



CATS (Cats and Their Stats) 2020 UK<sup>©</sup>

[www.cats.org.uk/stats](http://www.cats.org.uk/stats)



**Cats.  
The UK loves them.  
It's official!**



There are **10.2m owned cats in the UK** – that’s one for almost every six people! The UK is truly a nation of proud cat lovers.

As the cat experts, Cats Protection is excited to share with you the amazing and fascinating stats from the CATS (Cats and Their Stats) 2020 UK report, the first of its kind.

This independent research project involved speaking to over 10,000 people from across the UK, making it the largest and most comprehensive report on cats.

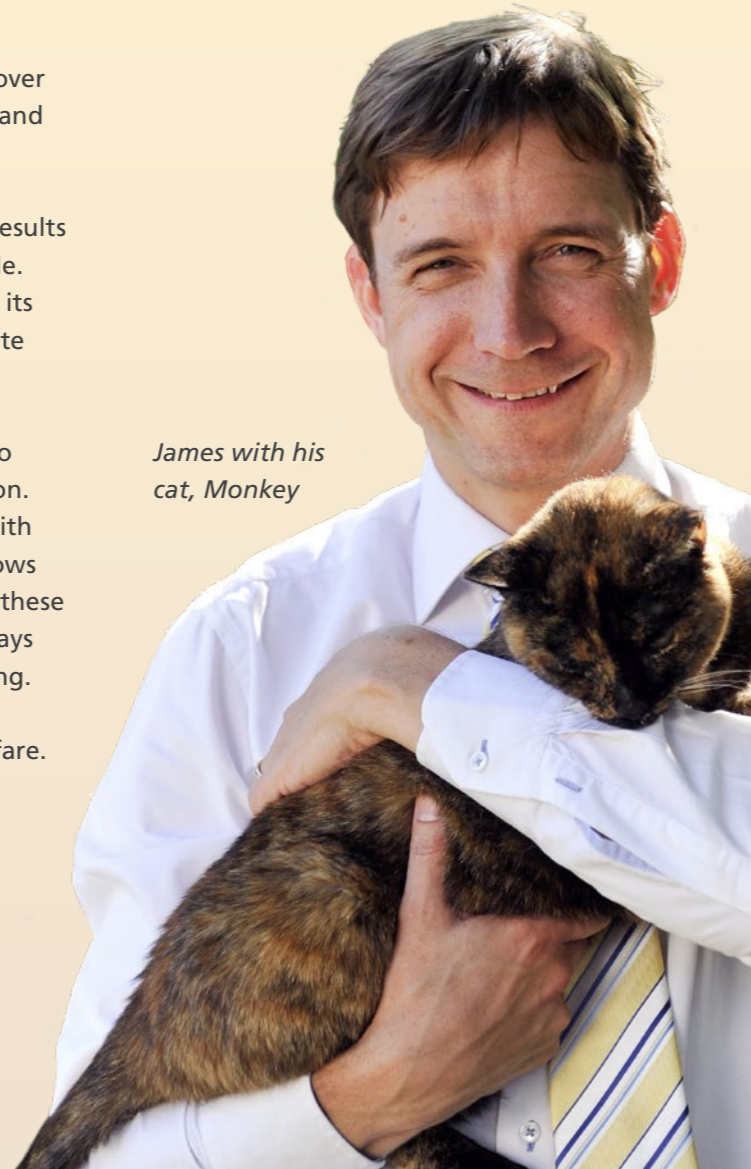
The survey was carried out in early spring 2020 and the results already showed us just how much joy cats bring to people. We know that the subsequent COVID-19 pandemic, with its lockdown and restrictions has made many of us appreciate the joy and comfort cats give us even more.

This report gives us a new, robust and unique insight into the world of cats as well as their owners, across the nation. It provides compelling evidence that cats are complex, with varied needs that we must meet, and it resoundingly shows just how much we love our cats. Cats Protection will use these statistics to inform everything we do, from rehoming strays to promoting the benefits of neutering and microchipping. It will also help us to speak up for cats with legislators, decision makers and anyone with influence over cat welfare.

I hope you find CATS 2020 UK useful – together we can make a better world for cats.



James Yeates BVSc, FRCVS  
Chief Executive



James with his cat, Monkey

COVER PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/PAVLINA POPOVSKA / ILLUSTRATIONS: RUS HUDDA



## Methodology

We commissioned an external and independent agency, Basis Research, to conduct the research contained in this report.

An online survey was used to collect information among a nationally representative audience of over 18s in the UK, allowing us to identify the proportion of cat owners in the UK. We also conducted a more detailed survey among cat owners. This was carried out between 28 February 2020 and 5 April 2020.

The sample consisted of a nationally representative sample of N=3,520, and we interviewed N=6,344 cat owners in total.

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## So what have we learned?

# Welcome to the CATS (Cats and Their Stats) 2020 UK<sup>©</sup> first annual report

This report is the first comprehensive picture of owned cats in the UK. It gives some amazing insights into their lives, their relationship with us and the role they play in modern society.

