

CATS Report

Cats and Their Stats
UK 2023



CATS
PROTECTION

Contents

- 4 Methodology
- 6 Welcome
- 7 A message from Dr Christine Middlemiss,
UK Chief Veterinary Officer

8 | State of the nation

- 8 Cat population
- 9 Household cat ownership across the UK
- 10 Profile of cat owners
- 13 Is the cost of living affecting who is
acquiring cats?

14 | The cat market

- 20 The reality of the changing cat market
- 21 The need for regulation
- 22 A perfect storm for the rescue sector
- 24 Which groups are driving the change
in the market?
- 25 Here for all cats – and all owners
- 28 Cats from overseas
- 30 What type of cats do people have?
- 31 Pedigree vs purebred

34 | Veterinary care

- 34 Veterinary capacity
- 35 Vet registration
- 36 Vet visits
- 38 Insurance
- 39 Vaccinations
- 40 Parasite treatments
- 40 Flea treatment
- 40 Worming treatment
- 41 Responsible parasite protection
- 42 Neutering
- 43 Breeding
- 44 Microchipping
- 47 Health conditions and injury
- 48 Diet and body weight
- 50 Can't afford the vet?

52 | Cat care, welfare and behaviour

- 52 Sources of cat care information
- 56 A cat's environment
- 56 Indoor vs outdoor cats
- 58 Cats at night
- 58 Preventing cats from harm
- 59 Living with other pets
- 60 Behaviour and stress
- 64 Fireworks
- 65 Is escalating cost of living causing cats
to be more stressed?

66 | Companionship and challenges to ownership

- 66 Why we have cats
- 69 Cats as part of the family
- 69 Helping the most vulnerable
- 70 Barriers to cat ownership
- 71 Feline tenants welcomed
- 72 Life-long care and support
- 74 The ongoing cost of cats
- 75 Helping to lessen the pinch

76 | Cats in summary

78 | Where do we go from here? A message from John May, Chief Executive

82 | Services

Methodology

For the fourth year, we have commissioned an external and independent agency, Basis Research, to conduct the research contained in the CATS Report UK 2023.

An online survey was used to collect information among a nationally representative audience of adults over the age of 18 in the UK, allowing us to estimate the proportion of cat owners in the UK. We also conducted a more detailed survey among cat owners. This was carried out between 27 February 2023 and 13 April 2023. 'In the last 12 months' within the report refers to the time period March 2022 to March 2023 and unless otherwise stated, comparative data in this survey uses data from the CATS Report 2022.

The research consisted of a UK nationally representative sample of 3,500 individuals and a boost of 6,829 cat owners, including regional boosts to ensure accurate representation in these areas. Overall, 10,392 people participated in the study.

Data presentation

We work with Basis Research to calculate estimates of the cat population annually. Three data sources are used in this calculation:

- nationally representative online survey panel to determine the percentage of UK households who own a cat (n=3,500)
- data from the survey of cat owners on the number of cats owned by each household
- data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the number of households

Percentages throughout the report are rounded to the nearest whole number. Other figures, such as the estimated numbers of cats in the population, are rounded to two significant figures. When calculating cat estimates, we have taken the total estimated cat population figure and multiplied it by the whole percentage, for example 10% of all cats are not registered with a vet, equating to 1.1 million cats. Statistics and population calculations are estimates based on owner-reported responses to the online survey.

Significance testing is undertaken on the data at 99% and 95% confidence intervals. When a finding is referenced as significant within the report it has found to be significant at a 95% confidence interval. Due to rounding, there will be instances in the report where percentage calculations do not total 100%.

Cat acquisition: Throughout this report we look at recency of cat acquisition, typically looking at all those cats acquired in the last 12 months compared to another time period, for example over a year ago. The data is sourced from the question 'When did you acquire your cat?' in the CATS 2023 Research Survey.

Nationally representative sample: The population of interest is the entire population of the UK.

The nationally representative sample reflected its structure including gender, age, socio-economic groupings and regions.

More information available upon request.





Cats Protection is delighted to present the CATS Report 2023 – the most comprehensive survey of cat owners in the UK.

Understanding cat ownership is vital to understanding the lives of cats in the UK. The COVID-19 pandemic may be another year behind us, but the cost-of-living crisis continues, with many owners experiencing financial difficulties. The CATS Report 2023 aims to inform and support those playing a key role in ensuring and promoting a good life for cats.

Cats remain an ever-popular pet and there is strong evidence of the great benefits of cat ownership, with an increased number citing companionship and reducing loneliness and stress as the reason they choose to own a cat. 26% of households own the 11 million pet cats within the UK, and almost all of these consider their cat as part of their family.

The cost-of-living crisis is affecting cat ownership in different ways. This year, more owners couldn't afford to neuter their cat and we also saw more unplanned litters – a trend we're concerned will continue. Cats Protection has widened its neutering support, by offering a new, nationwide subsidised neutering programme.

We are also starting to see the cost-of-living crisis impact owners' ability to access veterinary care. This is the first year that owners report cost as the biggest hurdle to seeing a vet. Challenges with veterinary capacity, which in previous years were a considerable barrier to vet care access, are showing some signs of improvement.

However, problems with veterinary capacity are still present, particularly in urban areas. Cats Protection is working with the veterinary profession to examine how it can support vets and owners in the face of these challenges.

After years of campaigning, Cats Protection welcomed the announcement that the compulsory microchipping of all owned cats will be introduced in England from June 2024. However, the CATS Report has found that while there has been a small increase in the percentage of cats that are microchipped, there are still 3 million unchipped cats in the UK. Cats Protection is supporting more owners ahead of the legislation by now including microchipping as part of our neutering programme.

We are also continuing to see changes in how people obtain cats and the types of cats they are acquiring. The continued shift towards a preference to purchase cats presents challenges for animal welfare charities, as fewer cats are being adopted. It may also be fuelling issues such as kitten smuggling and poor breeding practices that have a detrimental impact on cat welfare. Cats Protection is calling for the government to introduce greater protections in these areas.

Cats Protection is here to help people see the world through cats' eyes. We hope to help achieve this by deepening our understanding of cats and the people caring for them, and in turn improve the lives of all cats.

**Kit Sturgess VetMB, PhD, DSAM, FRCVS
Chair of Trustees, Cats Protection**



A message from Dr Christine Middlemiss MRCVS, UK Chief Veterinary Officer

“Cats Protection has long championed compulsory cat microchipping and I am delighted that this year the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs announced it would be progressing with a requirement for all owned cats in England to be microchipped.

“Microchipping is by far the most effective and quickest way of identifying lost pets. As we’ve seen with dog microchipping, those who are microchipped are more than twice as likely to be reunited with their owner. By getting their cat microchipped, owners can increase the likelihood that they will be reunited with their beloved pet in the event of them going missing. It is promising to see an increase in chipping rates since the new microchipping rules were announced. The new rules mean cats must be implanted with a microchip before they reach the age of 20 weeks and their contact details stored and kept up to date in a pet microchipping database.

“All owners must have their cat microchipped by 10 June 2024 and owners found not to have microchipped their cat will have 21 days to have one implanted, or may face a fine of up to £500. More broadly, I welcome Cats Protection’s ongoing work to ensure the importance of education of the public about how to buy a pet safely and how to care for cats and kittens.”



State of the nation

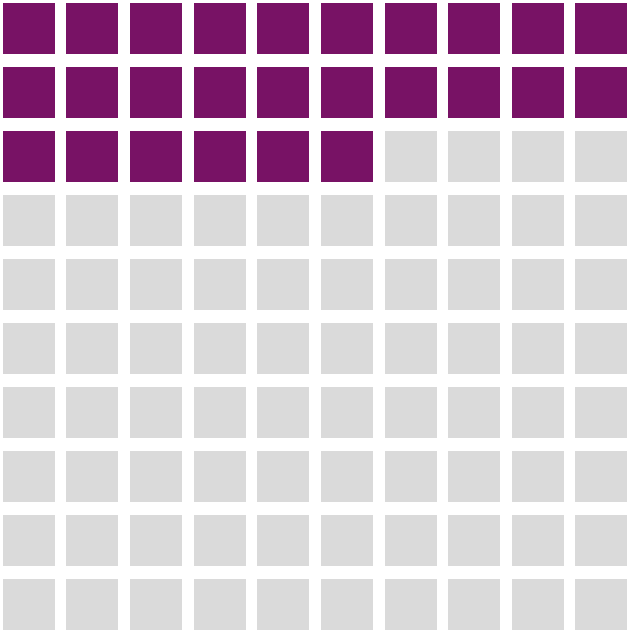
Key takeaways

- There are 11 million owned cats across the UK (11 million in 2022)
- A wide variety of people choose to own a cat – there is no ‘typical’ cat owner but overall, cat ownership does skew slightly younger than the population as a whole
- Concerns over living costs that may be preventing people in lower socio-economic grades from acquiring cats could be causing ownership to skew towards more affluent owners

Cat population¹

The cat population figures remain the same as last year:

26% of households in the UK own a cat



(26% in 2022)

There are **11 million owned cats**

across the UK (11 million in 2022)

The **average number of cats per household is 1.5 cats**, with 67% of cat-owning households having one cat, and 33% owning two or more cats.

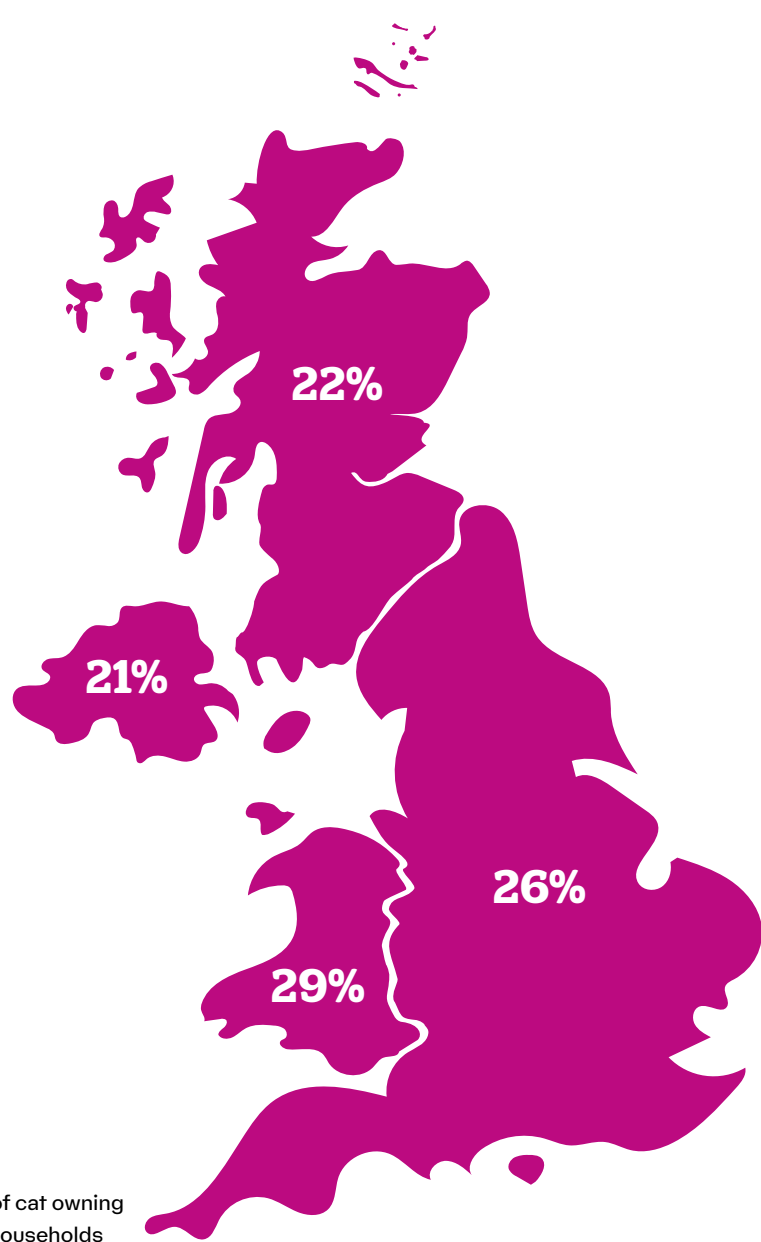
¹ Questions asked: Do you currently have a cat/s (that live with you)?/How many cats do you have in your household?

Example calculation: 26% own a cat in the UK x 28.1m UK households* x 1.5 cats owned on average = 11 million cats owned across the UK.

*Source: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/datasets/familiesandhouseholds England regional breakdowns only. Sample size too small for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland regions.

Household cat ownership across the UK¹

Cat ownership levels vary across the UK, ranging from 21% of households in Northern Ireland owning one or more cats, to 29% of households in Wales, with no statistically significant changes from last year's figures.



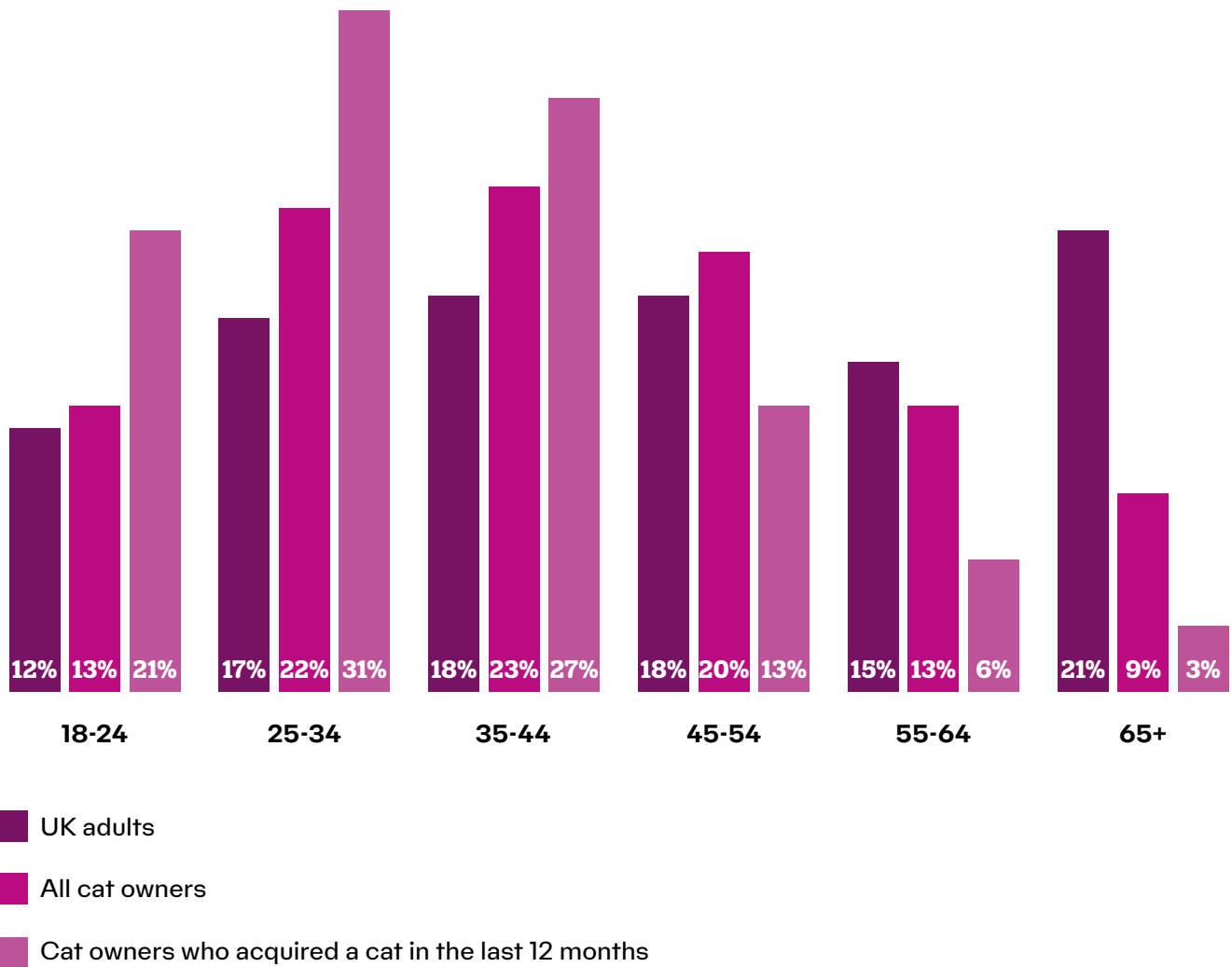
Owned cat population

	In millions		% of cat owning households	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
Total UK	11	11	26%	26%
Wales	0.6	0.6	28%	29%
England	9.2	9.2	26%	26%
Scotland	0.9	0.8	24%	22%
Northern Ireland	0.3	0.2	26%	21%
East of England	1.2	1.2	29%	30%
West Midlands	1.0	1.1	26%	30%
Greater London	1.4	1.4	29%	29%
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.8	1.0	22%	28%
South East England	1.4	1.4	25%	25%
South West England	0.9	0.9	26%	25%
North West England	1.2	1.1	24%	23%
North East England	0.3	0.4	19%	22%
East Midlands	0.9	0.7	27%	22%

Profile of cat owners²

Overall, a variety of people from all ranges of socio-economic backgrounds and regional demographics own cats. Cat ownership does skew slightly younger than the general population as a whole however, and ownership has increased in the 35-44 age group and fallen among those aged 45-54, compared to last year. There is no significant difference between the proportion of people owning cats in different resident areas or types, compared to last year, but there are significantly fewer male owners.

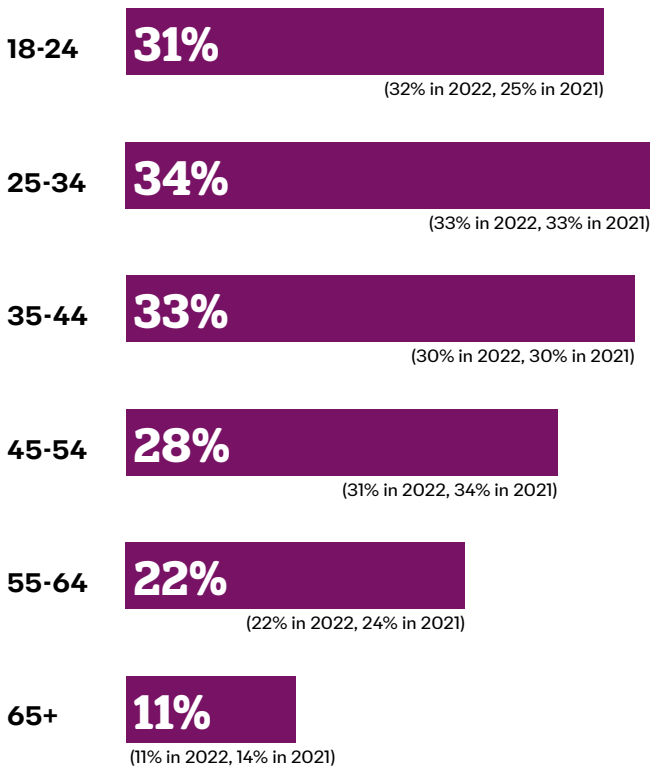
The age of cat owners compared to UK households



UK cat owners are less likely to be over the age of 65 when compared to the general population and those acquiring a cat in the last 12 months tend to be younger than the overall profile of cat owners.

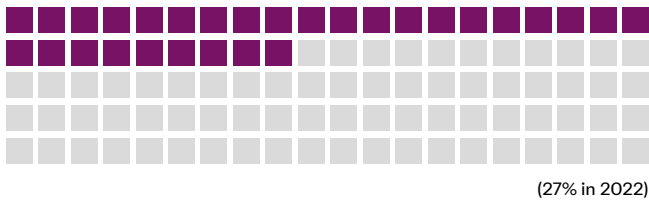
² Questions asked: Do you currently have a cat/s (that live with you)?/How many cats do you have in your household?/When did you acquire (e.g. buy/adopt) your cat?

