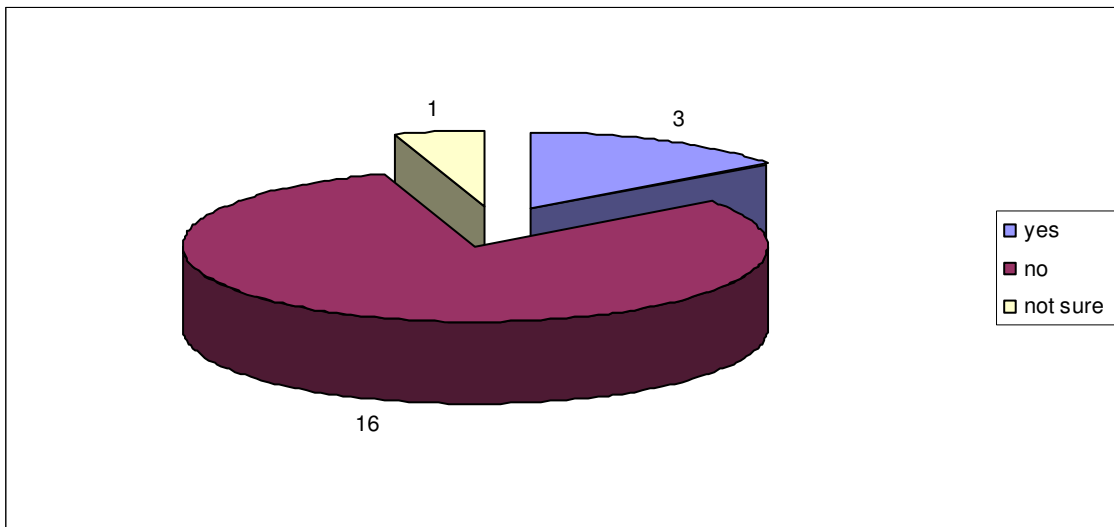
**Women – Are people taking more dugong now compared with last year?****Men – Are people taking more dugong now compared with last year?****Are there cultural events where you must have dugong?**