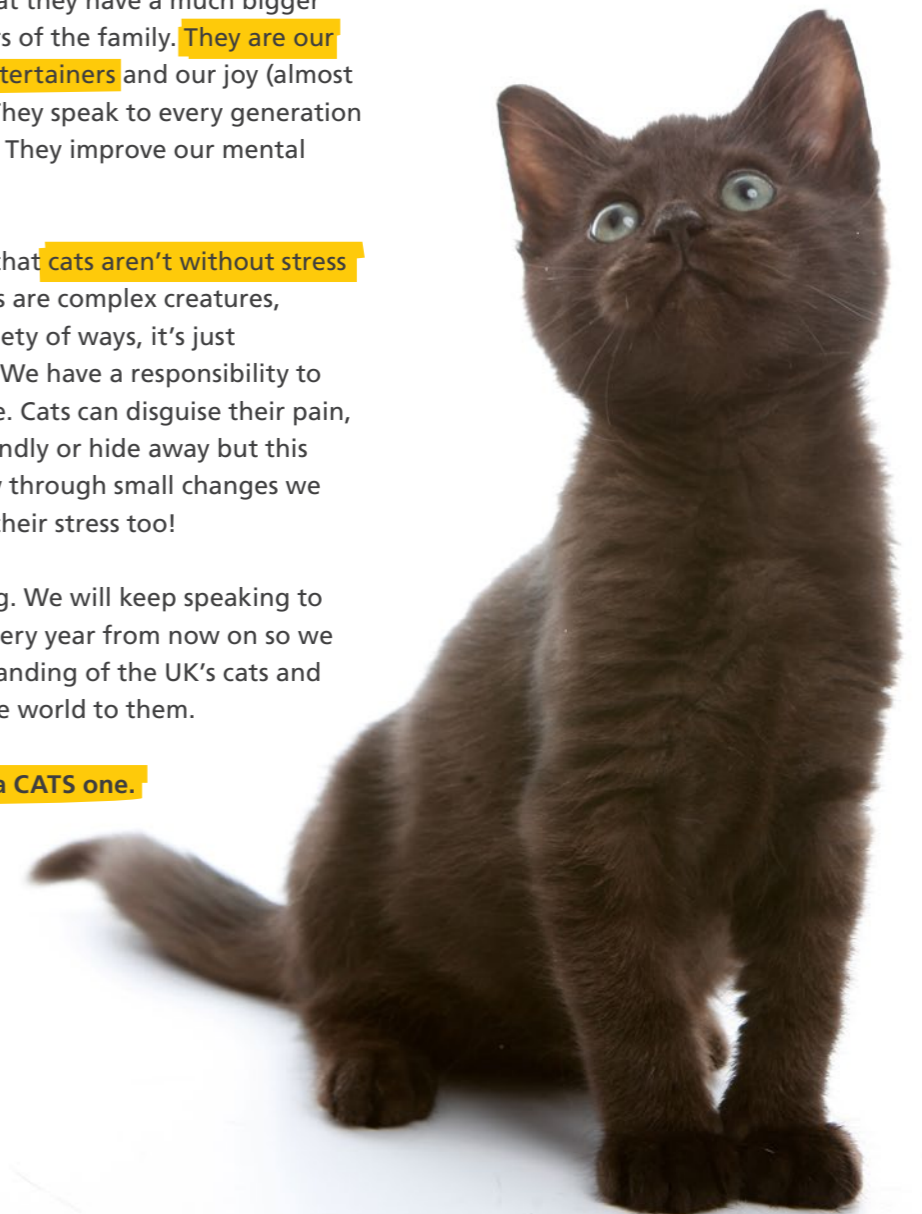
It is the first time that cat owners' voices have been heard in a way that allows us to really understand how life is for cats across the nation. We spoke to over 10,000 people, both those who already owned cats but also those that would like to.

Forget the cold and aloof perception of cats, existing on the periphery of our lives. We found that they have a much bigger role to play, as much-loved members of the family. They are our comforters, our confidantes, our entertainers and our joy (almost nine out of 10 cat owners said so). They speak to every generation and shape every aspect of our lives. They improve our mental health and reduce our stress.

But interestingly this report shows that cats aren't without stress of their own. It emphasises that cats are complex creatures, communicating their needs in a variety of ways, it's just sometimes we don't spot the signs. We have a responsibility to make cats' lives the best they can be. Cats can disguise their pain, become easily stressed, seem unfriendly or hide away but this report explains why and shows how through small changes we can enrich their lives... and reduce their stress too!

This first report is just the beginning. We will keep speaking to cat owners (and non-cat owners) every year from now on so we continue to build a greater understanding of the UK's cats and their owners and how cats mean the world to them.

If you need a cat stat then make it a CATS one.