Proportion of each age group that owns a cat

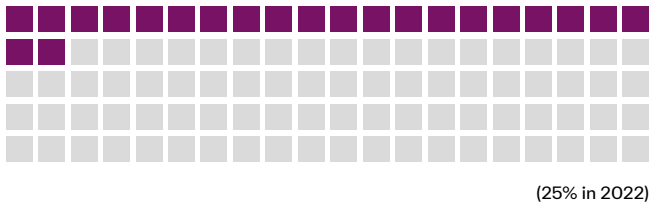


Gender and cat owners

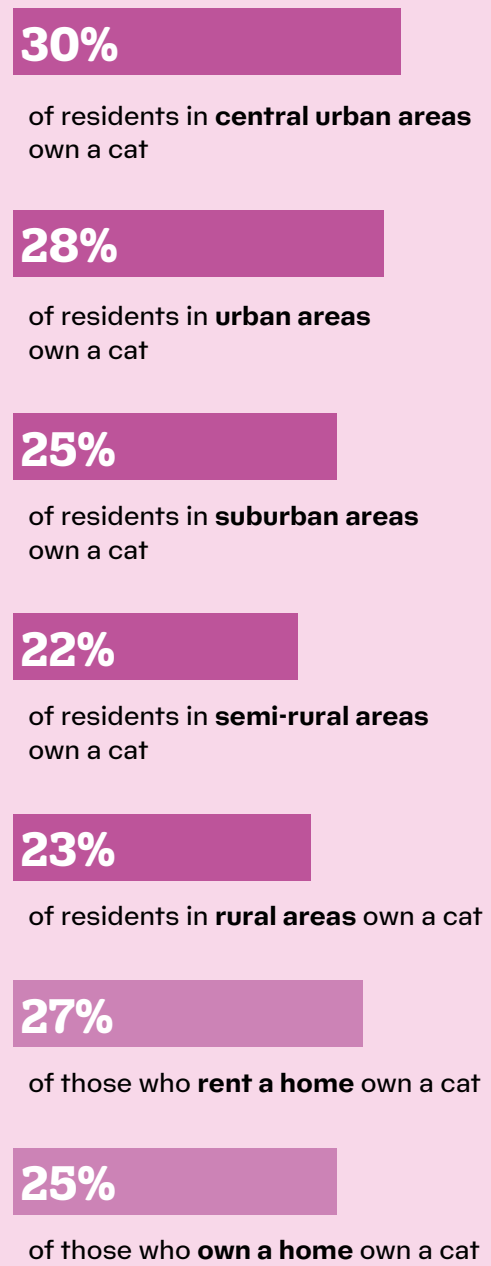
29% of females in the UK own a cat



22% of males in the UK own a cat



Residence status and cat owners³



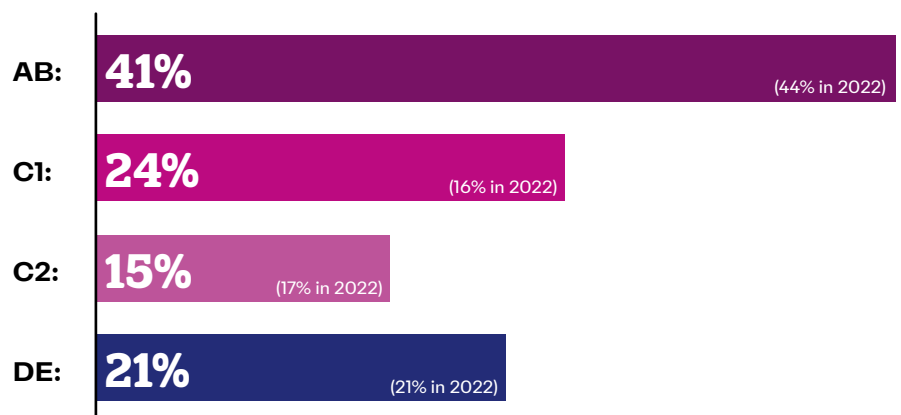
³ Questions asked: Thinking about your main home (where you live most of the time), which of the following best describes its location?/Thinking about your main home, what is the ownership situation?



Is the cost of living affecting who is acquiring cats?⁴

Compared to last year, more cats have been acquired in socio-economic grade ABC1 and fewer in C2DE in the last 12 months. Concerns over living costs that are preventing people in lower socio-economic grades from acquiring cats may be leading to ownership skewing to more affluent owners. Ongoing monitoring and investigation is required to establish the significance and possible causes of these changes, especially as the nation continues to face a cost-of-living crisis.

Profile of cat owners that have acquired a cat in the last 12 months by social grade



⁴ Question asked: Do you currently have a cat/s (that live with you)?

Approximated social grade is a socio-economic classification that has six categories: A, B, C1, C2, D and E. It applies to every UK household and is based on determining the employment category of the main income earner in a household. More information about approximated social grades can be found at www.ukgeographics.co.uk/blog/social-grade-a-b-c1-c2-d-e

The cat market

Key takeaways

- Adoption rates from rescue and rehoming charities are continuing to decline over time. Although long-term trends seem to suggest that the proportion buying their cats appears to be stabilising, cats acquired in the last 12 months are more likely to have been purchased compared to the cat population as a whole
- Fewer cats are being bought on Facebook; this follows campaigning by Cats Protection for the platform to clamp down on live animal sales that are banned by Facebook
- The trend away from moggies towards higher value pedigree or purebred cats appears to be continuing, potentially increasing the risk that cats will be exploited for profit



16%⁵ of the current cat population were acquired during the last 12 months, equating to nearly 1.8 million cats – no significant change from last year.

How cats were acquired (all cats in current cat population)⁵



This equates to a current UK pet cat population where around:

3.5 million were bought*

690,000 in the last 12 months

2.6 million were adopted from UK rescue/rehoming centres/animal shelters

260,000 in the last 12 months

2.5 million were taken on or taken in**

400,000 in the last 12 months

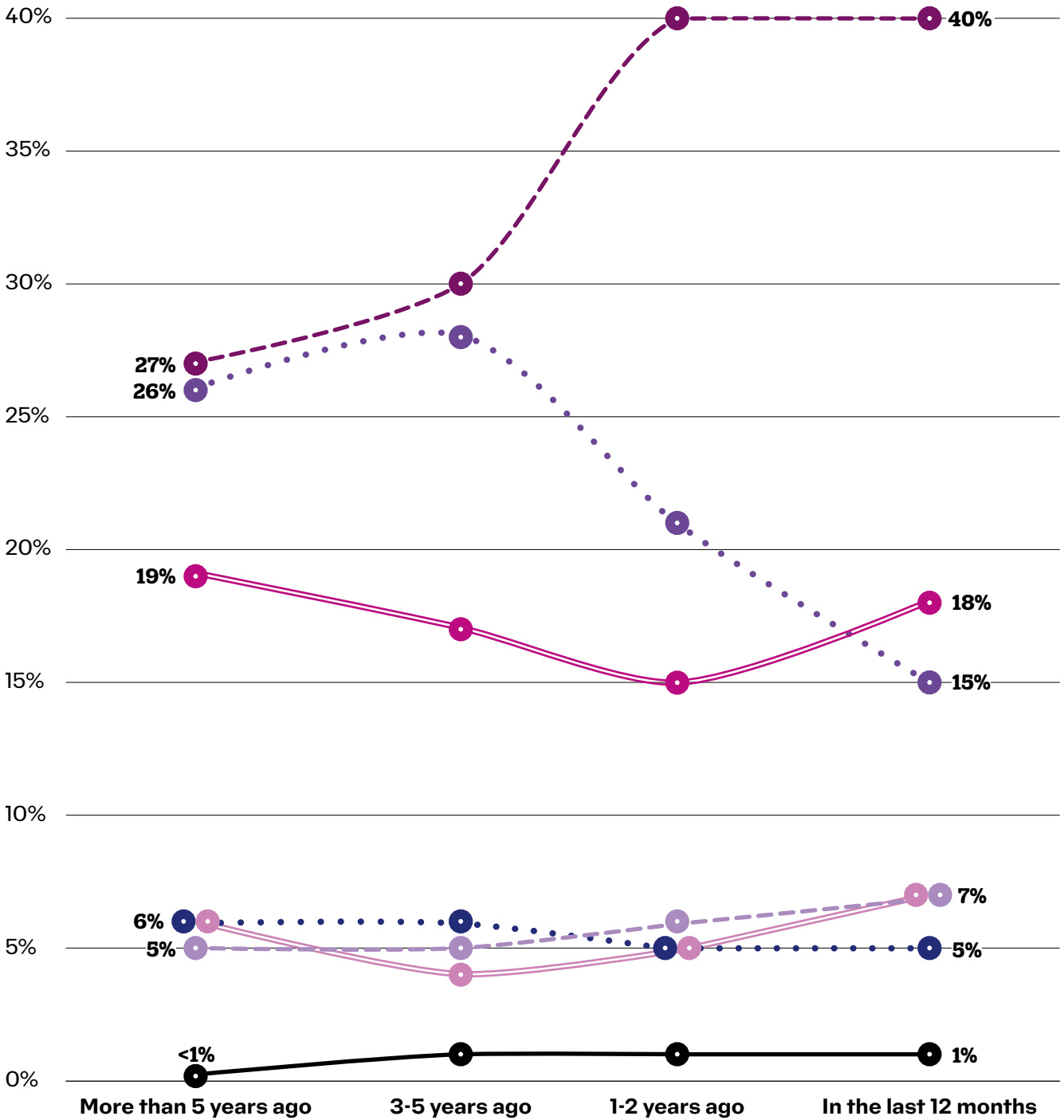
The additional 2.5m cats were acquired from other sources.

*Bought from a specialist breeder in the UK, bought from someone I know but not a specialist breeder, bought from a neighbour/friend/family, bought from a pet shop, bought from a specialist breeder overseas. **Taken on from a neighbour/friend/family or found as a stray and taken in.

⁵ Questions asked: Where did you get/adopt your cat from?/When did you acquire (e.g. buy/adopt) your cat? Excluding those who say they bought their cat but didn't pay anything.

The remaining 15% of cats were acquired in one of the following ways: given as a gift, my cat adopted me (e.g. started coming in for food and stayed), from an individual I did not know offering them for free, other.

How are people acquiring cats over time?⁵



- Bought (dashed purple line)
- Adopted from a rescue/rehoming centre/animal shelter in the UK (dotted purple line)
- Taken on from a neighbour/friend/family (double solid pink line)
- Found as a stray and taken in (dotted blue line)
- Kitten from an already owned cat (double solid pink line)
- Given as a gift (dashed purple line)
- Adopted from overseas charity (solid black line)

The long-term upward trend for people to buy their cat seems to be levelling out, but adoption continues to decline – something that is explored in more depth later in this report.

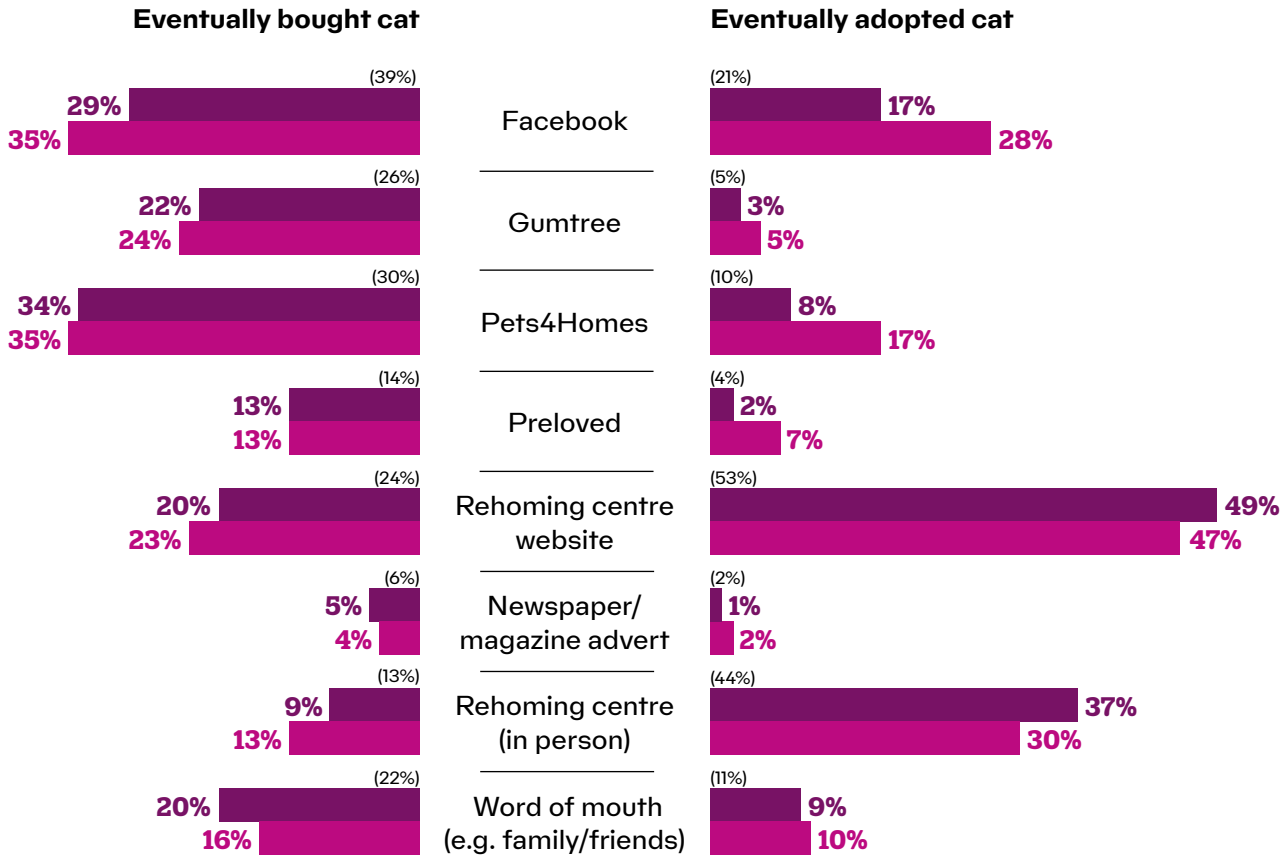
This year, for the first time in the CATS Report, the percentage of owners claiming in the last 12 months to have ‘taken on’ a cat from a neighbour, friend or family has surpassed the percentage of people claiming to have adopted from a rescue in the UK. Later in this section we explore the pressures on the rescue sector, which is currently facing high waiting lists for people to give up their cat – it may be that those unable to relinquish are instead giving their cats to neighbours, friends and family.



Where do people look to find cats before they acquire?⁶

Anytime – 2022 data is in (brackets)

In the last 12 months



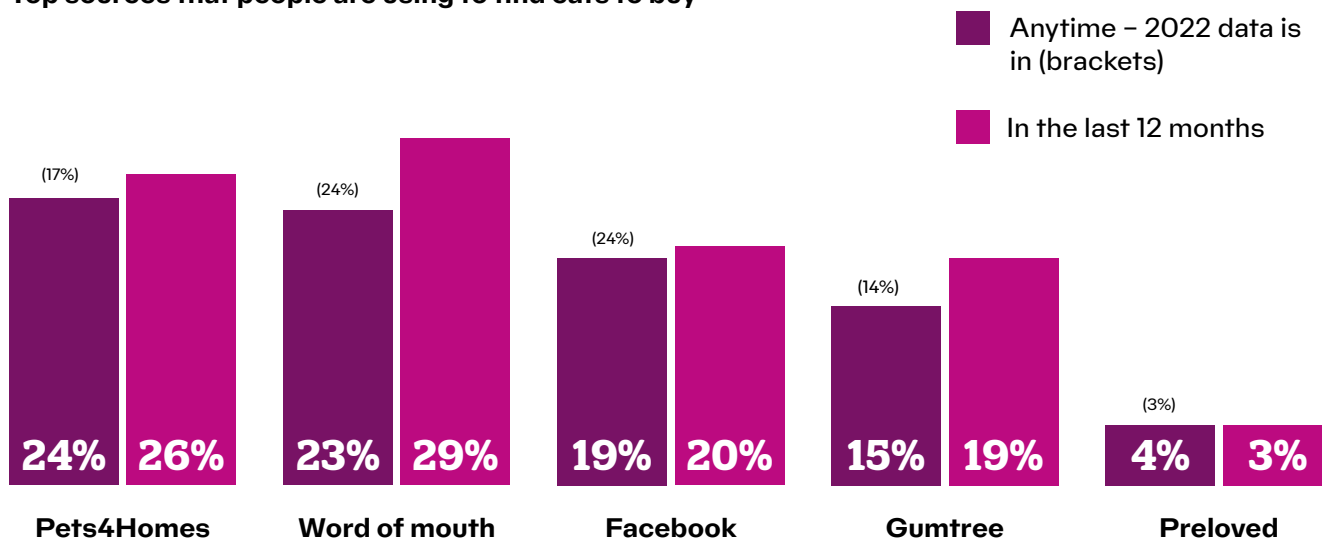
“Cats Protection works with the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) to tackle irresponsible advertising of pets for sale by setting out advertising standards, which many of the popular classified sites sign up to. Cats Protection has also been piloting a new programme, where volunteers monitor the adverts on popular online platforms to ensure good welfare practices are being met. Any adverts that don’t meet the requirements set by PAAG are reported to the websites and logged with Cats Protection, allowing the charity to keep on top of any concerning trends in the online marketplace.”

Jade Emery, Campaigns & Advocacy Officer, Cats Protection



⁶ Question asked: Which of the following sources did you use to look for a cat before you bought/adopted them?/Where did you buy/adopt your cat from?/When did you acquire (e.g. buy/adopt) your cat? – filtered by bought cats and excludes those that say ‘don’t know/can’t remember’.

Top sources that people are using to find cats to buy⁷



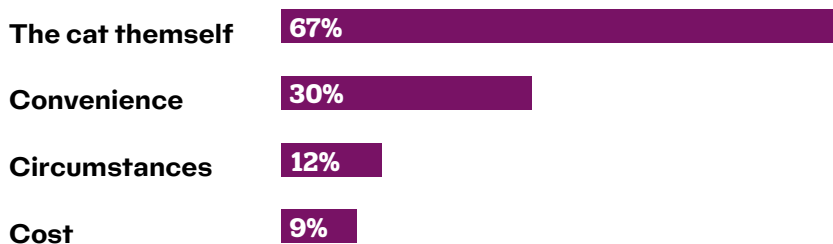
As our lives become increasingly digital, it is unsurprising that online sources remain popular for people to look for and eventually source their cats to buy.

Of all cats purchased, 63% were bought from online sources^{7a}

71% for those cats purchased in the last 12 months

The reasons why owners chose the source that they eventually purchased their cat from⁸

Factors relating to...*



The emotion and desire for the actual cat themselves is by far the most compelling reason that people choose the eventual source of purchase for their cat, outstripping practical and financial reasons.

⁷ Where did you find the cat or kitten you went on to buy/adopt?/When did you acquire (e.g. buy/adopt) your cat? - filtered by bought cats and excludes those that say 'don't know/can't remember'.

a. Figure calculated through those selecting Pets4Homes, Facebook, Gumtree, Preloved and Other website.

⁸ Question asked: Why did you end up buying/adopting your cat/kitten from this source?

*Codes included:

Cost: it was the cheapest option, I didn't want to pay an adoption fee.