91% of Men said yes

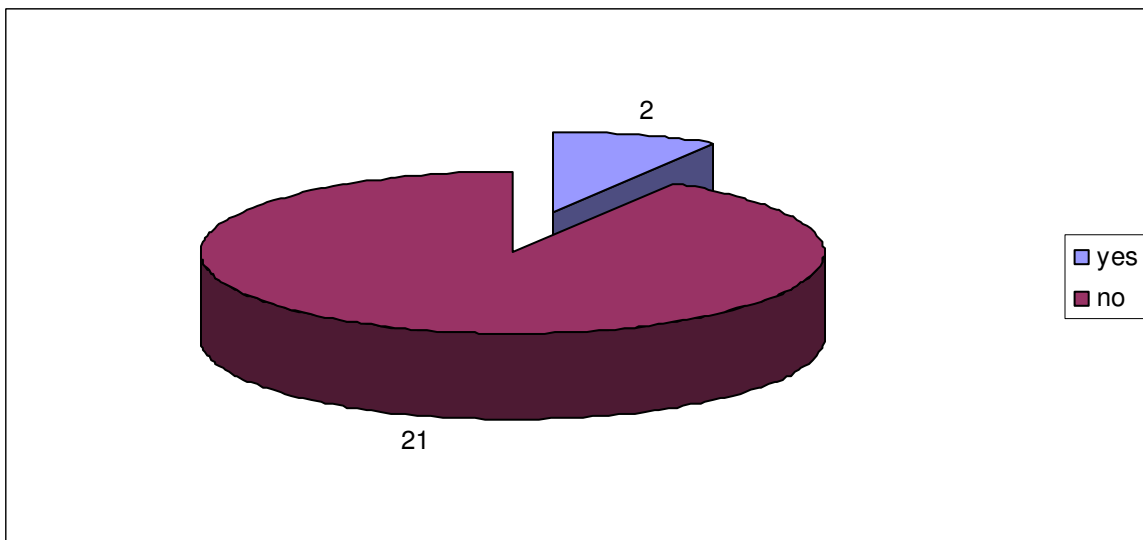
79% of Women said yes

## 6. Common Question

**Women - If there were no more Dugong or Turtle would your family go hungry?**



**Men - If there were no more Dugong or Turtle would your family go hungry?**



## 7. Any other comments?

### **Women - Do you have any other comments about turtle?**

- Should be a limit on number caught.
- There are heaps on our island, don't know about others.
- Wouldn't buy from shop because we can always catch turtle.
- Each family has their own hunters.
- Sometimes there is overkill for ceremonies because not sure of numbers.
- Plenty of turtles on Steven Island – little ones, big ones and eggs
- Should be harvested sustainably.
- Don't like the way they are killed. Should be more humane.
- Dogs eat them before people come back.
- There are heaps /plenty (2)
- It's the best meat.
- I feel bad they're in danger.
- Wish they were used only for important events.
- Important when a whole group of families gather.
- One turtle can feed about 60 people.
- Our island (Murray) is for turtles to lay eggs – very important to us. Taste of turtle from there is better because of deep water.
- We only kill to eat – always!
- Bigger boats and better technology have increased catch 10-fold.
- Turtle is a delicacy that we have to preserve. People need to be educated about using the measures in place, so food isn't wasted. Some won't share.
- Young people go out to get as many as they can.

### **Women - Do you have any other comments about dugong?**

- Plenty of dugong around
- With freezers, people catch and store lots.
- There are not many dugong near Murray Island because the water is too deep.
- If there were no turtle or dugong, we would have to spend more money buying food.
- Don't like dugong much (2) – it's a bit fatty.
- It's not a Torres Strait table without dugong.
- If no turtle or dugong would get something else (3).
- Can't always get dugong.

**Women - What do you think is the best way to protect Dugong and turtle?**

- Catch limits (4).
- Do not over-take.
- Don't kill too many
- Limits per family
- Catch limits for ceremonies
- There are always other food options.
- Tag, release and research (2)
- Could always eat fish instead.
- Project officer
- Management plan (3) to give turtles time to breed
- Have hunting season and permit system – don't let the same guy go out 5 times a week.
- Not sure (5)
- Fisheries management
- Don't know (2)
- Don't kill mothers (pregnant or with calf)
- Policing the plan/have someone monitor the catch.
- Education services (3).
- Teach kids at schools and other people throughout the community at grass roots level.
- Stop killing
- Stay away during breeding season
- Ceremonial use only (4).

**Men - Do you have any other comments about turtle?**

- There are heaps of turtles.
- Put limits on the catch
- People are taking more in mating season.
- I don't eat any turtle for health reasons – high cholesterol, greasy, indigestible, fatty
- There are plenty on Murray
- People would not kill them for fun – they are a totem
- There is a special way to cook hawksbill turtle otherwise they are poisonous
- They sell kangaroo and crocodile meat, so I can't see why they can't sell turtle
- No fun killing on Yorke
- People are getting greedy
- Turtle is one of the main foods we have.

**Men - Do you have any other comments about dugong?**

- Would barter for dugong, but not buy.
- Would not go hungry if no turtle or dugong but would miss them (2).
- Would not go hungry if no turtle or dugong but would affect our diet a lot (2).
- Would not go hungry if no turtle or dugong. Would buy or hunt other food (4).
- There are heaps of dugong.
- Some people eat only special parts of dugong.
- Rarely eat dugong – it's hard to get
- Dugong rare on Yorke

**Men - What do you think is the best way to protect Dugong and turtle?**

- Management plan (4)
- Management in consultation with Indigenous people that abides by international obligations and by cultural rules for Thursday Island
- Every dugong hunter should be registered and have a limited catch per year. The licences should be issued by the prescribed native title bodies. First offence should be a fine, second offence should be confiscate boat/dinghy.
- Sustainable use
- Locals more involved in looking after species
- Get fisheries guys more involved with local people
- Hard research
- Catch limits (7). Don't hunt so many. Restrict amounts taken.
- Hunt in traditional way
- Try to reduce subsistence use.
- Patrol areas
- Better education and promotion of conservation
- Hunting seasons (2) – give them time to reproduce/quarterly seasons like for crays
- Stop digging up eggs
- Traditional/tribal law and self management
- Don't know/not sure
- Stop hunting/ stop hunting except for ceremonies.