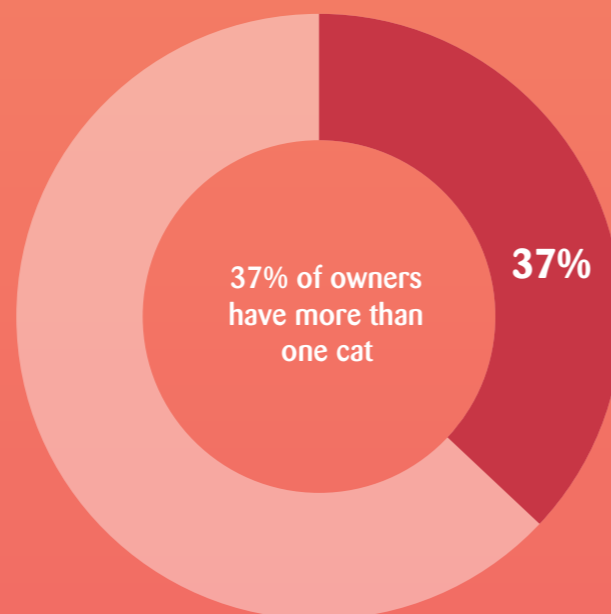
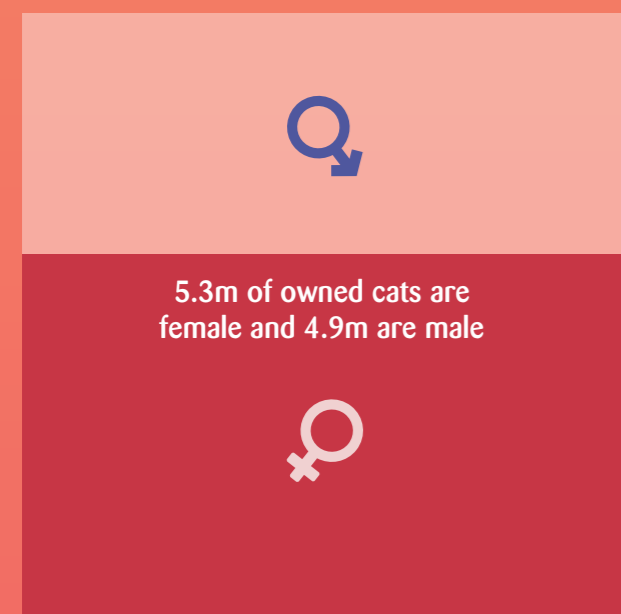
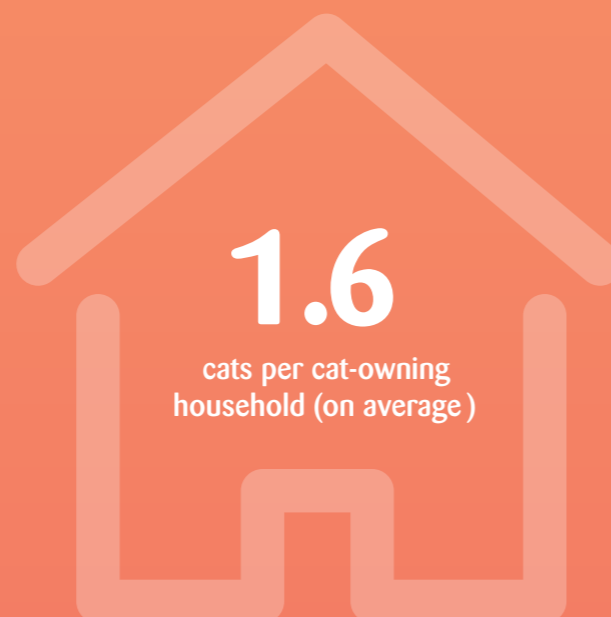
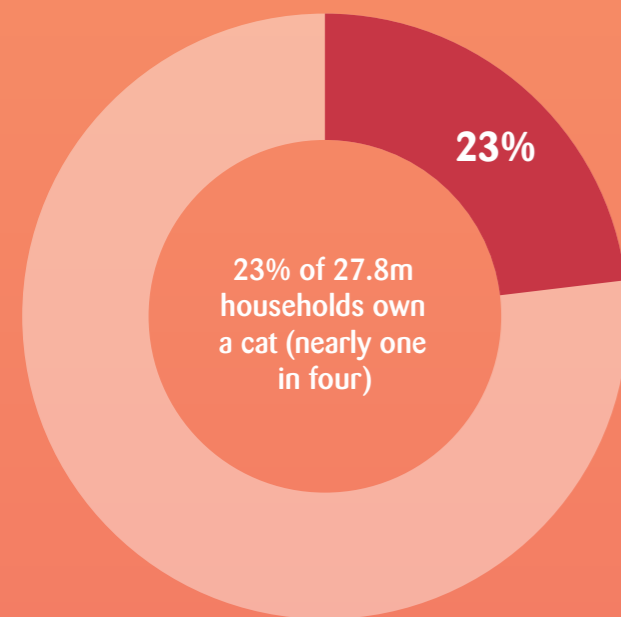
# People and cats

## Population

Did you know that there are

**10.2 million owned cats in the UK?**

That's one for almost every six people!



## The naming of cats...

is a serious business! Baby or cat? There's a definite trend here.

Rank	Female	Male
1	Bella/Belle	Bobby/Bob
2	Poppy	Charlie
3	Molly	Alfie
4	Lily/Lilly	Oscar
5	Luna	Jack

Top five male and female cat names as revealed by our data.



“You guarantee they will always be there, even if it is just for food. I love playing with them as kittens then as they get older they like to keep my lap warm.”

[Male, 44, Wales]





## Age is just a number

When you're a cat you're considered 'mature' from the age of seven (that's 44 in human years). Almost **half (43%) of the UK's owned cats are mature.** Many adopters opt for the cute kitten as first choice but anyone with an older cat can tell you their many virtues.

Cat ownership is highest among people **aged 25-54 (28%).** Those under 45 are more likely to buy a cat rather than adopt (33%).

One in 10 (11%) of those who would like a cat but don't feel able to have one, feel being older is a barrier, worrying about what would happen to their cats after they'd gone. Cats make a difference to people of all ages – we can find the right cat for the right owner! And for peace of mind we have our Cat Guardians service: [www.cats.org.uk/catguardians](http://www.cats.org.uk/catguardians)

## Breeds and mogs

**70% told us their cats are moggies (6% don't know) and 24% said they have pedigree breeds.** This rises to 38% considered pedigree in Greater London.

**?** Did you know that the only valid proof of a pedigree is to obtain a pedigree certificate from a breed association such as the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF): [www.gccfcats.org](http://www.gccfcats.org)?

## So much to love

Cats bring joy. Ok so we might be biased, but **87% of owners agreed!** And there's also joy to be had from other people's cats with nearly two thirds **(64%) regularly going online to view funny and cute cat pics and videos.**

Cats are great companions and can relieve stress or loneliness; **59% agreed** which rose to **62% for those aged between 18 and 34.**

**91% said that their cats are part of the family.** 86% talk to their cats (how is this not more?!) and 64% love to spoil them. Over half (53%) admitted to putting their cat's needs ahead of their own.

"Cats are fabulous company and when you are feeling sad they just know how to cheer you up with their witty characters and personalities. They make my house feel like a home."

[Female, 28, Scotland]

"You guarantee they will always be there, even if it is just for food. I love playing with them as kittens then as they get older they like to keep my lap warm."