Convenience: it was the easiest, most hassle-free option, it was the quickest way of getting a cat.

The cat itself: I very much wanted this particular cat, I fell in love with a photo or video of this cat, I wanted a particular breed, I specifically wanted a kitten and it was the only place I could get one from.

Circumstances: the owner was moving away, the owner was moving into rented accommodation, the cat previously belonged to someone that died, to help out a friend, to help out a family member.

The reality of the changing cat market

Unfortunately, we are now starting to see the reality of many of the concerning market shifts that Cats Protection has been highlighting to both the sector and government since the inception of the CATS Report.

Waiting lists for cats to be relinquished in the rescue sector are growing, while purebred cats continue to be sold for thousands of pounds online, and the welfare needs of breeding animals and their offspring remain inadequately protected (with the notable exception of Scotland, which has introduced cat breeding regulations).





The need for regulation

Behind the online adverts hid lies, cruelty and fraud...

Following an investigation by the RSPCA and Trading Standards, a man and woman received jail sentences of over three years and a lifetime ban on keeping animals after they were found guilty of animal welfare and fraud offences for selling sick kittens online.

Using 33 different names across multiple selling sites, the pair lied about health checks, gender, age and breed of the kittens. The woman even falsely claimed to be a vet nurse. When unsuspecting new owners met their pet, kittens were often in terrible condition – weak, thin, dirty and suffering from various health conditions. Promised official paperwork was proven to be fraudulent or never materialised.

When buyers attempted to contact the sellers, they were often ignored, blocked or told there was nothing wrong with the kitten that they had been sold. Even during the investigation, the criminals made attempts to cover their tracks by hiding and wiping mobile phones used during transactions. With kittens priced anywhere between £50 and £1,500, the pair are estimated to have made in the region of £280,000 since 2015.

Tragically, many kittens that were sold or found at the property that the sellers operated out of either died or had to be euthanased, despite extensive veterinary care in some cases.

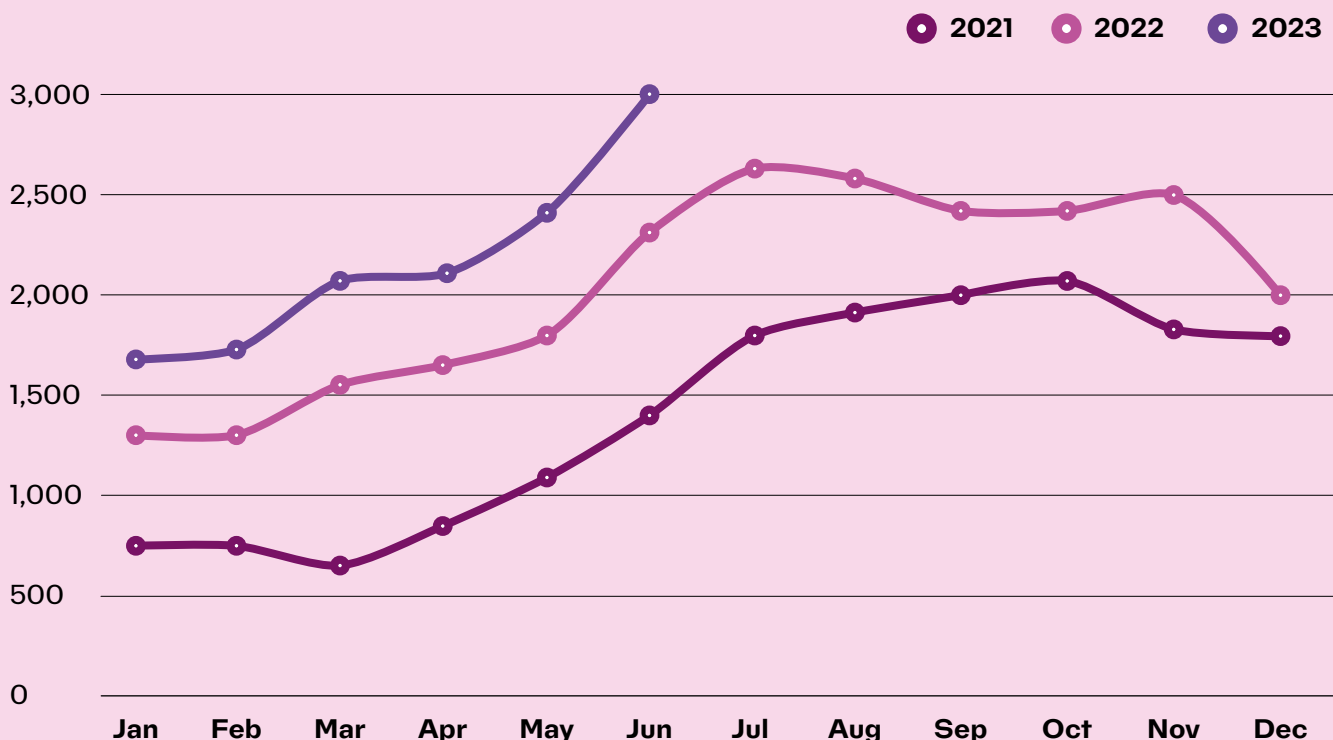
This case highlights just how easy it is for unscrupulous people to pose online as respectable, trustworthy breeders and seek to profit from an unregulated market. This is why it is vital that cat breeding legislation is introduced to ensure the welfare of cats within the commercial cat trade.

A good breeder should always be happy to let prospective owners see kittens with their mother. Better still, cat lovers should first consider one of the many cats that are currently available for adoption and in search of a caring home.

A perfect storm for the rescue sector

Cats Protection's own data shows that while demand for adopting cats is decreasing, supply from people looking to relinquish their cats is increasing. Waiting lists for people looking to relinquish their cats have been at capacity at many centres throughout 2023.

The rise in the number of cats on waiting lists at Cats Protection's adoption centres since 2021



Given that cat acquisition has remained consistent, the move away from adoption suggests that those looking to obtain cats are simply not seeing adoption as a viable option.

Whether that is because of potential owner concerns around the homing process or even being accepted as an adopter, or the sector simply not being able to offer the types of cats that people want needs further work to understand. What is clear though, is that this trend cannot be ignored.

It is crucial that the public see the rescue sector as accessible, trustworthy and reliable. This is why Cats Protection is calling for regulation of animal welfare establishments to be introduced across the whole of the UK.

“Cats Protection recognises the challenges faced by the sector and is working to face them head-on by staying informed and relevant, while being supportive and proactive in its approach.

“As well as looking to constantly improve our interaction with cat owners and potential cat owners, the charity is also working to understand the full lifecycle of contact between us and supporters, from our homing processes onwards. We work hard to match responsible owners with appropriate cats, but also to keep cats in homes where possible – for the benefit of the cat, their owner and to tackle the oversupply we are seeing. By helping those that may otherwise end up relinquishing their cat, we aim to lead the sector response in addressing the changing market.”



Mike Elliott, Feline Welfare & Operations Director, Cats Protection



“Association of Dogs and Cats Homes (ADCH) Members have seen a 5.1% reduction in cats being rehomed, so it is vital that we understand what is going on in the sector. The CATS Report provides vital data on the changes being seen in the commercial market for cats, which we can utilise to plan for future issues down the line.

“ADCH will continue to work with and support all members of the rescue sector to ensure that the offering from rescues is appealing to the new demographics of potential cat owners.”

Giles Webber, Chair ADCH



The ADCH, the leading representative body for dog and cat rescue and rehoming organisations, works to ensure minimum animal welfare and operating standards are in place for member organisations and is well aware of these issues.

Which groups are driving the change in the market?

For cats acquired in the last 12 months, younger cat owners, and those living in southern and central urban areas are significantly more likely to have purchased their cat than adopted them⁹.

First-time owners are less likely to have a moggy (51%) than those who have had cats since childhood (68%) or had cats most/all of their adult life (64%)¹¹. All owners are just as likely to have bought or adopted their cat, regardless of ownership experience, however. For cats acquired in the last 12 months, moggies are less likely to be owned by male owners (43%, female: 54%) and younger owners (18-34: 44%, 35-54: 52%, 55+: 75%)^{11a}. This distribution pattern is echoed for all cats, although the actual percentages are consistently higher (male: 57%, female: 66%, 18-34: 51%, 35-54: 65%, 55+: 76%)¹¹.

14% of cat owners are first-timers, with a higher proportion living in central urban areas (18%) and specifically Greater London (20%)¹⁰

⁹ Question asked: Thinking about your main home (where you live most of the time), which of the following best describes its location? Base: Acquired a cat in the last 12 months.

¹⁰ Question asked: How long have you been a cat owner?

¹¹ Question asked: What breed is your cat? I.e. moggy, cross-breed, specific pedigree breed.

a. Filtered by acquired in the last 12 months.

Here for all cats – and all owners

Cats Protection has a wealth of information available for those looking to bring a cat into their lives for the first time or those that have had cats for years and want to know more. From practical advice such as when to neuter, to helping owners better understand their cat and how they communicate, all Cats Protection educational resources are aimed at improving cat welfare and owner confidence – whoever they are.

Find out more at www.cats.org.uk



Cats on Facebook

Owners looking for cats* on Facebook⁶

29%

(39% in 2022)

Bought cats found on Facebook⁷

19%

(24% in 2022)

As a social media platform, rather than a classified advertising site, Facebook has not signed up to the Pet Advertising Advisory Group's (PAAG) voluntary advertising standards. This means that the platform is potentially more attractive to unscrupulous sellers, risking more tragic stories of cats being bred under unsuitable circumstances and underage, sick or injured kittens being put up for sale.

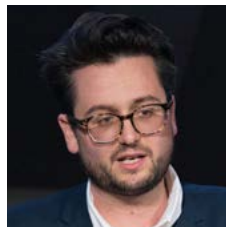
Facebook imposes a ban on the sale of cats between private individuals but does allow legitimate rescues to operate. Given the numbers claiming to have used Facebook to find a cat to buy, it does appear that this ban is still not fully effective.

However, following extensive campaigning by Cats Protection, direct dialogue with Facebook and decisive action by the social platform over the past few years, it is encouraging to see that fewer people are using Facebook to look for and eventually buy their cats this year. However, considering the private sale of animals is banned on Facebook, the purchase figures are still relatively high and a cause for concern.

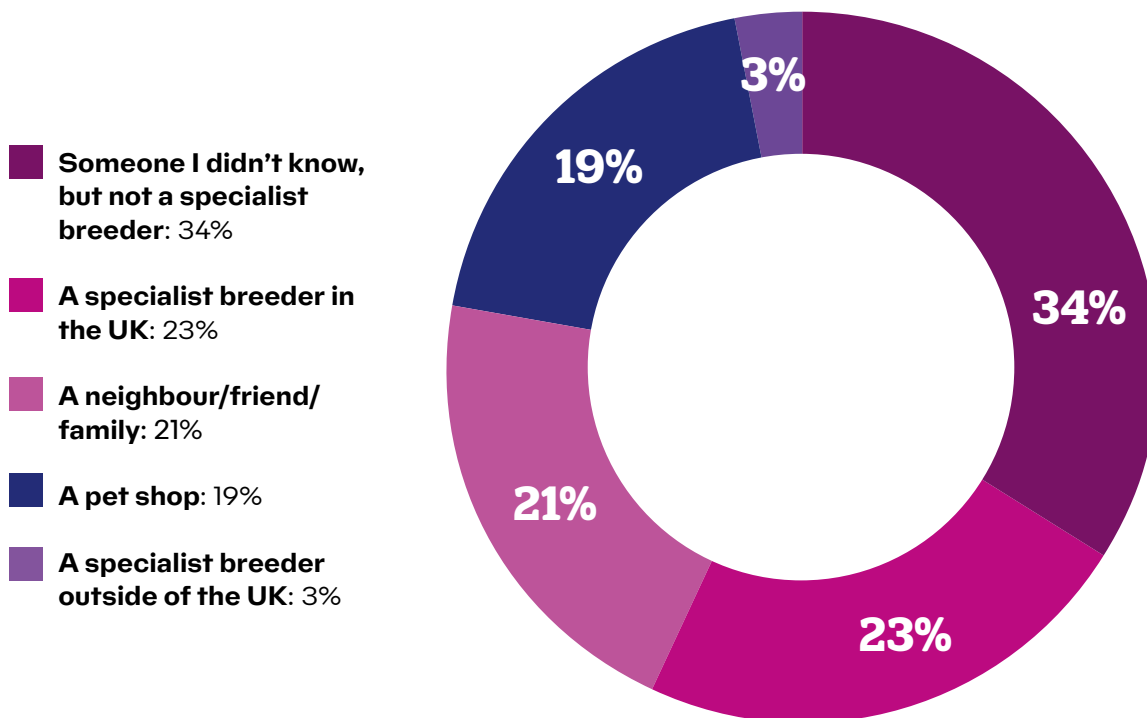
*cats which went on to be purchased

“Cats Protection remains extremely concerned about the high proportion of cats that are being found on Facebook for purchase. However, the charity very much welcomes the decrease in cats being obtained in this way and is grateful for Facebook’s efforts in this area – we hope Meta, the company that owns Facebook, will continue to tackle this issue further.”

Stefan Blakiston Moore, Advocacy & Digital Campaigns Manager, Cats Protection



Where are cats found on Facebook in the last 12 months bought from?¹²



A higher proportion of people purchased their cat from an 'unknown person that is not a specialist breeder' than in 2022 (27%). While it is difficult to interpret exactly who these individuals selling on Facebook are, the fact that buyers are more likely to identify them as 'not a specialist breeder' perhaps indicates more casual sellers, which may be more likely to be in breach of Facebook's own rules.

Regardless of who a prospective cat owner is buying from, Cats Protection always encourages thorough research before purchase, particularly online.

To try to help ensure good welfare and health, Cats Protection advises anyone looking to buy a cat or kitten to use the Kitten Checklist. This list includes advice such as seeing the kitten with their mother, guidance on assessing health and socialisation, along with additional recommendations if considering the purchase of a pedigree.

The Kitten Checklist can be found at www.cats.org.uk/media/3722/the-kitten-checklist.pdf



¹² Questions asked: Where did you get/adopt your cat from?/When did you acquire (e.g. buy/adopt) your cat? Filtered all bought cats found on Facebook.

Cats from overseas¹³

3% of cats acquired in the last 12 months were from an overseas source (5% in 2022). This equates to approximately 50,000 cats, down from last year's estimate of 80,000. The decrease in cats being imported from overseas this year was anticipated, due to a temporary ban being put in place from April to September 2022 on commercial pet imports from Ukraine and its neighbours, following the Russian invasion. Following this ban, tighter controls for commercial imports of pets from 'higher risk countries' were introduced to protect biosecurity.

CATS Report estimate for cats bought or adopted from an overseas source in last 12 months: 50,000

(80,000 in 2022)

	21/22	22/23
Government estimates for number of cats entering the UK	41,361	46,206
Government figure for commercial imports	10,959*	6,859**
Government figure for non-commercial imports	30,402*	39,347**

¹³ Questions asked: Where did you buy/adopt your cat from?/When did you acquire (e.g. buy/adopt) your cat? Some responses cleaned from data.

*government (DEFRA) figures Apr 21 – Mar 22

**government (DEFRA) figures Apr 22 – Mar 23

www.gov.uk/guidance/import-live-animals-and-germinal-products-to-great-britain-under-balai-rules#commercial-imports

However, due to an increase in cats coming into the UK non-commercially according to data provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the overall figure for cats coming into the UK has increased, whereas the CATS Report estimate has decreased. This is because the CATS Report estimate is closer in comparison to the government's commercial figure in that it specifically relates to cats that have been bought or adopted from an overseas source, which is similar to the government's commercial import criteria*. The non-commercial figures include things such as cats travelling on holiday with their owner.

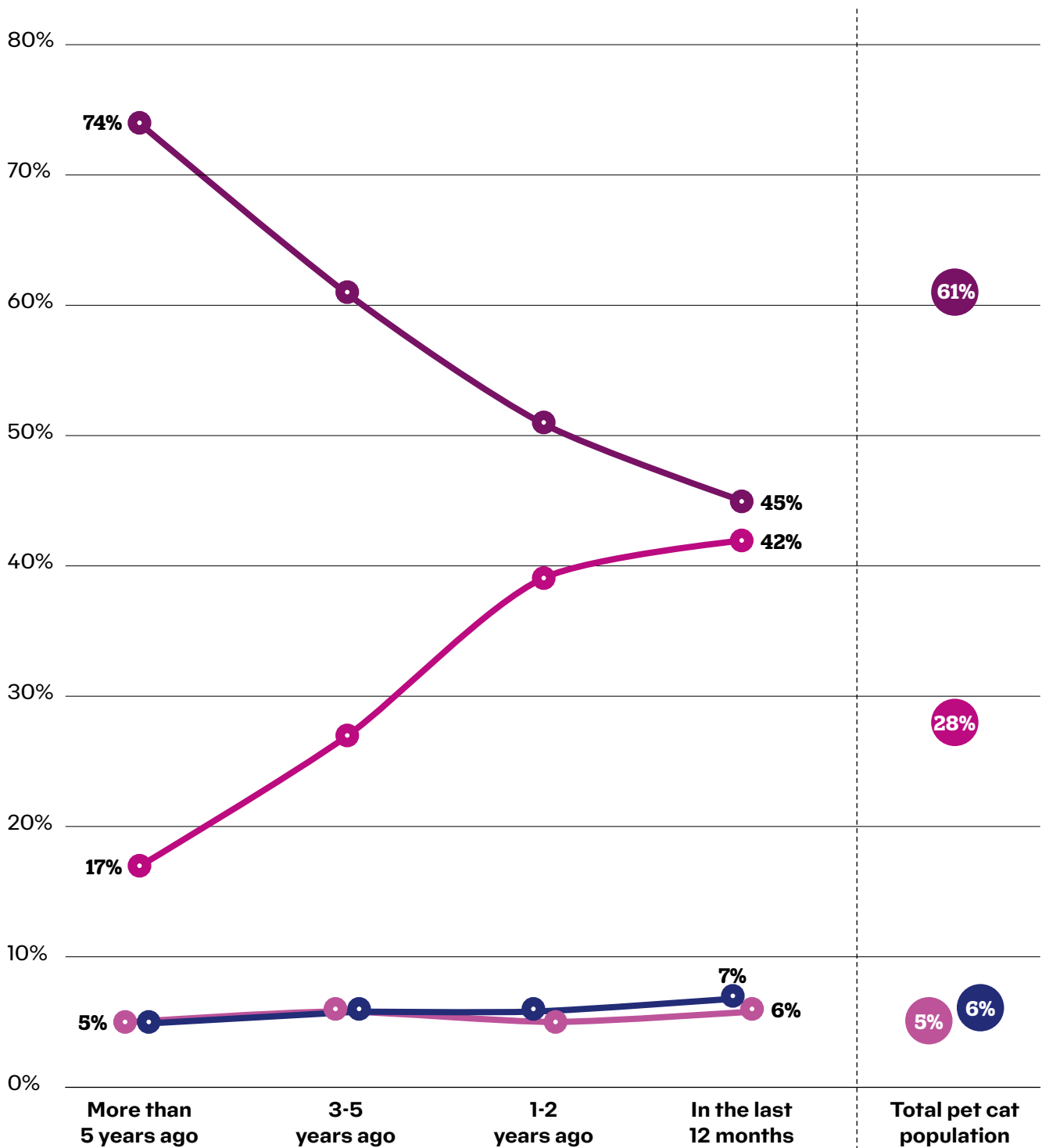
Interestingly, like with the CATS Report estimate, the government's figure for commercial imports decreased from last year by almost exactly the same percentage that the CATS Report import figure estimated (Defra commercial imports: down 38%, CATS Report overseas acquisition: down 37%).