[Male, 44, Wales]

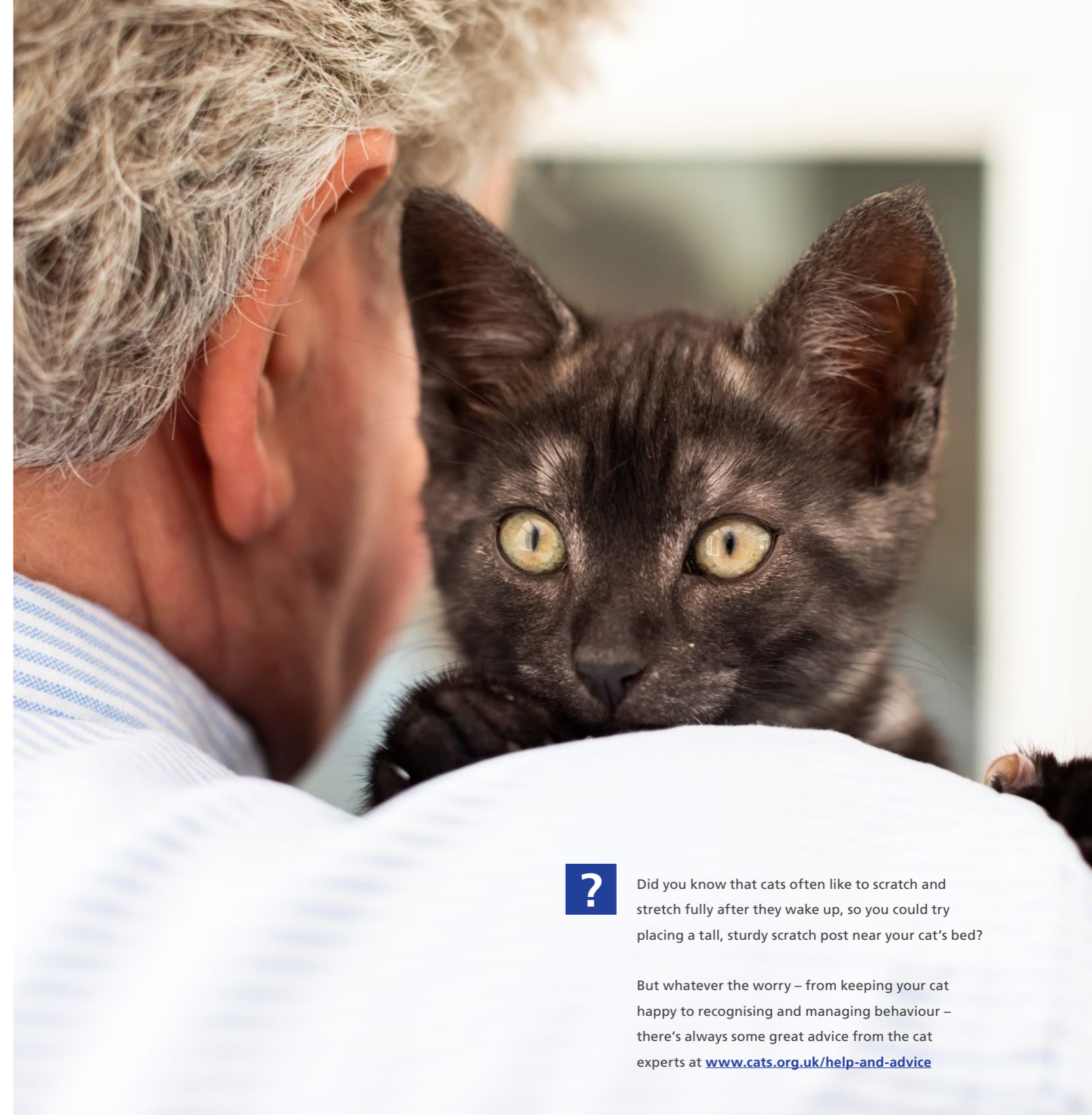
"Our cat is very loving and loyal to the family, he loves to cuddle up on the sofa. He is much loved and a member of the family."

[Female, 56, Greater London]

But naturally cat owners do have worries about their pet.

More than half of owners (55%) worry about whether their cat is happy or not, with those under 45 worrying the most. Unsurprisingly most owners (71%) hate leaving their cats when they go away and 42% admit that having a cat has impacted on their holiday plans.

And of course some cats may have some less endearing habits; **36%** of owners have experienced **scratched** furniture, 30% have had that far too early furry alarm call and **22% have received prey brought in from the garden.**



Did you know that cats often like to scratch and stretch fully after they wake up, so you could try placing a tall, sturdy scratch post near your cat's bed?

But whatever the worry – from keeping your cat happy to recognising and managing behaviour – there's always some great advice from the cat experts at [www.cats.org.uk/help-and-advice](http://www.cats.org.uk/help-and-advice)

"Cats are fabulous company and when you are feeling sad they just know how to cheer you up with their witty characters and personalities. They make my house feel like a home."

[Female, 28, Scotland]



# Cats and their people

One of the best things about having a cat is sitting down with them after a hard day or when you just feel like relaxing and giving them a stroke. **90% of owners said they did this every day** and 61% actively play with their cat every day. Overall, **78% considered themselves to be heavily involved** with their cat; feeding, playing and generally being there for them.

The **majority of cats enjoy both outdoor and indoor life (67%)**, coming and going more or less as they please. But **31% live exclusively indoors**. This is more common where owners live in a flat or densely populated urban environments and in particular North England and Scotland.