The CATS Report estimates continue to raise concerns about the potential for cat and kitten smuggling.



What type of cats do people have?

Percentage of cat breed types obtained over time¹⁴



- Moggy/domestic shorthair or longhair
- Cross-breed (non moggy)
- Pedigree/purebred
- Don't know

¹⁴ Questions asked: What breed is your cat?/
When did you acquire (e.g. buy/adopt) your cat?



Although moggies remain the most commonly owned type of cat, the gradual decline in the proportion of the cat population being moggies continues. For cats obtained in the last 12 months, the moggy and pedigree acquisition figures are closer than ever and if this trend continues next year, pedigree cat acquisitions may exceed moggy acquisitions for the first time. Over the next 10-15 years, this could mean an overall UK cat population with more pedigree cats than moggies.

Pedigree vs purebred

Purebred: a specific breed of cat produced through selective breeding, and both parents are of the same breed.

Cross-breed: A breed of cat produced through breeding with different breeds, for example two different purebreds or a purebred and a non-purebred/moggy cat.

Pedigree: A purebred or cross-breed cat that is registered with a governing body, and the ancestry is recorded.

Moggy: A breed of cat that is produced through nonselective breeding and is neither a purebred, nor a cross-breed.

In this report, pedigree and purebred cats are included in the description of 'pedigree', with purebred cats referred to as 'pedigree without paperwork', where relevant.

Overall cat population by breed (as indicated by their owners)¹⁴

Moggy/domestic longhair or shorthair: 61%
 (63% in 2022, 65% in 2021)

Other pedigree breed: 9%
 (9% in 2022, 8% in 2021)

British Shorthair: 7%
 (6% in 2022, 5% in 2021)

Don't know: 6%
 (6% in 2022, 7% in 2021)

Cross-breed (non-moggy): 5%
 (6% in 2022, 5% in 2021)

Ragdoll: 3%
 (2% in 2022, 2% in 2021)

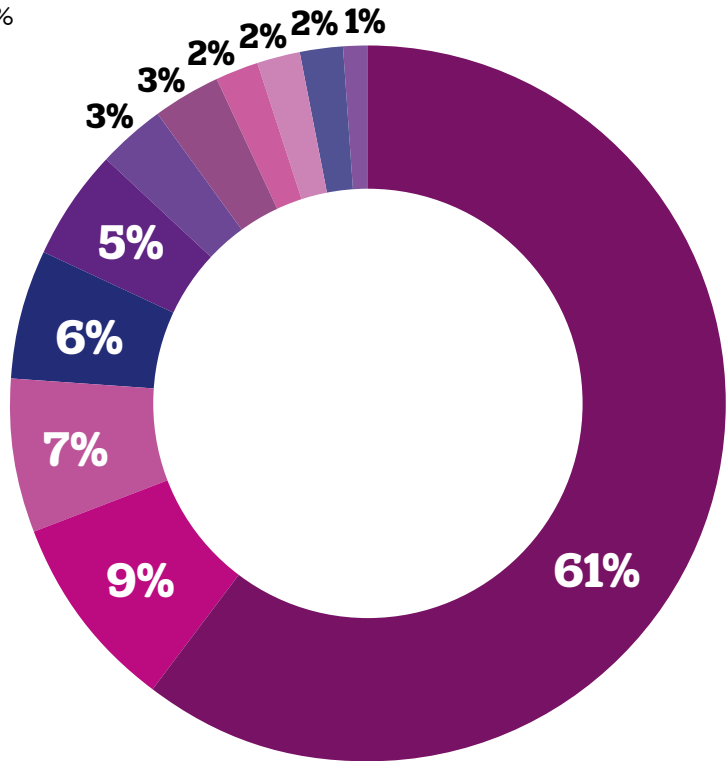
Persian: 3%
 (2% in 2022, 2% in 2021)

Bengal: 2%
 (2% in 2022, 2% in 2021)

Maine Coon: 2%
 (2% in 2022, 1% in 2021)

Siamese: 2%
 (2% in 2022, 1% in 2021)

Scottish Fold: 1%
 (1% in 2022, less than 1% in 2021)



There have been significant rises in the numbers of Ragdoll and British Shorthair cats in the overall cat population. British Shorthair cats make up 11% of cats acquired in the last 12 months. There seems to have been a drop in the actual number of Scottish Fold cats however, which is encouraging, considering their breed predisposition for many debilitating health conditions.

“Cats Protection advocates for the welfare of all cats and continues to highlight the need for responsible cat breeding and selling – including calling for a ban on cats being bred for extreme features which will negatively impact their health and welfare or their offspring. Of particular concern are breeds with folded ears, such as the Scottish Fold – this is an inherited genetic defect that affects the cartilage in the ears (causing them to fold over). This defect also causes problems with the cartilage in their joints that can result in a lifetime of pain and suffering. There has been some success in Cats Protection’s campaigning on cat breeding; with the Scottish Government restricting the breeding of cats with the Scottish Fold, and more recently, Gumtree taking the decision to prevent adverts for the breed.”

Dr Sarah Merrett MRCVS, Central Veterinary Officer, Cats Protection



Owners of pedigree or cross-breed cats (as defined by their owner) that received breed confirmation paperwork/certification for their cat (and from which organisation)¹⁵

Do not have paperwork: 46%

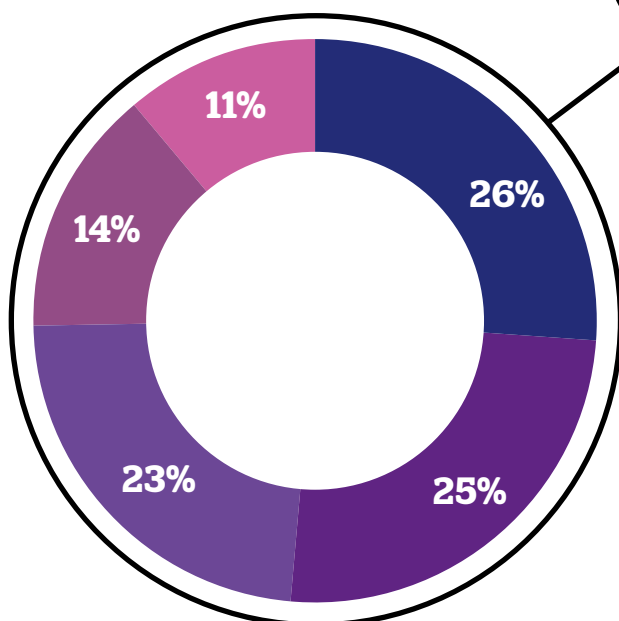
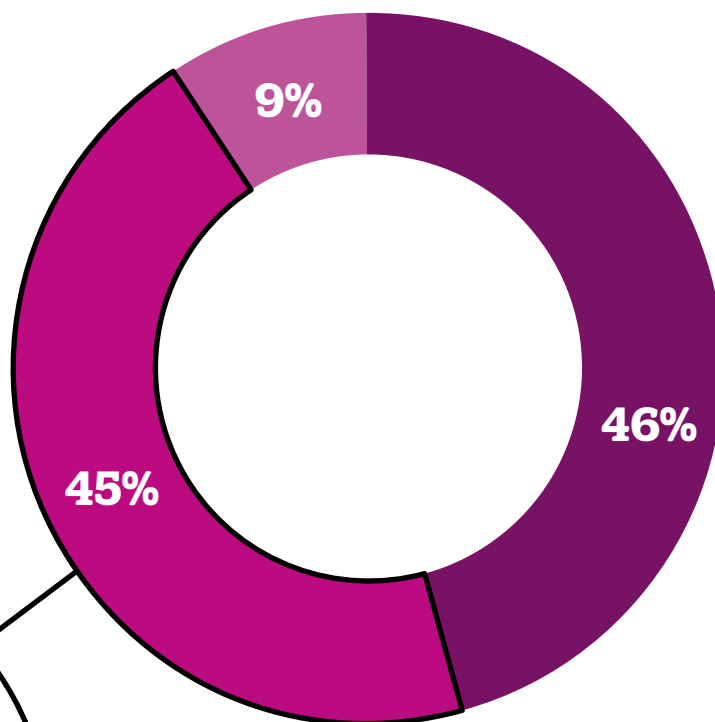
(39% for those acquired in the last 12 months)

Have paperwork: 45%

(54% for cats acquired in the last 12 months)

Don't know: 7%

(7% for those acquired in the last 12 months)



TICA (The International Cat Association): 26%

(31% for cats acquired in the last 12 months)

GCCF (General Council of the Cat Fancy): 25%

(30% for cats acquired in the last 12 months)

Don't know/Can't remember: 23%

(15% for cats acquired in the last 12 months)

FIFe (Fédération Internationale Féline)/Felis Britannica: 14%

(19% for cats acquired in the last 12 months)

None of these: 11%

(6% for those acquired in the last 12 months)

The total number of pedigree or cross-breed cats (as defined by their owner) with paperwork has dropped from 2022 (48%). This has been especially so for GCCF, with the proportion of owners saying that their cat is registered with the body dropping from 30% last year, to 25% this year. More people than last year don't know if their cat has paperwork – up from 16% in 2022.

The GCCF won't register many breeds where there is a harmful genetic mutation and/or where the structural anomaly is the key feature on which the breed is based such as the Scottish Fold and Munchkin. These breeds are however recognised by other associations such as TICA and FIFe, so it is still vital that cat owners have a strong understanding of the cats they are buying and the potential health risks that are intentionally bred into certain extreme breeds.

¹⁵ Questions asked: When you bought/adopted your cat were you given any paperwork or certification to confirm their breed?/Is your cat registered with one of the following pedigree registration bodies (filtered by all those who received paperwork confirming breed of cat)?/When did you acquire (e.g. buy/adopt) your cat?

Veterinary care

Key takeaways

- Veterinary capacity continues to be an issue, with almost a third of owners saying that they have experienced difficulty accessing a vet
- Despite imminent legislation for mandatory microchipping of cats in England, almost a quarter of cats are not microchipped
- Almost half of litters born in the last 12 months were unplanned, but an increasing number of people cannot neuter their cats because of cost concerns

Veterinary capacity¹⁶

There does seem to have been some easing of veterinary capacity problems since last year, but nearly a third of cat owners still say that they have had trouble accessing a vet in the last 12 months. This capacity problem seems to be compounded in central urban areas, where there is also a higher proportion of owners that acquired their cat in the last 12 months (19% of all cat owners, 29% in central urban areas).

30% of owners state that they have experienced difficulty accessing a vet (37% in 2022) – 44% in urban areas

Of those owners who struggled to access a vet, these are the top reasons

Vet too busy

32%

Reduced service delaying booking of surgery

29%

Vet has reduced opening hours

24%

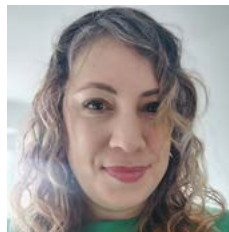
16 Questions asked: Still thinking about the vet, have you experienced any of the following over the last 12 months in relation to your cat?/Which of the following best describes how often you tend to go to the vet?

Waiting longer for veterinary services such as neutering and vaccinations can increase the risk to the health and wellbeing of cats, reiterating the importance of early booking for non-urgent or routine treatments.

Recent insight work from Cats Protection probed deeper into current veterinary capacity concerns, finding that one of the top reasons that vets are struggling to meet demands is staff shortages. 40% of respondents to the survey of veterinary professionals said that they have, or had vacant posts remain unfilled for over six months¹⁷.

“In Cats Protection’s recent Veterinary Capacity Survey, over half of vets surveyed reported either a current or anticipated reduction in capacity, with both difficulties in recruitment and increases in pets registering over 2022 cited as contributing factors. Vets surveyed reported that this was impacting waiting lists for routine and elective surgery, difficulty fitting in emergency and urgent cases and challenges registering new clients.

“Access to veterinary care is fundamental to the work of charities like Cats Protection, and the veterinary workforce are instrumental in ensuring cat welfare. Cats Protection is currently looking at ways to support the veterinary profession during this challenging time.”



**Dr Alison Richards MRCVS,
Head of Clinical Services,
Cats Protection**

Vet registration¹⁸

**10% of cats
(1.1 million) are
not registered
with a vet**

Higher for:

Outdoor-only cats – 27%

Those in social grading DE – 15%

First-time cat owners – 14%

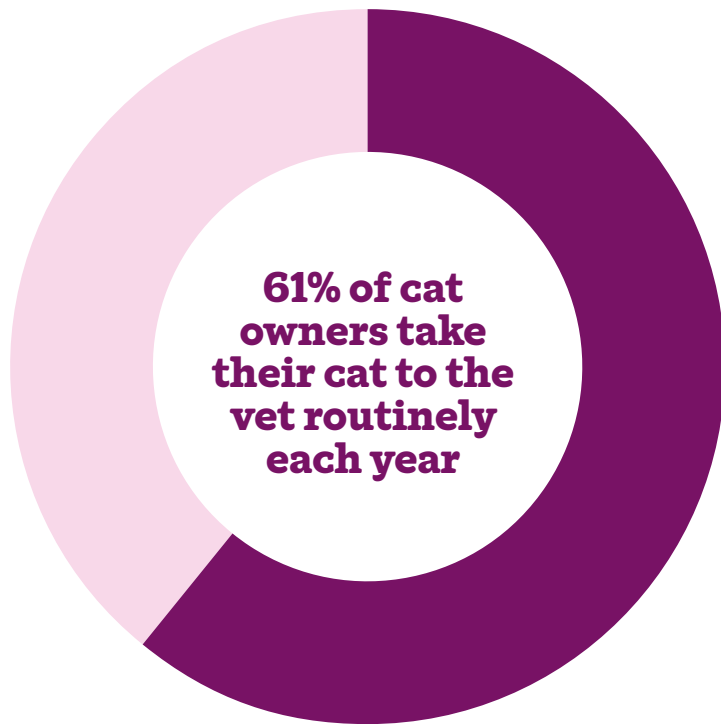
The number of cats who are registered with a vet has remained stable at 90%, which although a good proportion, leaves 1.1 million cats not registered with a vet.

It is perhaps worrying that such a high proportion of outdoor cats are not registered with a vet, as their lifestyle places them at greater risk of trauma or injury which may require emergency treatment. First-time owners would also perhaps benefit from education as to the importance of their cat being registered with a vet.

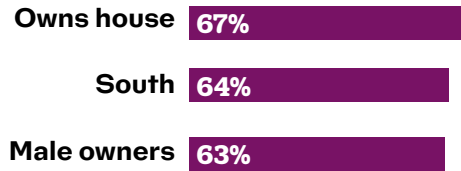
¹⁷ Cats Protection's Vet Capacity Survey Fieldwork: Nov 2022 to Jan 2023. Sample: 236 UK vet professionals including veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses asking about their experiences in the prior 12 months.

¹⁸ Question asked: Is your cat registered with a vet?

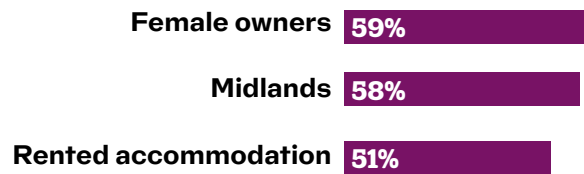
Vet visits¹⁹



Higher than average:



Lower than average:



Over a third of cats do not visit the vet regularly each year, meaning that around 4.3 million cats are not getting access to routine health checks. These regular, routine visits not only ensure that cats receive preventative healthcare, but also provide opportunities for health problems to be detected before they are obvious to the owner. This facilitates earlier intervention, improving cat welfare and overall outcomes. Early intervention often represents a cost saving in the long run too, by helping to avoid the more extensive treatment required when some conditions are allowed to progress in severity.

For some cat owners though, irregular vet visits aren't necessarily by choice – 57% say that they do not visit the vet as often as they would like to²⁰. This is the same proportion as in 2022, but the reasons for not visiting have shifted. The stress of vet visits (for the cat and their owner) remains a common barrier, but for the first time, the cost of visiting the vet was the top reason that owners don't go as often as they would like.

¹⁹ Question asked: Which of the following best describes how often you tend to go to the vet?

Top reasons for not visiting the vet as much as owner would like²⁰

The cost



(24% in 2022)

Too stressful for me/my cat*



(26% in 2022)

With the rise of cat-only and accredited 'Cat Friendly' clinics, the figures for feline stress keeping cats from visiting the vet will hopefully continue to fall.

“While it is well known that stress is a major factor affecting clinic visits, making small changes such as appropriate appointment booking and separation of cats and dogs in the waiting room helps reduce stress for both cats and their caregivers. Education of caregivers on cat carrier training and travel also plays an important role and helps reduce stressors prior to arrival at the clinic.”

Sarah Collins RVN, ISFM Nursing Manager, International Cat Care



*net of responses related to these themes

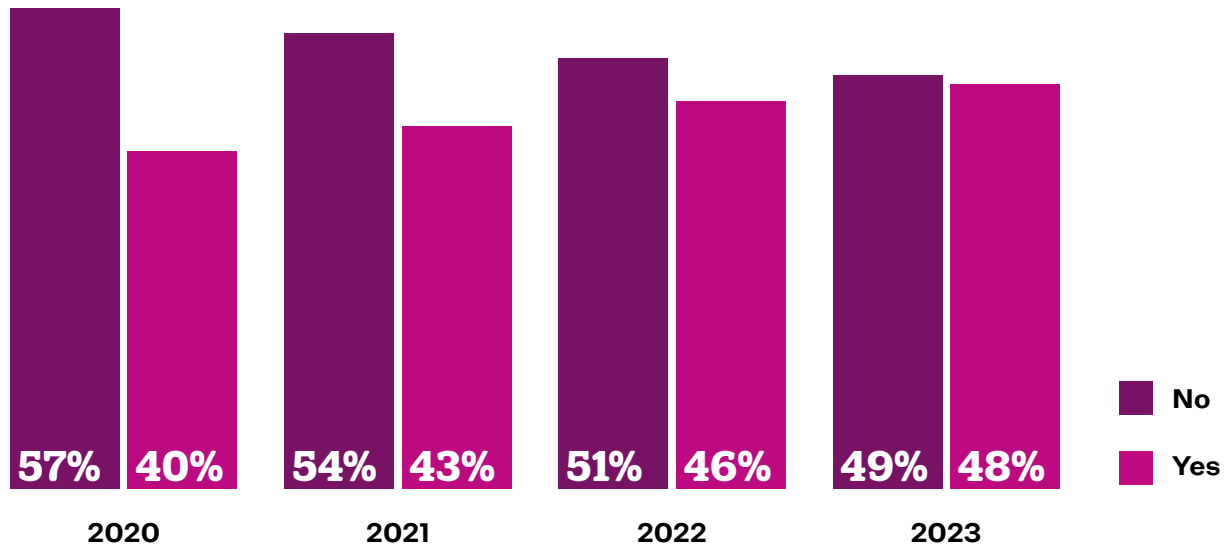
²⁰ Question asked: Which of the following, if any, prevents you from taking your cat to the vet as often as you might like to?



Insurance²¹

The year-on-year trend for increasing numbers of cat owners taking out insurance for their cat continued this year, with almost equal proportions of insured and uninsured cats. This is good news for cat health, as those who have insurance are more likely to take their cat to the vet for regular annual health checks (insured: 79%, uninsured 44%).

Proportion of cat owners that have insurance for their cat:



Owners who have taken out insurance for their cat, by socio-economic grade:



Owners who have taken out insurance for their cat, by owner age:



The likelihood of a cat being insured drops with the socio-economic grade of their owner, suggesting that affordability of insurance is a significant factor and likely excludes those that would benefit most from it, should a cat become unwell or get injured.