Did you know that some cats have to live indoors for their own safety, due to medical conditions such as FIV, or having a disability such as poor eyesight or hearing? Learn more about what indoor cats need at [www.cats.org.uk/indoor-cats](http://www.cats.org.uk/indoor-cats)

**90% stroke their cat every day!**

**61% actively play with their cat every day**

**78% are heavily involved with their cat**

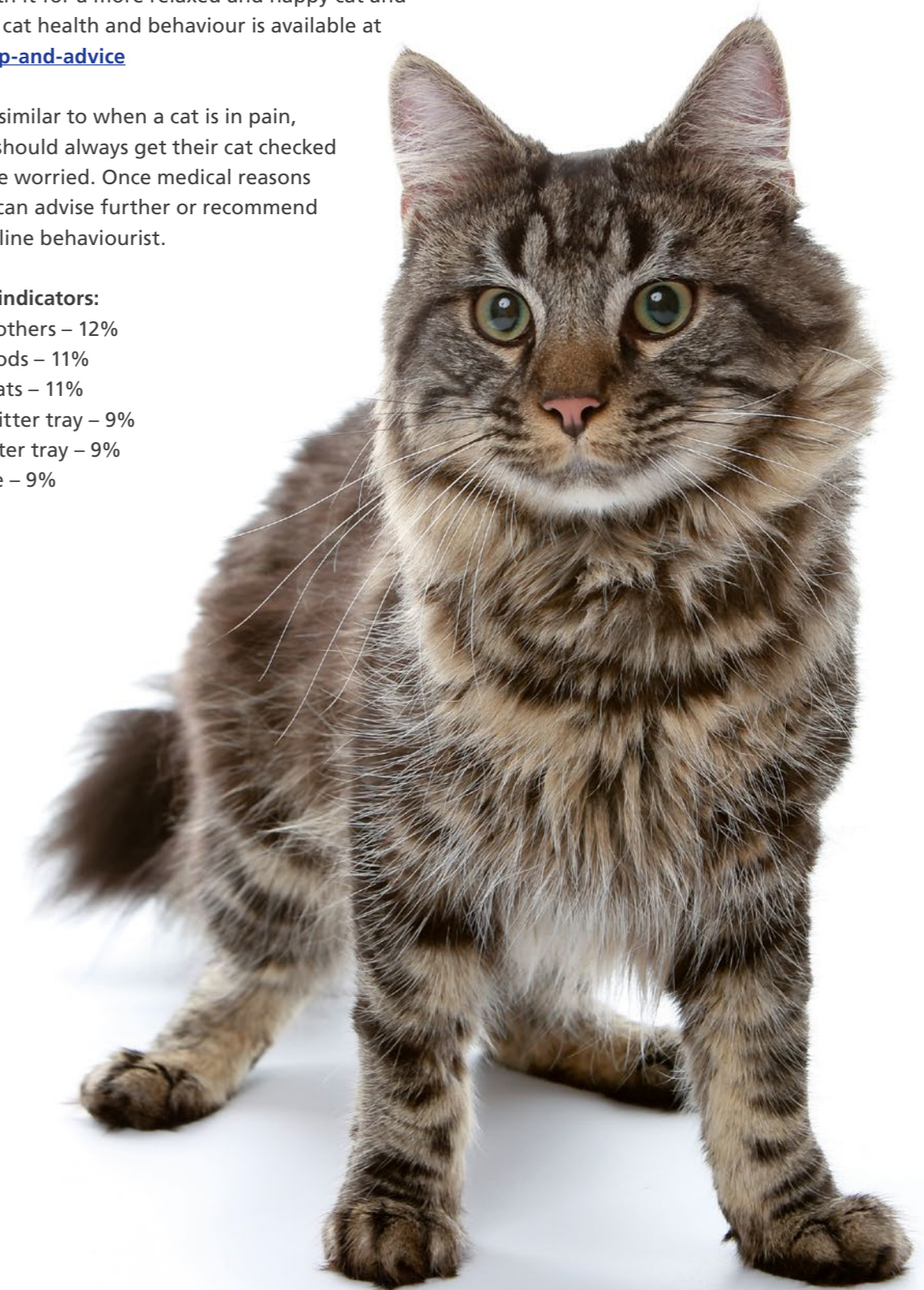
## Cats get stressed – how to tell?

Cats appear to be the epitome of calm and coolness but that can be just a front – cats are masters at disguising illness, injury and stress. Despite owners' best intentions many cats **(45%) exhibit signs of stressed behaviour**. These can be signs that something's wrong. Happily, many stress-related problems can be resolved, allowing owners to enjoy positive companionship with their cat once more. It will take a bit of effort but is well worth it for a more relaxed and happy cat and a wealth of advice on cat health and behaviour is available at [www.cats.org.uk/help-and-advice](http://www.cats.org.uk/help-and-advice)

Signs of stress can be similar to when a cat is in pain, which is why owners should always get their cat checked out by a vet if they are worried. Once medical reasons are ruled out the vet can advise further or recommend a suitably qualified feline behaviourist.

### Most frequent stress indicators:

- Bites/scratches me/others – 12%
- Hides for long periods – 11%
- Fights with other cats – 11%
- Defecates outside litter tray – 9%
- Urinates outside litter tray – 9%
- Runs away from me – 9%



## Cats in the night

Of those cats that are given outside access, 46% are able to come and go freely during the night. Dawn and dusk is when they are at their most active, a prime time for them to hunt rodents and other small prey.

Cats Protection always recommends that cats are kept in at night. Not only does it reduce predation of wildlife but it also keeps your cat safe. Cats are at increased risk from road traffic injuries and fatalities at night. They are also more inclined to fight, venturing into other cats' territories, and can come to harm by other animals or even humans.