The likelihood of a cat being insured also decreases if their owner is older.

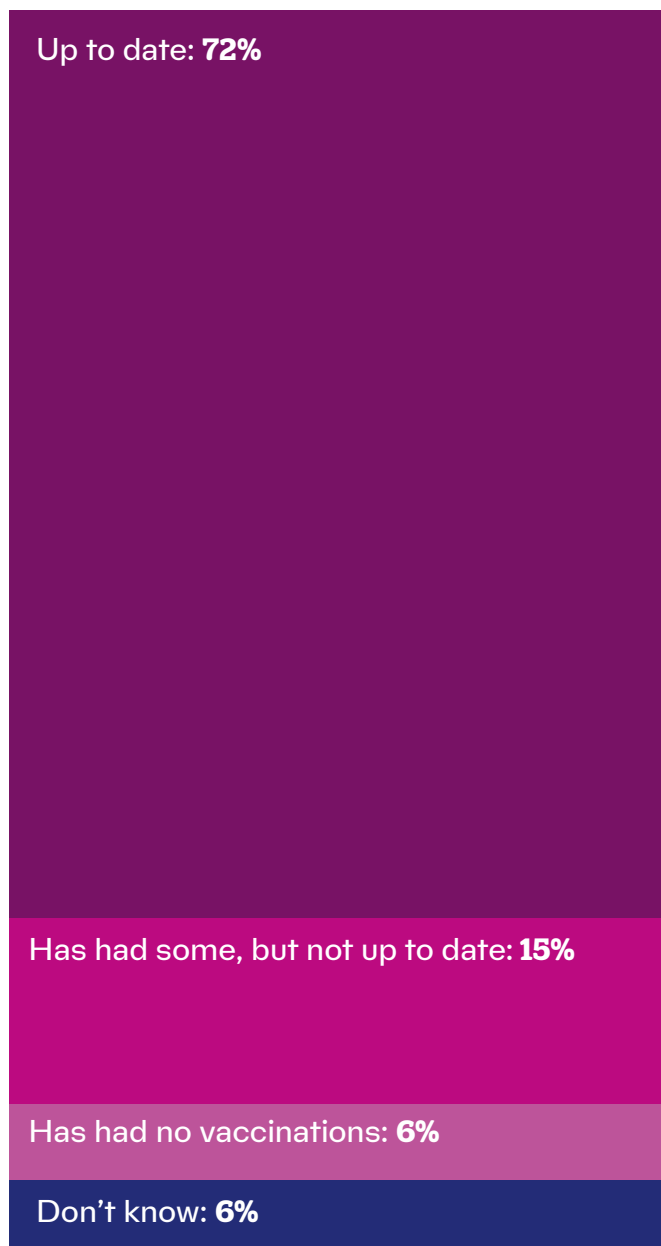
²¹ Question asked: Do you have pet insurance for your cat?

Vaccinations²²

Vaccination rates have remained stable, with 72% of owners saying that their cat's vaccinations are up to date, appropriate for their age.

It is important to stress that the data below is owner reported; owners may not be aware of which vaccinations are needed and with what frequency, but nonetheless the data provides a useful insight into the perceptions of owners.

Vaccination status of cats, according to their owners



This means that up to 3.1 million cats may not be protected against diseases that are preventable by vaccination

Younger cats are less likely to have received any vaccinations at all (0-6 months: 15%, 7-11 months: 11%). Although some of the cats in the 0-6 month age bracket may be below the age for first vaccination (8-9 weeks of age), this still leaves a lot of younger cats potentially vulnerable to life limiting and costly, or difficult-to-treat diseases such as feline leukaemia virus (FeLV) and cat flu.

The cats least likely to be vaccinated include those from the East Midlands (up to date: 68%) and those that are uninsured (up to date: 61%). Vaccination rates for cats from multi-cat households are also lower than the general cat population (3+ cats: 60%), despite potentially being at higher risk of infectious disease due to increased contact with other cats.

²² Question asked: Is your cat up to date with their vaccinations (i.e. has had their booster vaccinations as relevant to their age)?

Parasite treatments²³

Nearly two thirds of cat owners (64%) say that they are protecting their cats against fleas throughout the year as often as is recommended by their vet or the product that they use – an increase on last year (60%). The same increase hasn't been seen for regular worming treatment, which remains at 61%.

Flea treatment

Outdoor-only cats are half as likely to be treated for fleas regularly compared to all cats (32%) and 15% of cat owners only apply flea treatment to their cat when fleas are present. There can be negative implications of this approach though. Signs of fleas are often the result of cats being irritated by bites and fleas can transmit diseases such as Bartonella and tapeworms. There is also usually a significant environmental burden of immature flea life stages once fleas are established within the home.

However, cats with certain lifestyles will be much lower risk of being exposed to fleas. Therefore, each cat should be evaluated on a risk-benefit basis as to the frequency of treatment, and vets should educate owners about the best treatment protocol.

Worming treatment

16% of owners only treat their cat for worms when they think that worms are present, which is concerning, as many cats show no outward signs of worms when infected yet will be shedding infective eggs into the environment via their faeces. Some species of worm eggs, such as *Toxocara cati*, can infect humans, with the risk of potentially serious disease for young children, the elderly and those who are immunocompromised.

Lifestyle and diet both influence a cat's risk of being infected with worms and treatment frequency based on these factors, rather than looking for signs of worms (unless performing worm egg counts), is advisable.

23 Questions asked: How often do you tend to protect your cat from fleas?/How often do you tend to give your cat a worming treatment?



Responsible parasite protection

There is increasing concern that some of the parasiticides commonly used for pets may be contaminating the environment. As parasiticides are harmful to a wide range of invertebrates, and with even small doses potentially impacting large numbers, this could be highly detrimental to wildlife and ecosystems and, in turn, public health.

Protecting our pets against the harmful effects of parasites is important though, so an 'individual risk' approach is recommended, guided by evidence-based expert bodies, such as the European Scientific Counsel for Companion Animal Parasites (ESCCAP).

www.esccapuk.org.uk/guidelines-uk/



“Veterinary professionals should always take a risk-based approach to prescribing medicines, including parasiticides. They should avoid blanket treatment, and instead risk assess use of parasiticides for individual animals, taking into account animal, human and environmental health risks, in addition to lifestyle factors.”

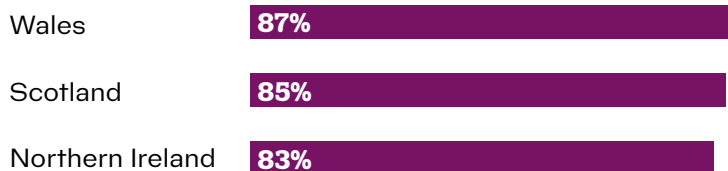
‘Responsible use of parasiticides for cats and dogs’ policy, British Veterinary Association

Neutering²⁴

The proportion of cats that have been neutered remains high and in line with last year, at 85%.

9.4 million (85%) are neutered
1.4 million (13%) are not neutered
220,000 (2%), the owner does not know

Neutering rates across the devolved nations:



Top reasons cat owners choose not to neuter their cat²⁵

My cat doesn't go outside



I can't afford it



I've been meaning to, but haven't got around to it yet



I want my cat to have kittens



The cats less likely to have been neutered

Younger cat owners aged 18-34 are less likely to have neutered their cat (80%), compared to 88% of 35-54 year olds and 94% of those aged over 55. Indoor cats are also less likely to be neutered (83%) than those who have outdoor access (90%).

Those living in central urban areas are also less likely to have neutered their cat (81%), which may be linked to there being more indoor cats in these areas.

21% of owners said that the reason their cat remains unneutered is because they don't go outside – approximately the same as last year (20%)²⁵.

There has been a significant increase in the number of owners who said that cost has prevented them from getting their cat neutered, however.

²⁴ Question asked: Is your cat neutered/spayed?

²⁵ Question asked: What are the reasons your cat is not neutered? Filtered by owners of cats that are not neutered. Only responses over 10% shown.

Breeding

6% of female cats have had a litter in the last 12 months (7% in 2022 and 15% in 2021 and 2020)²⁶. Almost half (48%) of these litters were unplanned, a higher proportion than last year (37%), but still much lower than in 2020 (77%) and 2021 (76%)²⁷. Pregnancy and birth present potentially significant health risks for female cats and cost implications for owners, and accidental litters can create additional pressure to the rehoming challenges already seen across the sector. This is one of the reasons that Cats Protection is keen to widen access to its subsidised neutering scheme.

Of the planned litters from the last 12 months, 38% were from moggies, and 65% were from pedigree cats²⁷

Where are kittens born in the last 12 months going (those that went somewhere other than the home that they were born in)?²⁸

I gave them to neighbours/friends/family

30%

(33% in 2022)

I sold them on a classified ad website (for example Gumtree)

27%

(19% in 2022)

I gave them away for free on a classified ad website (for example Gumtree)

19%

(18% in 2022)

I sold them using social media

17%

(13% in 2022)

I gave them to a rescue/rehoming centre/animal shelter

16%

(17% in 2022)

I gave them away for free using social media

14%

(19% in 2022)

26 Questions asked: Has your cat had kittens?/How many of these litters were in the past 12 months?

27 Question asked: Which of the following best describes this litter/these litters that your cat has had in the past 12 months? Filtered for all cats and one kitten litter in the last 12 months.

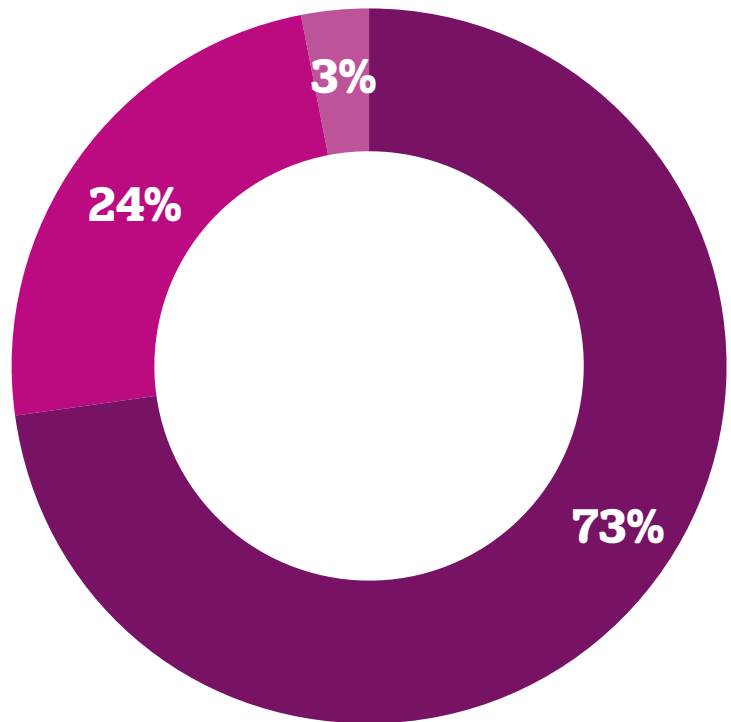
28 Question asked: What happened to the kittens your cat had in the last 12 months?

Microchipping²⁹

There has been a slight increase in the number of microchipped cats, from 71% to 73%.

Microchipped cats

- 73% are microchipped
- 24% are not microchipped
- 3%, the owner does not know if their cat is microchipped or not



This means that up to **around 3 million cats are potentially without a microchip**, reducing their chances of reunification with their owners, should they get lost or stolen.

The cats less likely to be microchipped

Cats with younger owners are less likely to be microchipped, with just 66% of those aged 18-24 owning microchipped cats. A higher proportion of cat owners in this age bracket were also uncertain if their cat was microchipped (8%), compared to other age groups.

There is a significant difference between the microchipping rates of cats acquired in the last 12 months (60%) and those acquired over a year ago (76%). This figure is lower than the same group from the year before (65%), suggesting that new owners are increasingly less likely to microchip their cat.

Microchipping rates across the devolved nations:

Scotland	71%
Wales	71%
Northern Ireland	67%

²⁹ Question asked: Is your cat microchipped?

Top reasons cat owners choose not to microchip their cat³⁰

My cat doesn't go outside

27%

My cat doesn't stray/go far

18%

I just hadn't thought about microchipping my cat

14%

I can't afford it:

13%

With indoor cats arguably being at greater risk of becoming lost, should they find themselves outside in unfamiliar surroundings, it is concerning that this is the main reason that owners choose not to microchip their cat.

When looking at reasons for not microchipping specifically in the new owner group (those who acquired their cat in the last 12 months), a higher proportion say that their cat is too young (14%, vs. 5% for all cats). Some of these cats may well be young kittens but neutering, which Cats Protection recommends doing from four months of age, is a great opportunity for microchipping. For some kittens, microchipping at the same time as receiving their primary vaccination course (such as between 8-13 weeks old) is possible.

With new laws making it compulsory to microchip pet cats in England from June 2024, education efforts will be important to ensure that all cat owners – but particularly new ones – understand why they should microchip their cat

³⁰ Question asked: Which of the below best describes the reasons why your cat is not microchipped?

Microchips and keeping details up to date³¹

Of the owners that have had their cat microchipped, 92% say that their details are up to date – the same proportion as last year.

However, this leaves over 600,000 cats who are microchipped with details that are out of date, potentially rendering their microchip useless, should they become separated from their family.

The new microchipping regulations will require owners to ensure details are up to date, so ensuring owners know the importance of this, and how to do it will be imperative going into 2024.

31 Questions asked: Are your cat's registered microchip details up to date?/Which of the following microchip details are up to date?

92% of cats with a microchip have up-to-date details

No: 4%
Don't know: 4%

Of those who say their cat's microchip details are up to date:

85% say their **phone contact is up to date**

84% say their **current address is up to date**

76% say their **email address is up to date**

5% are **unsure which specific details are up to date**

“After many years of campaigning, Cats Protection is delighted that microchipping will be compulsory for pet cats from June 2024, giving cats in England the same protection as dogs when it comes to microchipping.

“Data from the CATS Report clearly shows there is still work to be done to raise awareness with cat owners to ensure compliance with the new regulations when they come into force.

“It is also crucial that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland also introduce the same protections for cats – we are working with politicians to ensure this happens as soon as possible.”



Madison Rogers, Head of Advocacy, Campaigns & Government Relations, Cats Protection

Health conditions and injury³²

Most common health conditions in cats

Dental disease: **3%**

Obesity: **3%**

Lower urinary tract disease: **2%**

Digestive disorders: **2%**

Overgrooming: **2%**

Arthritis: **2%**

Hyperthyroidism: **2%**

Allergic skin disease: **2%**

Parasites (e.g. fleas): **2%**

Kidney disease: **2%**

77% of cat owners state that their cat has no diagnosed health conditions, which is in line with last year (76%).

Of those that do have a diagnosed condition, dental disease remains the most common, closely followed by obesity. However, the report data shows a much lower prevalence of these conditions than published scientific data, which suggests dental disease and obesity actually affects around 15% and 11% of cats respectively³³. This could be indicative of an education gap, where owners simply aren't recognising these conditions or their significance and once again highlights the importance of regular vet visits.

Reasons for cat injury³⁴

Fighting with another cat they don't live with:



Fighting with another animal:



Fighting with a cat they do live with:



Road traffic accident:



Other:



Hit by an air gun pellet:



Poisoned:



28% of owners said that their cat had been injured since they have owned them³⁴. The most common reason for injury is fights with other cats outside the household.

³² Question asked: Does your cat have any of the following diagnosed health issues/conditions?

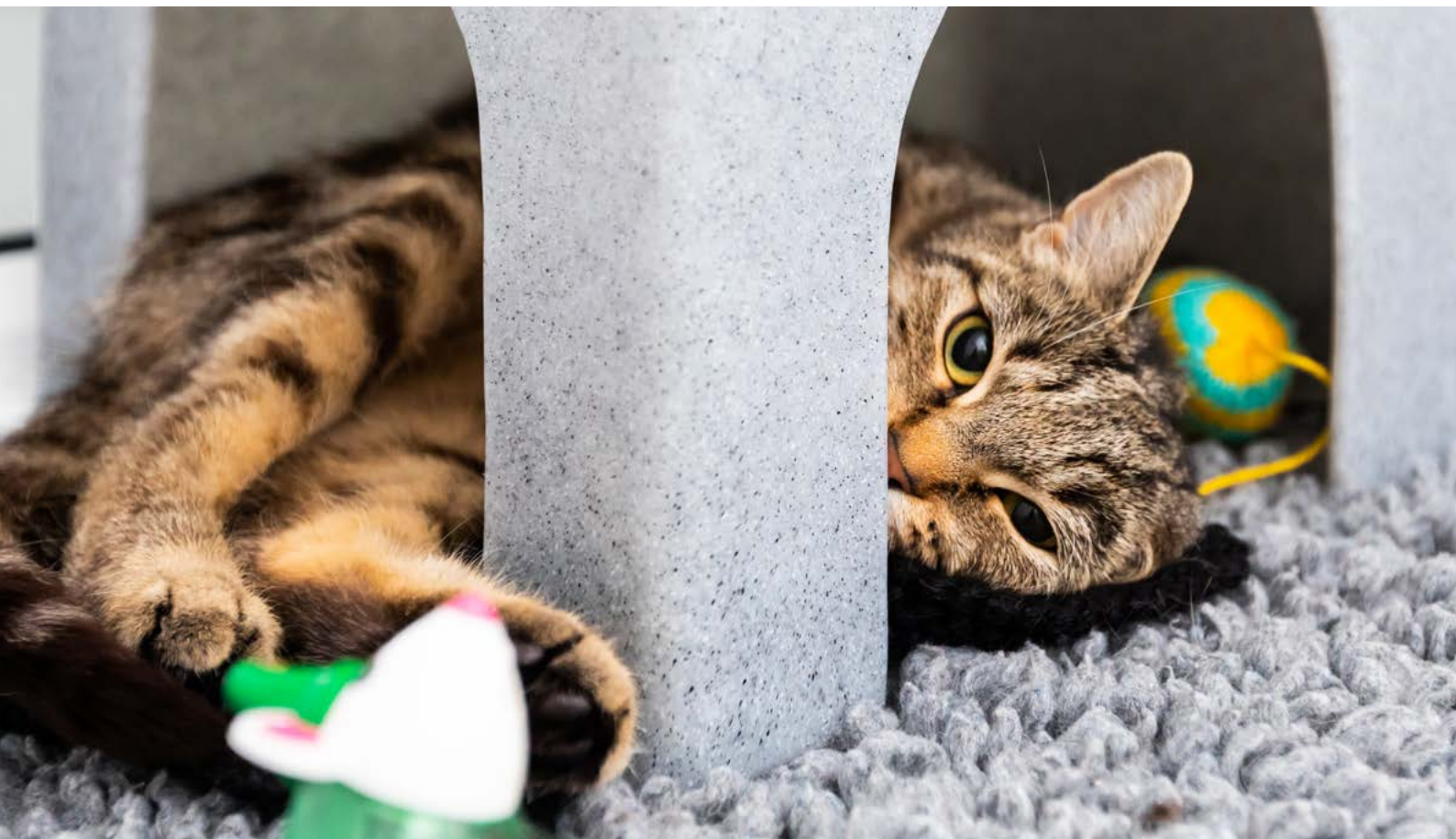
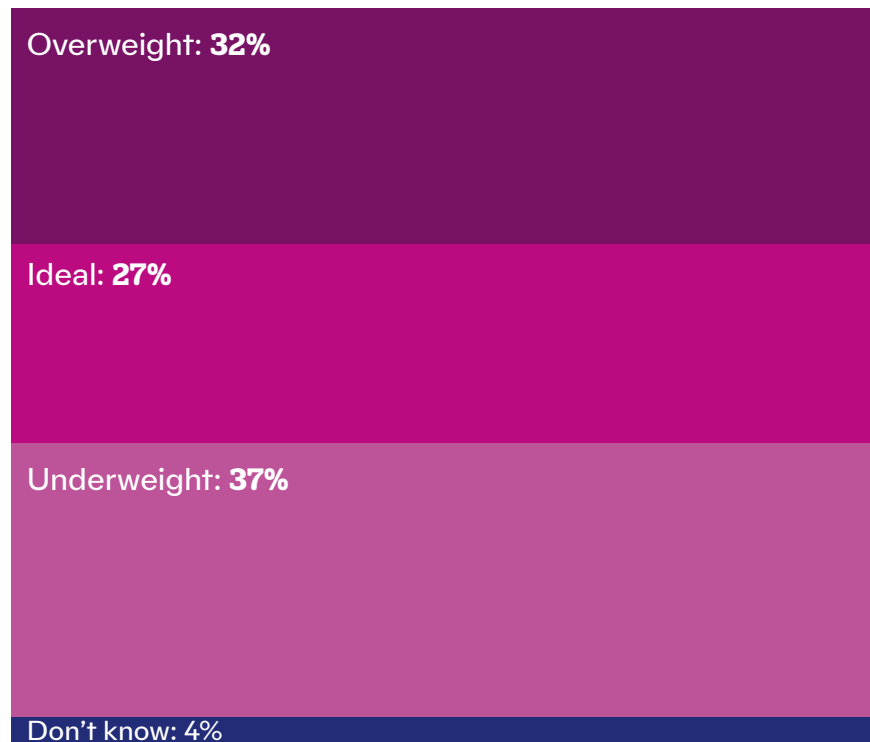
³³ O'Neill DG, Gunn-Moore D, Sorrell S, et al. Commonly diagnosed disorders in domestic cats in the UK and their associations with sex and age. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*. 2023;25(2). doi:10.1177/1098612X231155016.