# Cats and their welfare

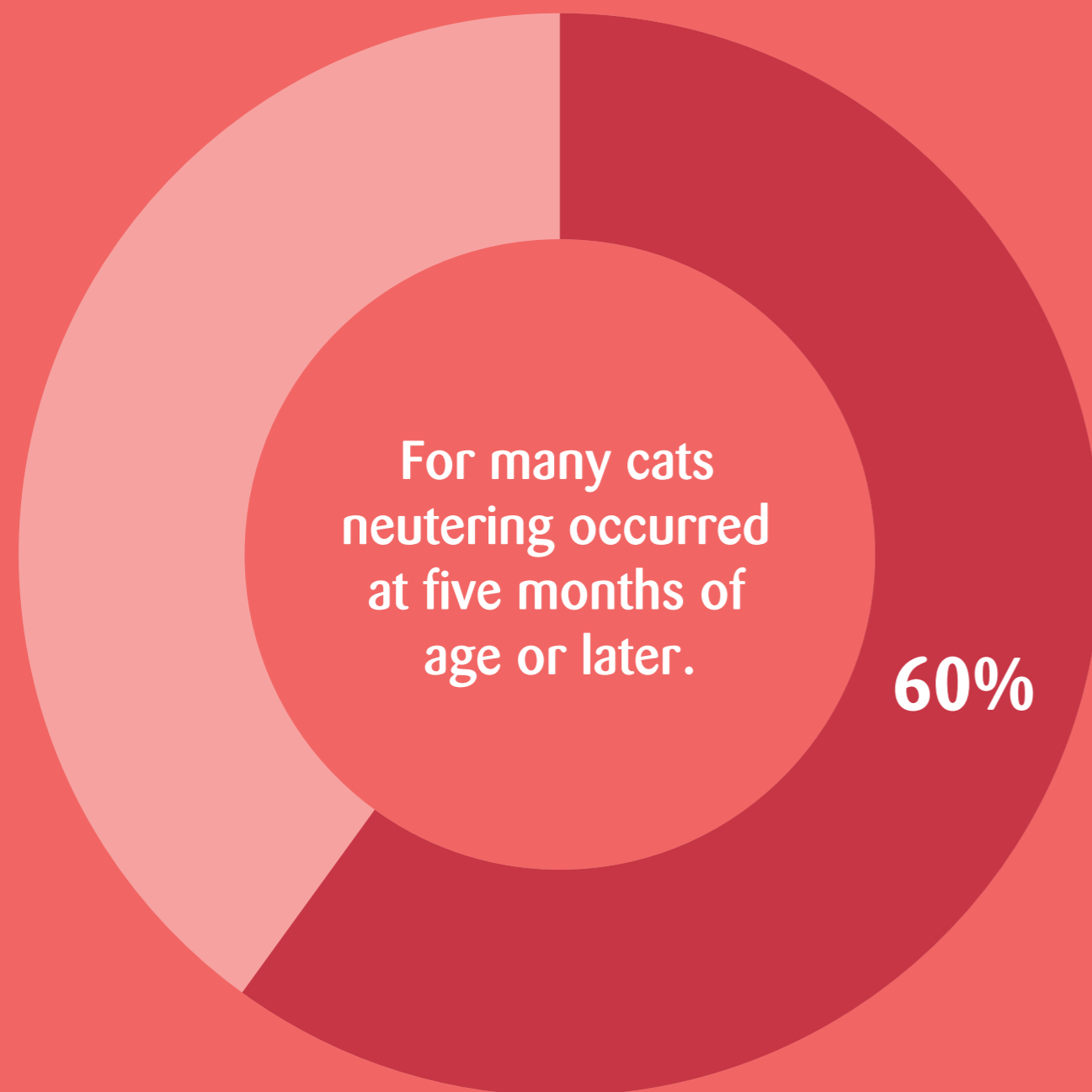
## Neutering

The majority of owned cats (88%) are neutered or spayed, although 16% of neutered females have a first litter before they are spayed.

Cats Protection recommends that cats should be neutered from four months old as this is when they can become sexually mature. For many cats (60%), however, neutering occurred at five months of age or later.

Indoor cats are less likely to be neutered (81%) but cats are veritable Houdinis and can escape through the smallest crack in an open window or door. So, Cats Protection recommends neutering indoor-only cats too. There are additional health benefits from neutering as well as controlling the population so it should be considered for all cats.

**?** Did you know that unneutered female cats can have up to three litters a year and 18 kittens a year?



## Microchips reunite

Microchipping is a **safe, permanent and low-cost** way of identifying an owned cat, and gives a lost cat the best chance of being reunited with their owner.

Despite this there are over **2.6 million owned cats still not microchipped across the UK** (26% of owned cats are not microchipped, 71% are, 3% don't know).

92% of microchipped cats have up-to-date registered details, cat owners told us.

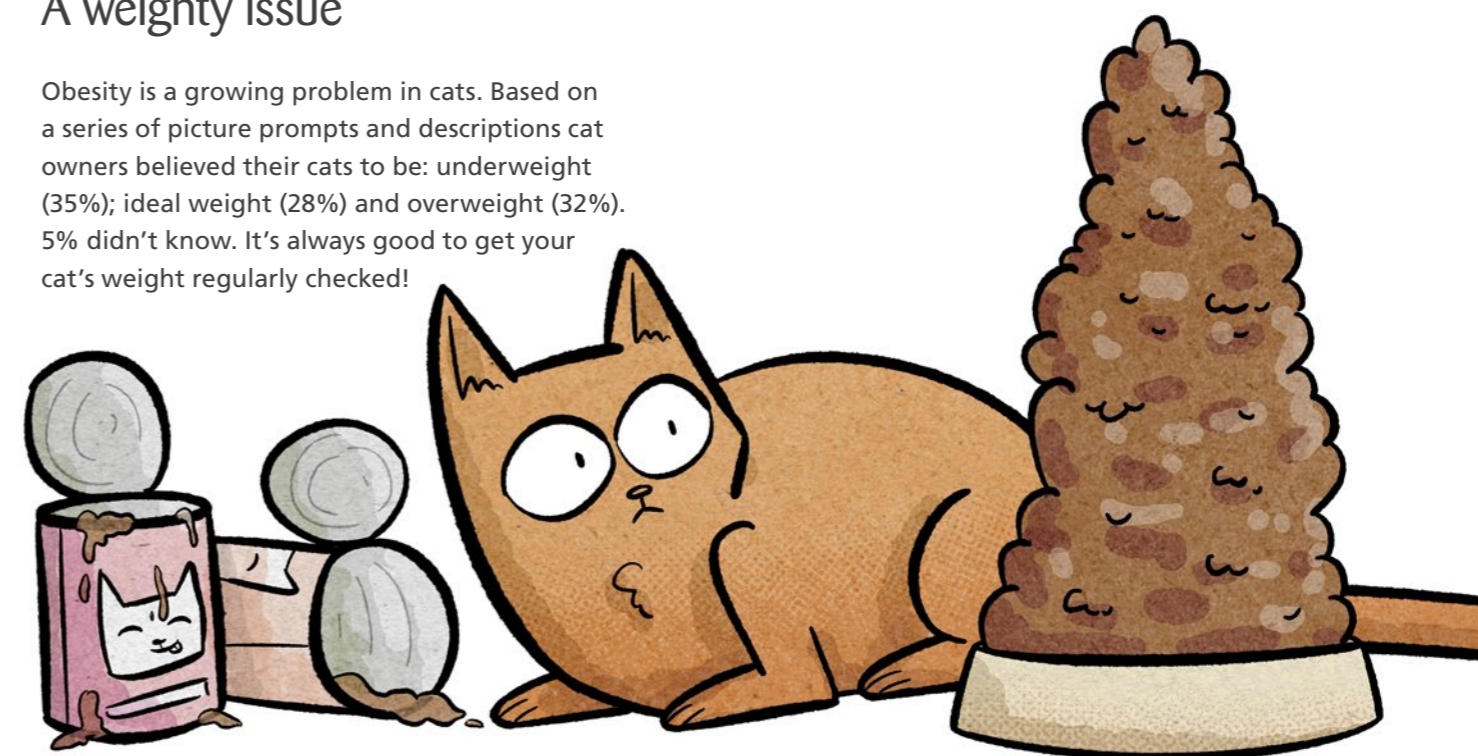
**?** Did you know that chipping has been compulsory for owned dogs since 2016 but still not for cats? Find out why chipping is essential and what Cats Protection is doing to make it compulsory for cats too: [www.cats.org.uk/microchips-reunite](http://www.cats.org.uk/microchips-reunite)

# 2.6m

**26% of owned cats are not microchipped**

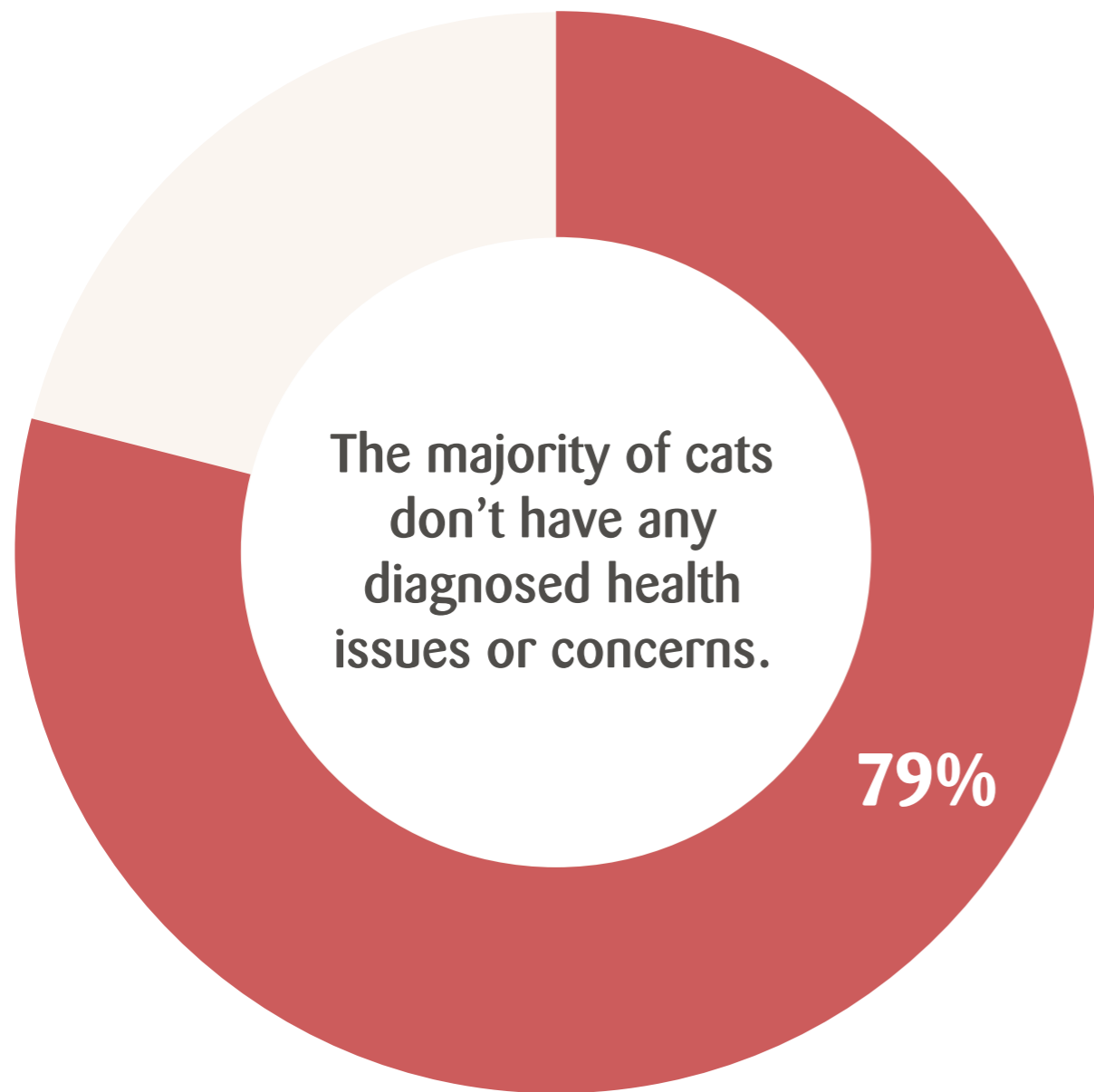
## A weighty issue

Obesity is a growing problem in cats. Based on a series of picture prompts and descriptions cat owners believed their cats to be: underweight (35%); ideal weight (28%) and overweight (32%). 5% didn't know. It's always good to get your cat's weight regularly checked!