³⁴ Question asked: Since having your cat, has your cat ever been injured?

Diet and body weight³⁵

Just 27% of cat owners think that their cat is an ideal weight, and more are identifying their cat as overweight (32%), compared to last year (30%). Older owners are more likely to think that their cats are overweight (18-34: 30%, 35-54: 32%, 55+: 36%).

Owner perception of their cat's weight



Age and owner-reported body condition of cats over time³⁵

	Underweight			Ideal			Overweight		
	2023	2022	2021	2023	2022	2021	2023	2022	2021
Juvenile (7-11 months)	47%	46%	50%	26%	28%	27%	21%	18%	19%
Adult (1 year to 10 years 11 months)	37%	38%	35%	27%	27%	30%	33%	29%	31%
Elderly (11+ years)	35%	35%	33%	25%	26%	27%	37%	34%	34%

More owners of juvenile cats perceive their pet as underweight. These cats are more likely to be in the 'ideal' body weight category, potentially highlighting a mismatch in owner perception of what a cat's weight 'should' be, to be healthy.

The proportion of owners who perceive their cats as underweight is also higher in the group of owners that are most concerned about living costs (40%). Only 32% perceive their cat as overweight in the same group.

When looking specifically at obesity, 4% of owners placed their cat in the highest body condition scores (8/9 and 9/9) brackets, despite only 3% saying that their cat had been formally diagnosed as obese.

The report data shows that obese cats are no less likely to be visiting the vet regularly, so perhaps this indicates an opportunity for vets to further communicate with owners that their cat is obese and the potential consequences of this.

It must be emphasised that this report data is owner reported. Vet-reported figures for feline obesity are around 11.6%³³, but it is also noted that obesity may be under-reported in primary care vet practices³⁶.

³⁵ Question asked: Which of the following descriptions and images would you say best reflects your cat in relation to their size?

³⁶ O'Neill DG, Church DB, McGreevy PD, Thomson PC, Brodbelt DC. Prevalence of disorders recorded in cats attending primary-care veterinary practices in England. *Vet J.* 2014;202(2):286-291. doi:10.1016/j.tvjl.2014.08.004.

Can't afford the vet?

Worryingly, the cost-of-living crisis seems to be impacting feline health and welfare by decreasing access to vital veterinary care for cats. Understandably, this is being felt more starkly by those who have been impacted most by cost-of-living challenges, such as lower income households.

10%

of cats are not registered with a vet¹⁸

14%

for those in socioeconomic grade C2DE

47%

of owners in socioeconomic grade C2DE don't take their cat to the vet routinely each year (39% for all cat owners)¹⁹

28%

of owners said cost prevented them from visiting the vets as often as they would like (up from 24% in 2022)²⁰

33%

for socioeconomic grade C2DE (28% in 2022)

42%

for those who say that they are concerned about paying the bills (33% in 2022)

15% of owners said that the reason that their cat remains unneutered is because they simply can't afford to get it done²⁵. This makes cost the second most common reason that cats remain unneutered (the top reason being that the cat does not go outdoors). Considering that cost didn't even feature in the top reasons why cats remain unneutered in 2022, this is a clear example of how household financial concerns are increasingly impacting the delivery of veterinary care to cats.

Overall, a quarter (25%) of all cat owners are concerned about how they would pay vet bills if their cat became sick or injured, rising to half (50%) of those who say that they have been negatively impacted by the cost-of-living crisis³⁷.

As more and more households are struggling to meet everyday costs, Cats Protection is looking at ways that it can support owners to access essential veterinary services. Cats Protection's subsidised neutering scheme will enable access to neutering and microchipping to cats where finance may be a barrier. Cats Protection also signposts to organisations who provide access to subsidised veterinary clinics for eligible owners. However, charity resources will be limited, and in the face of a cost-of-living crisis, it's likely that not all owners will be able to access a subsidised clinic.

Insights from a recent survey of the veterinary profession suggests that decision making for vets and clients is becoming more dependent on financial limitations since the cost-of-living crisis began. Cats Protection is developing education resources for vets to support them with clinical decision making and discussions around finances with owners who are struggling, so that they can offer a broader range of treatment options.

Education for current and potential owners to help them understand the realistic costs of veterinary care is also important, as it allows owners to budget for costs accordingly and highlights the benefits of having pet insurance. It will also help reassure and encourage attendance for some owners who perhaps perceive veterinary treatments as being more expensive than they really are.

³⁷ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



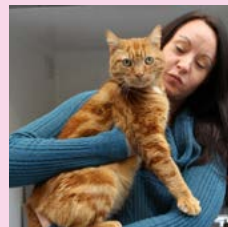
To help ensure continued access to important veterinary services for all households, Cats Protection is dedicated to delivering targeted help for cat owners on a low income to overcome some of the barriers to veterinary access for neutering and microchipping.

It is vital that support is well signposted to owners however, as 54% of those who say that they have been negatively impacted by the rising cost of living said that they are unaware of support available to them, and a further 16% say that they don't know where to go to find it³⁸.

This highlights the importance of well-coordinated communication teams for charitable and other support organisations.

“Cats Protection is proud to have launched a new subsidised neutering scheme for low-income households from April 2023. After surveying how best to make the scheme work for vets, we increased the value of the voucher (and will review this annually), have one, nationwide scheme, and include post operative pain relief, a buster collar and microchip where needed. In helping more cats be neutered (and chipped) we aim to reduce the number of unwanted litters, which are not only detrimental to feline welfare, but can place additional financial strain on those already most affected by the cost-of-living crisis. We thank all the practices who have already signed up for helping us work towards this.”

Jane Clements RVN, Head of Neutering, Cats Protection



³⁸ Question asked: Are you aware of any support available to help with rising costs of looking after your cat/s?

Cat care, welfare and behaviour

Key takeaways

- Education about adequate resource provision and placement, and signs of stress is important – particularly for owners of multi-cat households and indoor-only cats
- Younger cat owners, who are more likely to have indoor-only cats, are more likely to turn to social media platforms like TikTok for information and advice about their cat
- A high proportion of owners continue to be unaware of the toxicity risk of lilies

39 Question asked: To what extent do you agree with the following statement (I did lots of research before getting my cats/I find it easy to find high quality and reliable information about cats)? Top two response boxes included (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree).

40 Question asked: Which of the following would you do if you were seeking information or advice about your cat/s?

41 Question asked: I'm very confident I know what's best for my cat/s: To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about having a cat/s?

Sources of cat care information

The number of cat owners claiming to have done research prior to getting their cat has dropped slightly, from 33% last year, to 31% this year. In the 18-34 year old group however, this rises to 38%, which is encouraging, as younger owners are also more likely to have acquired their cat during the last 12 months³⁹.

Where are people seeking their cat advice from?⁴⁰

Contact my vet:

60% (55% in 2022)

Search the internet/Google:

52% (49% in 2022)

Talk to my friends and family:

35% (32% in 2022)

Search social media:

19% (16% in 2022)

Contact an animal charity:

15% (15% in 2022)

Contact a pet shop:

12% (12% in 2022)

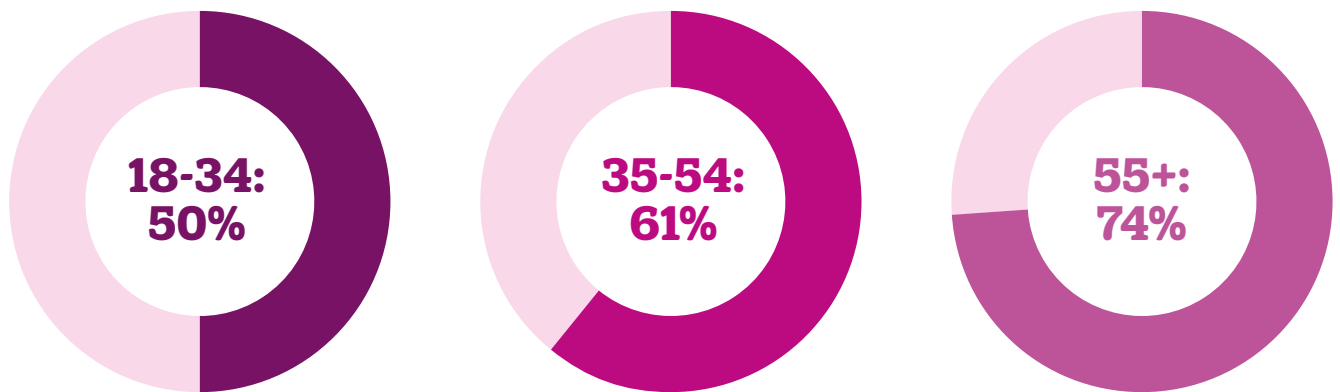
Buy or borrow a book:

11% (11% in 2022)

Cat owners are increasingly turning to their vet for this advice, which remains the most commonly chosen source of information⁴⁰.

This seems to translate into owners that feel better informed, as 63% of cat owners that visit the vet regularly feel confident that they know what is best for their cat, compared to just 44% of owners that never visit the vet⁴¹.

Older cat owners are more likely to seek information about their cat from a vet⁴⁰

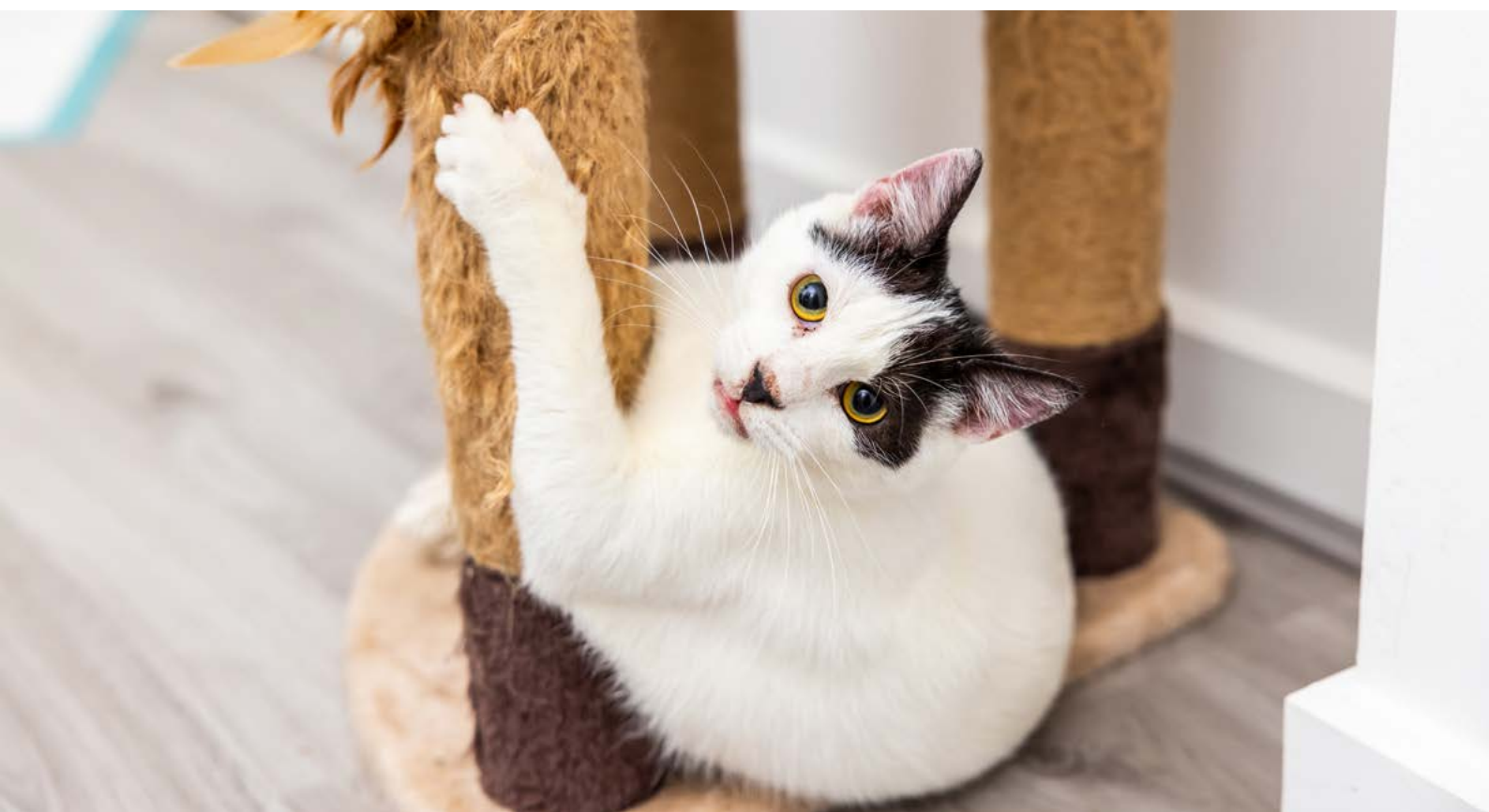


New owners, who are also more likely to be younger, are less likely to turn to their vet as a source of information about their cat (50%) but are much more likely to turn to social media (27%) compared to other cat owners.

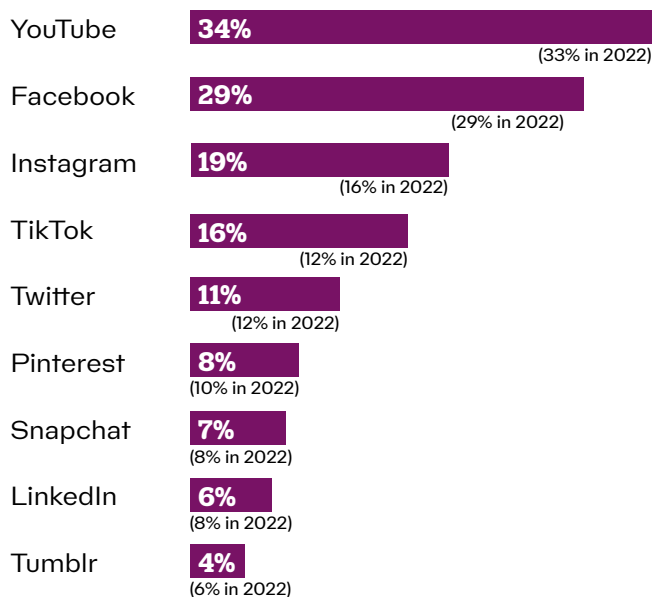
Internet searches are more popular than ever and searches on social media for information on cats have also seen an uprise, further highlighting the online space as an increasingly important source of information.

YouTube is the most popular source of cat information for cat owners on social media, but the rival video-based platform, TikTok has seen an increase in popularity over the last 12 months. This is understandably much higher in the demographic that TikTok is aimed towards, with 35% of 18-24 year olds choosing this platform as a regular source of cat information⁴².

⁴² Question asked: Which of the following, if any, do you use/visit on a regular basis when looking for the following content related to cats (information/advice)?



Social media platforms as sources of information about cats⁴²



Almost half (48%) of cat owners say that they would specifically like practical resources to help them assess and monitor their cat's wellbeing⁴³. With fewer male owners claiming to be confident about knowing what is best for their cat (55%, female owners: 64%), this is a demographic that is perhaps one that sources of information – including charities – should be focusing on⁴¹.

Cute or funny videos and pictures of cats are increasingly popular, with a third of cat owners saying that they consume this kind of content online several times a week, at least (33% for pictures, 33% for videos, 29% for both in 2022). This increases to 46% for videos and 45% for pictures in the 18-24 year old age group⁴⁴.

Overall, Facebook and YouTube remain popular sources of 'fun' cat-related content (39% for each platform), but for younger owners aged 18-24, TikTok is by far the most popular social platform (60%, all cat owners: 28%)⁴⁵.

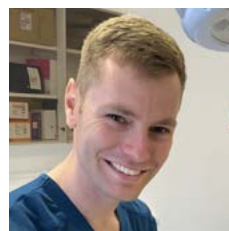
⁴³ Question asked: I would like practical resources to help me assess and monitor my cat's wellbeing: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

⁴⁴ Question asked: How often do you tend to do each of the following?

⁴⁵ Question asked: Which of the following, if any, do you use/visit on a regular basis when looking for the following content related to cats (fun content)?

“With more owners looking for information about their cats online, and especially among our younger owners, there is an important opportunity for vets to use these platforms to educate the public. Despite worrying trends towards cat content which focuses on extreme breeding and practices of poor welfare, vets can counteract this by challenging misinformation and providing factual, engaging, and valuable information which in turn empowers owners to do the best by their cat.”

Dr Ben Simpson-Vernon MRCVS,
Veterinary surgeon and TikTok star
(Ben the Vet)



Cats Protection is increasingly concerned about the representation of cats online, as well as videos that people may think are ‘fun’ but are actually causing distress to cats. The charity is looking to work with companies which advertise online using cats to ensure they are not represented in a way that could be detrimental to their welfare and that extreme breeds are not used.