### Know your cat's body shape

- Overweight cats are usually defined as being more than 15% over their ideal weight, and obese cats more than 30% over
- You **should be able to feel your cat's ribs easily** when you stroke their body lightly and you should clearly see a waistline when you look at them from above
- Stress can also be a symptom of overweight cats – if your cat is overweight, consider their diet, lifestyle, environment and the placement of their food, water and litter tray



## A clean bill of health

The majority of cats (79%) don't have any diagnosed health issues or concerns, which is great news! For those that do, the most frequently occurring are dental disease and obesity, both at 3%. Most of these can be picked up via regular vet checks.

- 3% dental disease
- 3% obesity
- 2% lower urinary tract disease
- 2% overgrooming
- 2% allergic skin disease

Regular vet check-ups, vaccinations, worm and flea treatment are routine for the majority of cats but despite the good intentions of

their owners a sizeable majority go without. 43% miss out on regular vet check-ups, cost being the greatest barrier to cats being taken to the vet more frequently (33%). 38% and 36% aren't regularly treated for worms and fleas respectively. Again this is more frequent among indoor cats. Moggies, rather than pedigrees, are more likely to miss out on regular vet visits. [www.cats.org.uk/finding-a-vet](http://www.cats.org.uk/finding-a-vet)

Whether indoor or outdoor, we strongly recommend all cats are microchipped, neutered and regularly treated for fleas and worms. Regular vet check-ups, at least yearly, can be combined with their annual vaccination.

## Accidents and cruelty

We also asked about injuries or accidents sustained by cats. Thankfully the majority of cats (74%) have never been injured. We found that one in four cats have sustained significant injuries or accidents. 11% of these were fights with other cats and 7% from other animals. Road traffic accidents were stated as cause of injury for 3%.

Sadly a sizeable number of owners reported injury as a result of cruelty. 1.7% of owners reported their cat had been poisoned, and a further 1.6% that their cat had been shot by an air gun – both equating to around 100k households across the UK.



Did you know that air guns are licensed in Scotland and Northern Ireland but not in England or Wales? Cats Protection is campaigning for licensing across the UK to protect our cats from harm:

[www.cats.org.uk/news/sign-the-petition-to-extend-air-gun-laws-to-england-and-wales](http://www.cats.org.uk/news/sign-the-petition-to-extend-air-gun-laws-to-england-and-wales)





# Barriers to cat ownership

We also spoke to many non-cat owners, those that had perhaps once owned a cat, or would like to but at present aren't able to.

- 21% Other pets make a cat unsuitable
- 19% Can't afford a cat
- 19% Others in household don't want a cat
- 18% Rent accommodation and aren't allowed a cat
- 16% Accommodation unsuitable for a cat

21%

19%

19%

18%

16%

Cats Protection is determined to break down the barriers that prevent cat ownership. We know that this isn't always possible but here's where we might be able to help.

## Unsuitable property

Even if people live somewhere with minimal access to the outdoors they can still adopt a cat. Some cats need to be 'indoors only' due to health issues such as poor vision or feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV). Some older or more timid **cats can also live indoors very successfully.**

All cats are different and the place you live does not necessarily need to be a barrier to happy cat ownership. Talk through your situation with someone from your local branch or centre and they'll be able to advise you further.



## We need more Purrfect Landlords!

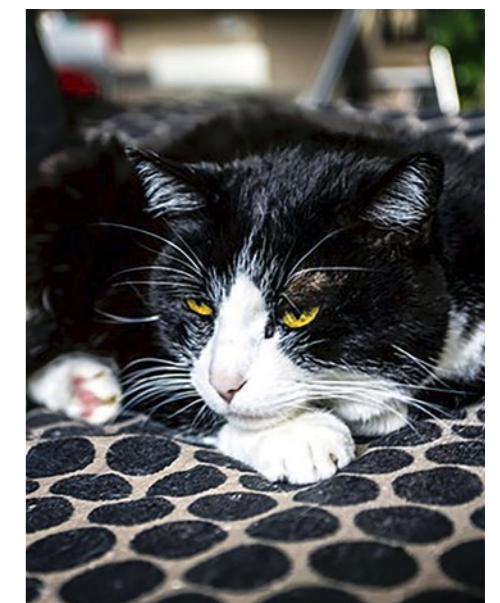
It's estimated that a staggering **1.6m more cats could be rehomed if ALL landlords allowed pets.** However, 47% of those that would like to own a cat live in rental properties, where it's common for tenancies to contain blanket 'no pets' policies.

With more and more people now renting, it's not just potential owners who are suffering. Landlords are missing out on a huge pool of responsible tenants who would treat properties as a valued home, and cats who could be rehomed are missing out because landlords are being inflexible.

We have lots of advice on how to approach landlords at [www.cats.org.uk/purrfectlandlords](http://www.cats.org.uk/purrfectlandlords)

## Allergies

These are not to be sniffed at but **allergies don't need to be a barrier.** People may react to some cats but not to others and there are a number of things that people can do to counteract allergic reactions: [www.cats.org.uk/cats-and-allergies](http://www.cats.org.uk/cats-and-allergies)









Reg Charity  
203644 (England and Wales)  
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