Top five cat-related activities that owners engage in several times a week or more⁴⁶

Talk about cats with my friends/family:

42%

(41% in 2022)

Watch funny or cute videos of cats online:

33%

(29% in 2022)

Look at funny or cute pictures of cats online:

33%

(29% in 2022)

Look at cat-related social media profiles:

24%

(23% in 2022)

Watch informational videos of cats online:

15%

(17% in 2022)

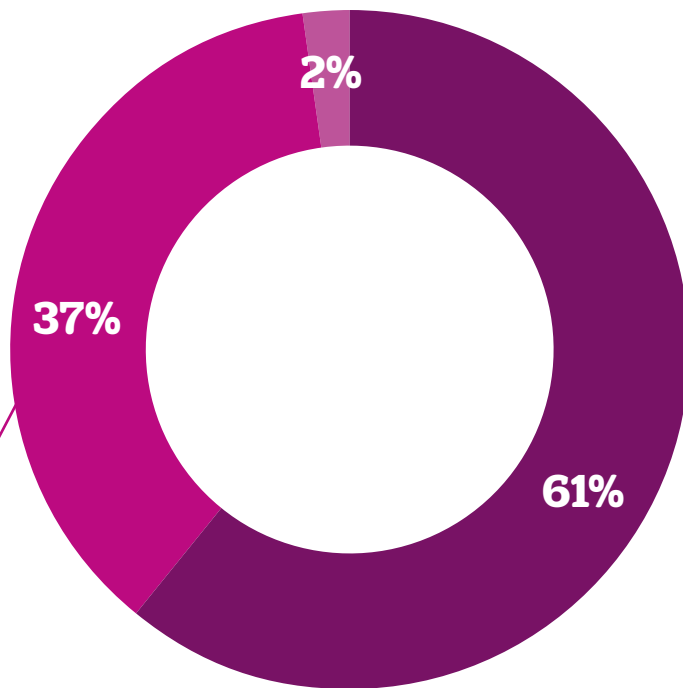
⁴⁶ Question asked: How often do you tend to do each of the following?
Top two response boxes included (at least once a day, several times a week).

A cat's environment

Indoor vs outdoor cats

Cat living arrangements⁴⁷

- They go both indoors and outdoors: 61%**
(60% in 2022)
- They always stay indoors: 37%**
(37% in 2022)
- They always stay outdoors: 2%**
(3% in 2022)



The number of cats that always stay indoors is significantly higher:

for 18-34 age group

45%

in central urban areas

45%

in urban areas

41%

for those that have acquired a cat for the first time in the last 12 months

43%

for 2+ cat households

41%

for 3+ cat households

42%

(Single cat households: 35%)

The proportion of cats that have access to an outdoor space remains in line with last year. The fact that cats from multi-cat households are more likely to be indoor-only is of note, as these cats are at higher risk of stress and inter-cat aggression, if factors such as resource provision and placement are not addressed appropriately.

Nearly half (47%) of cat owners control their cat's outdoor access in person – letting their cat in and out as needed. 14% use a cat flap with built in functionality that allows them (as the owner) to control their cat's access – either with a timer, or unidirectional opening. 21% have a basic cat flap, increasing the likelihood that their cat has autonomy over their outdoor access⁴⁸.

As well as controlled cat flaps, other measures that can help cats remain safer outside include making their outside space as enriching as possible and cat-proof fencing to discourage them straying too far (as well as unwanted visits from other cats) and training them to come when called. To facilitate rapid reunification should they get lost, microchipping is a must.

As cats from multi-cat households are more likely to be indoor-only, it is imperative that there is a strong focus on adequate resource provision and placement, and monitoring of signs of stress in these cats to mitigate the increased risks of consistent close proximity.

⁴⁷ Question asked: Which of the following best applies to your cat?

⁴⁸ Question asked: In what ways does your cat have access to going outside/coming inside?

“To thrive, cats need to feel they have sufficient autonomy and choice with their environment, as well as access to positive sources of stimulation. This includes the opportunity to explore, perform elements of their predatory sequence and access somewhere calm, away from the typical daily activities and disturbances going on within the home. Giving cats the option to venture outdoors into a safe and enriching area is a good way to provide them with these pleasurable experiences and sense of autonomy, and it’s encouraging to see that the majority of cats reported on in the survey have outdoor access. Although there are always important risks associated with cats going outdoors, it is also really reassuring to note the very low reported incidence of injury due to road traffic accidents and other outdoor hazards.”



Dr Lauren Finka PhD, Feline Welfare Scientist, Cats Protection



“Daily enrichment; such as the use of a puzzle feeder or appropriate play can have multifactorial benefits for all cats, but especially indoor-only cats and cats in multi-cat households. These activities simultaneously help stimulate the cat both physically and mentally, while also contributing to the release of ‘feel good’ hormones. Providing activities that best meet the ethology of our domestic cats ensures that one of their key welfare needs are met. This can form part of a wider solution needed to strive for harmony in a multi-cat household. Additionally, the value of vertical space should not be underestimated. Cats being able to get up high and avoid each other when moving about is an invaluable resource.”



Daniel Warren-Cummings, Behaviour Officer, Cats Protection

Cats at night⁴⁹

For those cats who do have outdoor access, 39% are able to come and go freely at night, down from 42% in 2022. Over half (53%) of cat owners keep their cat in overnight (51% in 2022).

Cats Protection recommends that cats are kept in overnight, to reduce the risk of injury from road accidents, fights with other cats/animals and predation of wildlife. This is because cats are most active at dusk and dawn, choosing this time to hunt, explore and venture into other cats' territories.

Preventing cats from harm

28% of cats have been injured since being in their owner's care³⁴

3% were involved in a **car accident**
2% were hit by an **air gun pellet**
2% have been **poisoned**

53% of cat owners are unaware that lilies are toxic to cats⁵⁰

Significantly higher for:

owners who acquired a cat for the first time in the last 12 months: **64%**

male owners: **67%**

18-24 year old owners: **71%**

owners not registered with a vet: **72%**

Lily toxicity occurs when a cat eats any part of the lily plant, including pollen that ends up on their coat and the cat licks off while grooming. The toxins can cause kidney failure, which is often fatal. Ideally owners should totally restrict their cat's access to lilies but if lily toxicity should occur, prompt veterinary care should be sought, as rapid treatment can prevent renal failure.

As well as ongoing media and social media activity, Cats Protection is calling on companies that sell lilies to improve warning labelling and has produced guides for cat owners about the dangers of lilies, and other plants, to cats.

It is available to view at www.cats.org.uk/lilies



⁴⁹ Question asked: Does your cat have access to the outside overnight?

⁵⁰ Question asked: Which of the following popular cut flowers, if any, are you aware of being toxic to cats?

Living with other pets

A third (33%)¹ of cat owning households have more than one cat and 39%⁵¹ of cat owners also own a dog. Cats are not ‘social obligates’ like dogs and humans – they do not necessarily need to live with company to have their emotional needs met. Because of this, other pets (especially other cats) in the household can be a source of stress and so steps must be taken by owners to ensure that resource provision is adequate for all cats in the household, as well as being aware of signs of stress in cats. A single cat or bonded pair of cats is almost always the best household set up to avoid social problems.

Average number of resources per cat⁵²

	🐈			🐈🐈			🐈🐈🐈+		
	2023	2022	2021	2023	2022	2021	2023	2022	2021
Food bowls	2.5	3.0	2.4	3.3	3.6	3.2	4.7	4.8	4.4
Water bowls	2	2.5	2	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.9	3.1	2.7
Litter trays	1.6	2.1	1.5	2	2.3	1.9	2.5	2.6	2.3
Scratching post	1.8	2.3	1.7	2.3	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.8	2.4
Cat beds	1.9	2.4	1.9	2.5	2.8	2.5	3.3	3.6	3.1
Hiding places	2.5	2.9	2.4	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.9	4.2	3.7

Best practice advice for multi-cat households is to ensure resource provision for cats at a minimum rate of ‘one per cat, plus one’. The figures for important resources such as water bowls and litter trays, show that this recommended resource ratio is less likely to be met in multi-cat households, where the need is greatest.

This creates a potential welfare problem, increasing the risk of stressed cats and the potential for intra-household fighting – something that has been reported to lead to injury for 4% of all cats and 5% of indoor-only cats³⁴.

51 Question asked: Do you currently have any of the below pets (that live with you)?


52 Question asked: How many of each of the following, if any, do you have in your home and are currently available for your cat/s to use at any one time?









































Behaviour and stress

Behaviour can be a complicated thing to analyse, with a large degree of crossover between ‘normal’ behaviours, and those that indicate that a cat is stressed. Sometimes, ‘normal’ behaviours that cats exhibit are deemed problematic by their owners, while behaviours that indicate stress are unrecognised or downplayed. This risks owners focusing on the wrong behaviours as concerning, and the potential knock-on effects for cats that may be experiencing stress.

Prevalence and owner perception of common normal and potential stress indicative cat behaviours⁵³

 Proportion of cats displaying this behaviour

 Considered a problem by owner (for owners of cats displaying this behaviour)

Jumps onto work surfaces/shelves	42%		22%	
Scratches furniture/carpets/walls	33%		56%	
Wakes me/other members of the household up	32%		33%	
Shows fear towards noise	28%		26%	
Begs for food when I'm eating	25%		26%	
Runs away from household guests	24%		21%	
Brings in wildlife/prey	19%		35%	
Scavenges for food/steals food left out	14%		32%	
Hides around the house for long periods	11%		17%	
Not get on/fights with other cats in household	9%		46%	
Poos outside litter tray	8%		75%	
Wees outside litter tray	7%		75%	
Screams/screeches	7%		33%	
Runs away from me/other adults in the house	7%		33%	
Chews wires/leads/chargers	7%		55%	
Shows aggressive behaviour towards adults in the house	5%		64%	
Not get on/fights with other pets (not cats) in household	4%		46%	
Shows aggressive behaviour towards guests in the house	3%		57%	
Shows aggressive behaviour towards children in the house	3%		55%	

53 Questions asked: Thinking about the past 12 months, which of the following does your cat tend to do, at least some of the time?/Which of the following do you consider problem behaviours that you would like to change?



The behaviours that owners find most problematic often relate to house-soiling, destruction/damage of belongings and aggression. House-soiling and aggressive-type behaviours typically have a compelling reason behind them – be it a medical issue, stress and/or the needs of the cat not being met. Often, resolving the issue for the cat’s benefit yields positive results for everyone.

Another thing that owners find problematic – scratching – is also a normal behaviour for cats, used to scent mark and condition their claws, but also relieve stress. Providing appropriate outlets for this behaviour (for example, scratching posts) is therefore important, to prevent the behaviour becoming ‘destructive’.

Proportion of cats that scratch furniture, carpets and walls, who do so daily⁵⁴

Single cat households

46%

2+ cat household

49%

3+ cat household

54%

⁵⁴ Question asked: Scratch furniture/carpets/walls: You said that your cat has shown the following behaviour(s) in the last 12 months. How often does each of these occur?

Cats from multi-cat households are more likely to display behaviours that owners find most problematic and that are typically more associated with cat stress, such as aggressive and fearful behaviours. This highlights the need for owners of multiple cats to not only be aware of the potential signs of stress in cats but also know how best to alleviate it, such as ensuring adequate resource provision and placement, as well as considering the appropriateness of adding any more cats to the household.

Although behaviour is not a reliable indicator of stress – and especially as very stressed cats are more prone to suppress behaviours – behaviours that are more strongly associated with stress are thankfully relatively uncommon but are more likely to be seen in indoor cats.

Increased understanding of cat behaviour and the importance of resource provision and placement are so important for a cat’s wellbeing and maintaining the cat-owner bond. When a concerning behaviour is recognised and medical reasons are ruled out, it is important that investigation is done into how a cat’s needs aren’t being met.

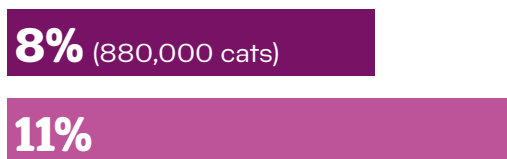
Prevalence of behaviours that are more reliably associated with stress in cats⁵³

■ Overall ■ Indoor-only cats

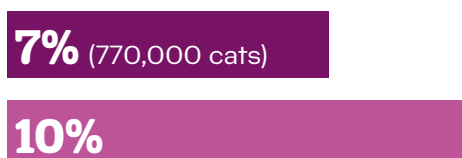
House-soiling/spraying:



Aggression:



Chews wires/leads:



Cats Protection firmly believes that positive change comes from ongoing education, which is why this underpins a huge proportion of the work that we do.

Curriculum-based lesson plans and school visits, as well as fun online learning modules are aimed at helping the next generation understand and value cats. Free, interactive talks for community groups spread that word further, and continued education for veterinary professionals means that the research and learnings that will improve feline welfare are disseminated to the people that can implement it best.



Fireworks

Fireworks can be really distressing for all animals, including cats. 28% of cat owners say that their cat shows obvious fear towards noises such as thunder or fireworks⁵³, and 64% of those who have witnessed their cat experience fireworks say that they express at least one sign of stress⁵⁵.

The impact of fireworks on cats (top five behaviours)⁵⁵

Hides or becomes withdrawn

25%

(24% in 2022, 27% in 2021)

Appears startled

20%

(19% in 2022, 20% in 2021)

Shows fearful body language

15%

(15% in 2022, 15% in 2021)

Tries to escape/run away

14%

(14% in 2022, 14% in 2021)

Shows increased dependency on owner

10%

(10% in 2022, 9% in 2021)

All these behaviours are indicative of stress in cats. For more advice about fireworks and stress in cats, visit www.cats.org.uk/fireworks



“There needs to be a balance between people being allowed to celebrate key moments with fireworks and the knock-on impacts that this has to wildlife, our pets and other people. Often, the unpredictability of fireworks is a big part of the problem managing the effect that they can have on our pets. That is why Cats Protection continues to call on the government to restrict the unplanned use of fireworks and reduce the maximum noise levels of them. This would help owners anticipate displays and take appropriate action, and ease the stress of all animals, including cats. Cats Protection also sits on a working group, with other leading animal welfare charities, to collaboratively call on the government to undertake a review of fireworks legislation to account for their impact on animal welfare.”

Charlotte Broad, Advocacy & Government Relations Officer, Cats Protection

⁵⁵ Question asked: Does your cat tend to show any of the following signs of stress as a result of hearing fireworks? Filtered for owners that have seen their cat experience fireworks.

Is escalating cost of living causing cats to be more stressed?

As people, we can all relate to the pressure that the increased cost of living places on everyday life, but are cats experiencing knock-on effects too?

One way to measure this is to look at the level of resource provision for recently acquired cats in households that are feeling the pressure of the cost-of-living crisis differently. You might expect that households which openly admit to feeling the financial strain the most may be less able to provide adequate levels of resources for the new cats in their household. However, the report data shows that households that have acquired a cat in the last 12 months and who say that they have been negatively impacted by the cost of living are no less likely to provide adequate resources, such as food/water bowls, scratching posts and litter trays, for their cat.

Cats from households that are struggling financially are still more likely to show multiple signs of stress though.

Of course, there are probably many factors at play here, including the risk of other stressors for cats and the owner's perception of stress signs in their pet. That does highlight again that cats from households who are struggling financially will likely benefit from a variety of support for their owners however, not just financial assistance. This could include advice on resource placement and education about causes of stress in cats.

Cats showing 3+ signs of stress⁵⁶ from households that:

say they've been negatively impacted by the cost-of-living crisis

27%

say they've not been negatively impacted by the cost-of-living crisis

18%

are concerned about paying the bills

29%

are not concerned about paying the bills

20%

⁵⁶ Question asked: Thinking about the past 12 months, which of the following does your cat tend to do, at least some of the time? (Count of stressors).



Companionship and challenges to ownership

Key takeaways

- The wellbeing benefits of cats for their owners remain a strong motivation for ownership
- Renting a home is often cited as a reason for not owning a cat, with potentially 1 million households impacted
- Cost-of-living concerns are impacting how cat owners care for their cat and even preventing would-be owners from being able to share their life with a cat

Why we have cats⁵⁷

More than ever, personal wellbeing is a huge driver for cat ownership, with companionship, reducing loneliness and reducing stress being collectively the top reasons that people choose to own a cat (55%, 51% in 2022 and 2021).

Significant increases can be seen in the number of owners who share their lives with a cat for companionship or to help them feel less stressed. The stress-relieving aspect of cat ownership seems particularly important to female owners (27%) and those aged 18-24 (30%). The increasing importance of owning cats to help with anxiety is also reflected by the fact that this response was selected by a higher proportion of those who acquired a cat in the last 12 months (29%).

While companionship is overall the most popular reason that people choose to share their life with a cat, this seems to be more important for female owners (44%) than it is for male owners (36%).

57 Question asked: What are the main reasons you have a cat/s?
Multiple answers allowed.

“Cats are great company but also independent, which I like.”

- Female owner, 55-64

“I just love cats!”

- Female owner, 18-24





“The reason I have cats? Their personalities and the love that they give.”

- Female owner, 35-44

“I kind of admire cats’ attitude.”

- Male owner, 65-74

Main reasons for owning a cat

As company for me/my family

40%

(37% in 2022, 39% in 2021)

I've always had cats

34%

(33% in 2022, 34% in 2021)

I grew up with cats and so wanted to get my own when I left home

26%

(24% in 2022, 23% in 2021)

To help me feel less stressed/anxious

24%

(21% in 2022, 20% in 2021)

To help me feel less lonely

21%

(20% in 2022, 19% in 2021)

They needed looking after/to be taken in

18%

(19% in 2022, 20% in 2021)

I've just always wanted cats, so got one as soon as I could

18%

(17% in 2022, 16% in 2021)

I wanted a pet animal and thought having a cat would be easier than having a dog

16%

(15% in 2022 and 2021)

My partner wanted one/already had one

15%

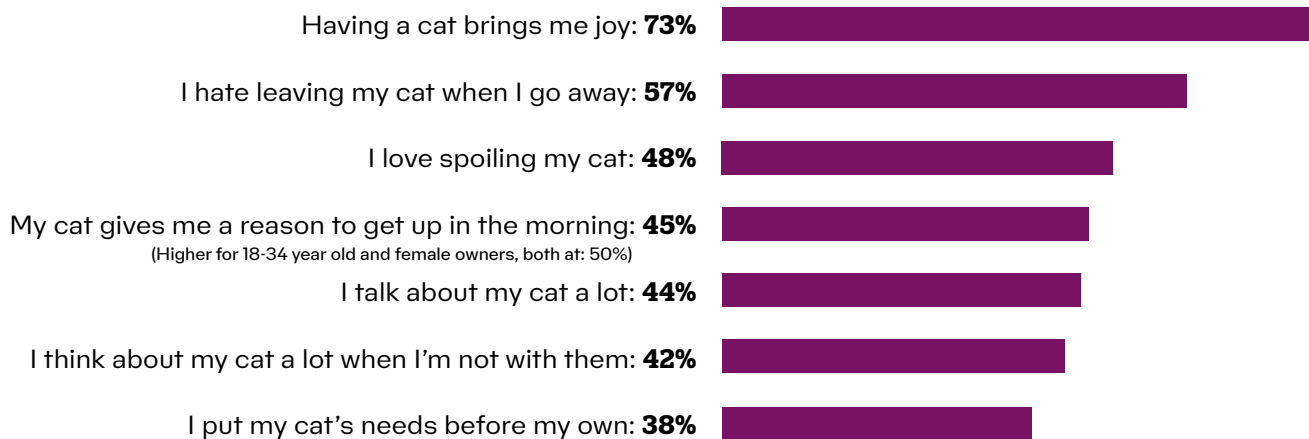
(12% in 2022 and 2021)

My child/children wanted one

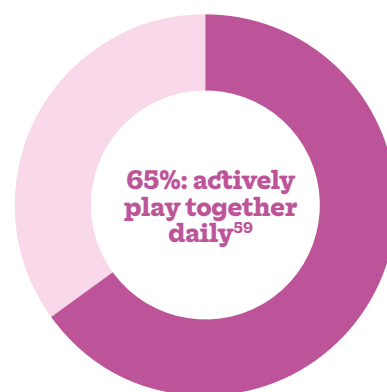
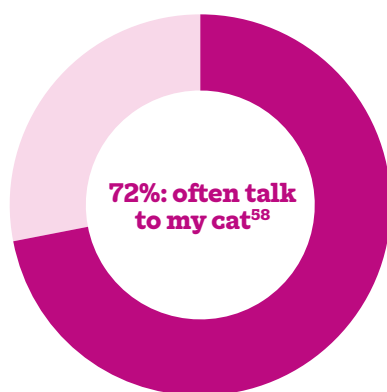
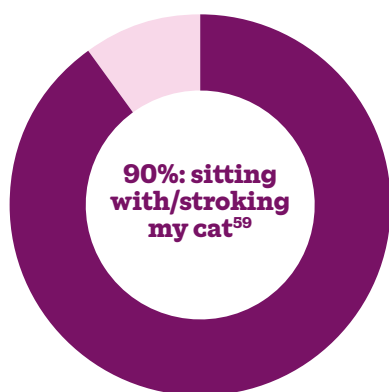
14%

(15% in 2022, 14% in 2021)

The importance of the cat-owner relationship⁵⁸



Spending time with our cats



The depth of feeling that cat owners develop for their cat is perhaps reflected by the fact that almost a quarter (23%) of those who don't own a cat currently say that this is because they couldn't go through the pain of losing one again⁶⁰.

⁵⁸ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about having a cat/s?

⁵⁹ Question asked: In an average week, how often do you do each of the following with your cat?

⁶⁰ Question asked: Which of the following reasons for not having a cat currently apply to you?

Losing a cat can be a really difficult time for owners, which is why the Paws to Listen grief support service was set up by Cats Protection. The free, confidential service puts grieving owners in contact with trained volunteer listeners who are ready to offer emotional support and practical information.



www.cats.org.uk/paws-to-listen

“Each year, the CATS Report continues to highlight the benefits to people of sharing their life with a cat, who provide companionship, and reduce both stress and loneliness for many cat owners. However, we know that the death of a much-loved pet can be devastating, and even a hurdle to future cat ownership, reflecting the trauma this loss can bring. Cats Protection aims to support people through the complete journey of sharing a life with a cat, including the difficult time after loss, and therefore has created our Paws to Listen service, to offer a sympathetic ear at a difficult time.”

Catherine Joyce, Paws to Listen Team Leader, Cats Protection

Cats as part of the family

92% of cat owners agreed that they consider their cat part of the family – clearly demonstrating their important position within the household⁵⁸.

Almost half (45%) of cat owners also have children living in the household, with the majority of these children being under 10 years old⁶¹. The benefits of cat ownership are well documented in children, including increased confidence and improved social-emotional development⁶².

There is also a growing body of evidence of the positive impact that cat ownership can have specifically on autistic children, helping to improve social skills and decreasing anxiety⁶³. Some reports even suggest that the nature of cats makes them better suited for some autistic children than other pet species⁶⁴. Cats should always be given space and choice over their interactions and never acquired solely for therapeutic purposes, but if a cat's presence in the home brings additional benefits to some family members, as long as that cat's welfare needs are always appropriately met, everyone wins.

61 Questions asked: Do you have any children?/How old are your children?

62 Christian H, Mitrou F, Cunneen R, Zubrick SR. Pets are associated with fewer peer problems and emotional symptoms, and better prosocial behavior: Findings From The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children. *J Pediatr*. 2020;220:200-206.e2. doi:10.1016/j.jpeds.2020.01.012.

63 Carlisle, G. K., Lamontagne, A., Bibbo, J., Johnson, R. A., & Lyons, L. A. (2023). Experiences of parents of autistic children who adopted a cat. *Qualitative Social Work*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/14733250231151946>

64 Grandgeorge M, Gautier Y, Bourreau Y, Mossu H, Hausberger M. Visual attention patterns differ in dog vs. cat interactions with children with typical development or autism spectrum disorders. *Front Psychol*. 2020;11:2047. Published 2020 Sep 4. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02047.

“Millie provides comfort for my autistic daughter.”

- Female, 25-34



Helping the most vulnerable

Cats Protection understands the special relationship that people have with their cats and provides a range of services that aim to support owners, especially when they are at their most vulnerable.

One example is the pioneering Lifeline (formerly Paws Protect) service – a free and confidential cat fostering service for people experiencing domestic abuse. Ensuring that their cat will be taken care of until they can be safely reunited, Lifeline helps facilitate a timely exit, by taking one thing off the list of concerns at a really challenging time.














www.cats.org.uk/paws-protect



Barriers to cat ownership

Unfortunately, some people feel unable to share their lives with a cat, for a variety of reasons – many of which are to do with circumstances, rather than desire.

Reasons for those that want a cat soon, but can't⁶⁵

I haven't been able to find a suitable cat yet	17%	
I've only recently started wanting one	17%	
I am waiting for my children to be older	16%	
Having a cat does not fit with my lifestyle	14%	
I live in rented accommodation and was not allowed a cat	13%	
I can't afford a cat	12%	
I live in accommodation that is unsuitable for a cat	11%	
Others in my household do not want a cat	9%	
I have other pets and having a cat would be unsuitable	8%	
I have only started working from home recently	8%	
Health reasons specific to having a cat prevented me	7%	
Health reasons not specific to having a cat prevented me	3%	
Other	2%	

⁶⁵ Question asked: You said that you were planning to buy/adopt a cat soon; why have you not done so before?





Feline tenants welcomed

In May 2023, Cats Protection welcomed plans outlined in a new Renters Reform Bill that, if passed, would see renters gain the legal right to request a pet in their home, which landlords must consider and cannot unreasonably refuse. Cats Protection has been campaigning for rental improvements to the private rental sector since 2018, as part of our Purrfect Landlords campaign. The campaign also includes the provision of practical advice and survey data for both tenants and landlords, to help educate and reassure.

Cats Protection is working to ensure that any proposals within the bill are fair and reasonable for tenants. This bill has the potential to allow more tenants in the private sector to enjoy the companionship of cats, equating to over 1 million more potential loving homes for cats that need adopting.

Renting a home is often cited as a reason for not owning a cat, with potentially 1 million households impacted

Reasons that people who have owned a cat before don't currently own a cat⁶⁰

I don't want to go through the pain of losing a cat again

23%

I have different pets now, instead of cats

16%

I can't afford veterinary care for a cat

15%

Having a cat does not fit with my current lifestyle (for example working away a lot)

14%

I can't afford to own a cat now (for example food, litter)

13%

I don't feel another cat could replace the one I lost

12%

I now live in accommodation that is unsuitable for a cat

11%

Life-long care and support

Older owners shouldn't have to miss out on the company of cats, let alone worry about what happens to them in the future.

The free Cat Guardians service helps provide peace of mind by making sure that a cat's individual needs are known, and their care is assured after their owner is gone – first in Cats Protection's care and then in a new loving home that is perfectly matched to them.

www.cats.org.uk/catguardians



Those aged over 65 are underrepresented among cat owners (11%), compared to all UK households (21%). This may be because some older people worry about what will happen to their cat after they have gone. 6% of people that have never owned a cat but would like to, say that this concern is enough to stop them from getting a cat altogether⁶⁶. 2% of previous cat owners worried so much about the uncertainty of their cat's welfare after they die, that it prompted them to give their cat up⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ Question asked: You said that you would like to buy/adopt a cat soon but can't, why is this?

⁶⁷ Question asked: You said that you used to have a cat but had to give them up. Please could you tell us why this was?

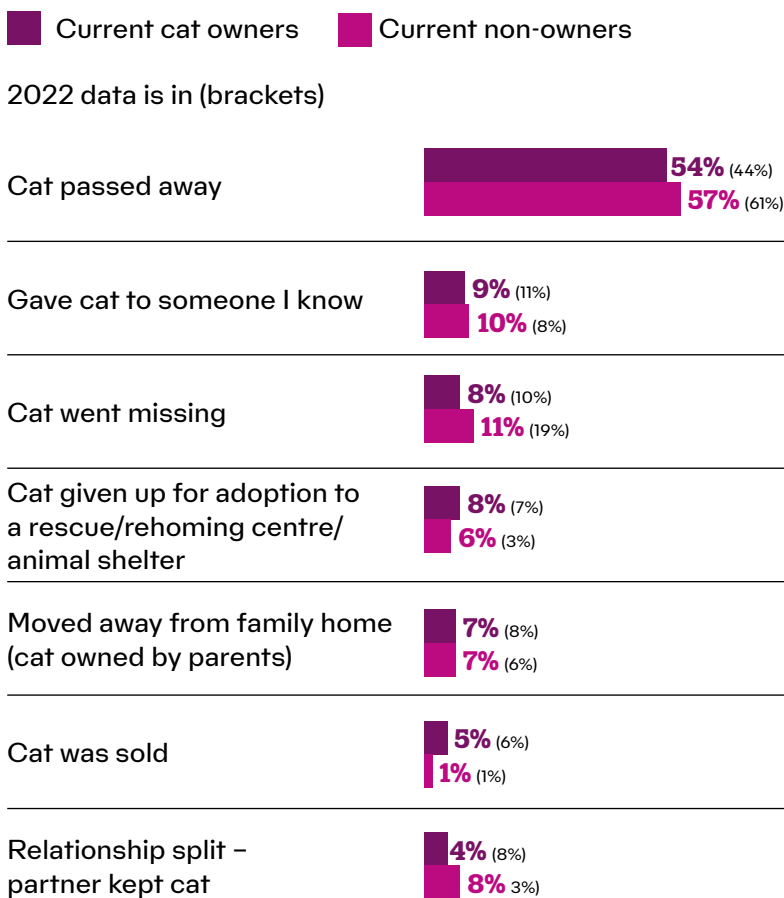
7% of cat owners had a cat in the last 12 months that they no longer own (8% in 2022)⁶⁸

15% of non-owners had a cat in the last 12 months that they no longer own (15% in 2022)⁶⁸

Thankfully, only a small percentage of cat owners had a cat in the last 12 months that they no longer own. A large proportion of these cats passed away, but some were relinquished by their owners, for a variety of reasons. 3% of cat owners say that they have considered giving up their cat in the last 12 months, meaning that around 330,000 cats could be at risk of being relinquished⁶⁹.

Cats Protection believes that it is beneficial for the cat and their owner when cats can remain in a stable, caring environment, so it's important to understand why cats are leaving people's homes. This then allows the provision of the most appropriate support to try and keep cats and their owners united and the cat's needs sufficiently met.

Why are cats no longer with their owners?⁷⁰



Happily, the number of cats that went missing (for non-owners) has significantly reduced since last year. With imminent legislation for compulsory microchipping for cats in England, this will hopefully continue to reduce further.

Although the number of cats that went missing has dropped, many still get separated from their families each year, causing much heartache.

Cats Protection has advice for when a cat goes missing, which can be found at www.cats.org.uk/lost-a-cat



68 Question asked: In the past 12 months, have you had a cat you no longer own?

69 Question asked: And thinking about the last 12 months, which of the below, if any, apply to you?

70 Question asked: Thinking about the cat(s) that left your company within the last 12 months, what happened to them?

The ongoing cost of cats

Over a third (34%) of owners say that they have been significantly and negatively impacted by the rise in living costs, with younger, female and less affluent owners particularly affected⁷¹.

Profile of those most impacted by cost-of-living rises

All cat owners: **34%**

Female owners: **38%**

Male owners: **29%**

18-34: **36%**

35-54: **38%**

55+: **24%**

ABCI: **29%**

C2DE: **41%**

For many owners, the rising cost of living is a big concern, with 14% seriously worrying about how they will meet their cat's needs in the future⁷². 7% say that they have already had to reduce their spending on necessities such as cat food and litter and 3% have had to rely on food banks to feed their cat⁷³. A quarter of owners (25%) have doubts about how they would pay vet bills if their cat became sick or injured and 22% of cat owners are very concerned about being able to pay bills and other living costs over the next 12 months⁷², due to inflation and interest rate rises, and associated impacts on regular household outgoings, such as mortgage payments.

71 Question asked: To what extent have your household finances been negatively impacted by the rising cost of living since January 2022?

72 Question asked: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

73 Question asked: And thinking about the last 12 months, which of the below, if any, apply to you?

This year's report data suggests that these concerns about the cost of living are having the tangible effect of preventing cats from entering or remaining within loving homes. Not being able to afford a cat is the reason that 12% of people who would like a cat don't currently own one⁶⁵, and why 13% of people who used to own a cat no longer do (up from 8% in 2022)⁶⁰. There have also been increases in the proportion of people that used to own a cat but now don't because of concerns over the cost of veterinary care (15%, up from 12% last year)⁶⁰.

This is being felt by Cats Protection centres up and down the country too. Between January and May 2023, relinquishment of cats for financial reasons was up 48% compared to the same period in 2022.

It is interesting that helping to reduce stress is consistently more likely to be the main reason for cat ownership for people that are concerned about finances. This is further indication of the benefits of cat ownership for people who are facing the big challenges of life.

Proportion of owners who own a cat to help them feel less stressed⁵⁷:

24%

Negatively impacted by the cost-of-living crisis:

Yes: 27%

No: 19%

Concerned that they won't be able to pay bills/other living costs:

Yes: 29%

No: 20%



Helping to lessen the pinch

Cats Protection is dedicated to helping cat owners continue to lovingly meet their cats' needs through these hard financial times, for the benefit of both the cat and their owner.

One example of this is the partnership of Cats Protection with multiple charitable and corporate organisations to secure cat food for distribution via FareShare – the UK's largest charity fighting hunger and food waste. This alliance has already helped thousands of cats be protected from the financial pressures that their owners face. Cats Protection's branches and centres across the country are also partnering directly with food banks and community partners to provide families with cat food, to help feed their pet.

Cats Protection has also produced guidance on how to take care of your cat when facing rising living costs, including information about our neutering voucher scheme, how to help keep vet bills down and top tips on keeping day-to-day cat care costs as low as possible.

To access this guidance visit www.cats.org.uk/cost-of-living



“The cost-of-living crisis represents a huge issue for cat welfare, with many owners facing impossible choices as costs continue to rise. No one should be forced to give up a beloved pet and no cat should be left hungry. We are proud to be working with our colleagues across the sector to get donated food into the bowls of cats in need.”

Peter Shergold,
Head of Field Operations,
Cats Protection



Cats in summary



State of the nation

- Cat ownership:

	In millions		% of cat owning households	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
Total UK	11	11	26%	26%
Wales	0.6	0.6	28%	29%
England	9.2	9.2	26%	26%
Scotland	0.9	0.8	24%	22%
Northern Ireland	0.3	0.2	26%	21%

- 67% of UK cat-owning households own one cat; 33% own two or more cats

The cat market

- Cat adoption rates have declined over time, while the proportion of bought cats has increased (stabilising over the last few years):

	Cat was acquired...			
	In the last 12 months	1-2 years ago	3-5 years ago	More than 5 years ago
Adopted from a rescue/rehoming centre/animal shelter in the UK	15%	21%	28%	26%
Bought	40%	40%	30%	27%

- The percentage of pedigree cats obtained has increased over time:

	Cats obtained...			
	In the last 12 months	1-2 years ago	3-5 years ago	More than 5 years ago
Moggy/domestic shorthair or longhair	45%	51%	61%	74%
Pedigree/purebred	42%	39%	27%	17%

Veterinary care

- Although there are still concerns regarding vet capacity, they appear to be easing
- 30% of owners state that they have experienced difficulty accessing a vet (37% in 2022)
- 10% of cats (1.1 million) are not registered with a vet
- 72% of cats (7.9 million) are up to date with their vaccinations, according to their owner
- 85% of cats (9.4 million) are neutered, 13% (1.4 million) are not neutered
- 73% of cats (8 million) are microchipped, 24% (2.6 million) are not microchipped
- 48% of litters born in the last 12 months were unplanned
- Cost of living and vet care:
 - 15% of people who have not neutered their cat said it was due to cost (10% in 2022)
 - 28% of owners said cost prevented them from visiting the vets as often as they would like (24% in 2022)
 - 25% of all cat owners are concerned about how they would pay vet bills if their cat became sick or injured

Cat care, welfare and behaviour

- 61% of UK cats have both indoor and outdoor access
 - The number of indoor-only cats has remained stable, compared to last year (37%)
- 53% of cat owners aren't aware that lilies are toxic to cats
- Provision of important resources in multi-cat households is often less than the recommended rate of 'one per cat, plus one'

Companionship and challenges to ownership

- 40% own a cat for companionship
- 24% own a cat to help them feel less stressed or anxious
- 21% own a cat to help them feel less lonely
- Restrictive rental contracts may be preventing around 1 million households from owning a cat
- Cost-of-living concerns:
 - 13% of people who used to own a cat but no longer do say that it's because they can't afford it
 - Owners of 1.5 million cats (14% of cat owners) are concerned about how they will meet their cat's needs in the future
 - Owners of 0.8 million cats (7% of cat owners) have had to reduce their spending on necessities for their cat (such as food, litter) in the last 12 months
 - Owners of 0.3 million cats (3% of cat owners) have had to rely on food banks to feed their cat

Where do we go from here?

A message from John May, Cats Protection's Chief Executive

We often talk about the importance of seeing the world through cats' eyes. In its fourth year, the Cats and Their Stats (CATS) Report continues to provide vital additional insight into the perceptions of cat owners.

With owners facing significant changes and challenges over the past few years, we need to keep up to date with how cat welfare is being impacted, and work to provide the right support and advice to those who need it.

The insights from this report indicate that cats and their owners are being affected by the global challenges of the last few years. We aim to use this report not only to steer our practical activities and ensure they're relevant to the needs of cats in the UK, but also to influence policy makers and other key stakeholders.

As the UK's largest cat welfare charity with more than 10,000 volunteers and employees across the country, Cats Protection is well placed to deliver the support that's needed. I'm delighted that we continue to invest in our neutering programme, have successfully campaigned for compulsory pet cat microchipping and are delivering targeted support to owners to help them through the cost-of-living crisis.

One of the consistent findings of the CATS Report is that methods of cat acquisition are shifting – Cats Protection is here for all cats and will continue to strive to offer the advice and support owners need; regardless of where owners get their cat.

However, the continued shift to more cats being purchased undoubtedly presents challenges for animal welfare charities, with fewer cats being adopted at the same time as more owners are looking to relinquish their pets. Cats Protection will seek to highlight its research and work with the wider sector and government to help address these issues.

The changes in the market may also be fuelling issues that have a detrimental impact on cat welfare such as kitten smuggling and poor breeding practices, so our work to speak up for cats and ensure they are provided adequate protections in regulation will continue to be critical as we seek to achieve our mission.

Cats Protection's vision is a society where every cat has their best possible life because they are protected, cared for and understood by everyone. The findings of the CATS Report and other research conducted by Cats Protection enables an improved understanding, so that we can make our vision a reality.









Services

Rehoming cats – For those looking to adopt a cat or to have theirs rehomed.

www.cats.org.uk/contact-us or 03000 12 12 12

Neutering support – Providing thousands of people each year with financial assistance for neutering.

www.cats.org.uk/neutering

Education talks – Free talks to schools (curriculum-based) and community groups, advising both adults and children about cat behaviour and responsible pet ownership.

www.cats.org.uk/education

Cat Guardians – A free service aimed at giving peace of mind to cat owners that are concerned about what might happen if they were to pass away before their cat.

www.cats.org.uk/catguardians or 01825 741 291

Paws to Listen – A free grief support service run by trained volunteer listeners, for those dealing with the loss of their cat whether through death, going missing or separation.

www.cats.org.uk/paws-to-listen or 0800 024 9494

Lifeline (formerly Paws Protect) – A free and completely confidential pet-fostering service for families fleeing domestic abuse.

www.cats.org.uk/paws-protect or 0345 260 1280

General advice – A helpline for those with any questions regarding their own cats, or cats in general.

www.cats.org.uk/contact-us or 03000 12 12 12



For further information contact stats@cats.org.uk or visit www.cats.org.uk/stats

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