

CATS Report

Cats and Their Stats UK 2024

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Methodology

For the fifth year, we have commissioned an external and independent agency, Basis Research, to conduct the research contained in the CATS Report UK 2024.

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 21 February 2024 and 12 April 2024. 'In the last 12 months' within the report refers to the time period March 2023 to March 2024 and unless otherwise stated, comparative data in this survey uses data from the CATS Report UK 2023.

The research consisted of a UK nationally representative sample of 3,521 individuals and a boost of 7,001 cat owners, including regional boosts to ensure accurate representation in these areas. Overall, 10,522 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=3,521)
- 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. Due to rounding, there will be instances in the report where percentage calculations do not total 100%. 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.

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 2024 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 from stats@cats.org.uk

Welcome to the annual Cats and Their Stats (CATS) Report UK[©] 2024

Welcome to CATS 2024, our fifth comprehensive survey about cats in the UK.

Back in 2019, we were ambitious with our goal to carry out the largest annual survey of its kind. The survey represents views and attitudes from people across the UK, including those that look after or share their homes with cats and also those that don't. Over the past five years, our findings have answered some of the most important and pressing cat welfare questions. The CATS Report has become an integral pillar of information for Cats Protection, as we lead the way for cat welfare and help people see the world through cats' eyes.

The CATS Report allows us to identify trends over time and helps us understand what impacts the lives of cats across the country. The identification of trends and changes supports immediate action to be taken if necessary and, just as importantly, informs longer-term strategic planning.

This year's CATS Report has highlighted the need to engage our youngest group of cat owners, who will be carrying the torch for cat welfare into the future. We have also documented a clear trend towards pedigree cat ownership, which may present challenges to the veterinary and animal welfare sectors. As ever, we are keen to work with owners, breeders and veterinary professionals in meeting these challenges, to improve the welfare of cats across the UK.

There are still many unknowns about what lies ahead for cats, but our report repeatedly tells us loud and clear that cats remain loved and valued by society. As a charity, we must do all we can to preserve the bond we have with our cats, and ensure that cats are protected, cared for and understood by everyone.

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



A message from Eleanor Brown MSc MA VetMB MRCVS, Deputy UK Chief Veterinary Officer

Cats deserve the best start in life and to be cared for compassionately.

Worryingly, a hidden trade in cats, some with extreme characteristics, seems to be appearing across the UK. It is important that consumers understand the detrimental impact these can have on a cats' health and welfare.

The CATS report, in its fifth year, is central in uncovering how the trade of these cats is operating on social media.

The Animal Welfare Committee which advises the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, as well as the Scottish and Welsh Governments, is completing a project on the welfare implications of cat breeding. The project will look at the types of cats being bred and assess whether these cats and their kittens can have their welfare needs adequately met as pets.

The decision to take on a pet should be a happy moment for any owner and their family. The work of Cats Protection is vitally important to help owners choose the right cat for them and ensure that the health and welfare of our cats is a priority.



Key findings

State of the nation

- There are 10.6 million owned cats across the UK, a slight fall from 11 million in 2023
- Cat owners are more likely to be younger on average than the general population
- Cat ownership continues to skew towards more affluent people, but this previously widening gap appears to have stabilised

The cat market

- For the first time, more pedigree cats were acquired in the last 12 months than moggies
- There is concern around the potential for breeds with extreme traits to become more popular. 3% of cats acquired in the last 12 months were Scottish Folds
- Social media has taken the top spot as a source to find a cat to buy

Veterinary care

- 58% of owners say that they do not visit the vet as often as they would like to
- Microchipping numbers have increased in the run up to the introduction of compulsory microchipping in England, but over 2.3 million cats remain unchipped
- More people are choosing not to neuter their cat because they want them to have kittens, but more kittens are being given away and being given up to rescue/rehoming centres, rather than sold

Cat care, welfare and behaviour

- Owners are increasingly researching their cat's needs, both before and after acquiring them, but first-time owners may require additional support to build their confidence in providing what is best for their cat
- Social media is growing as a source of information about cat care, particularly for younger owners
- For the first time, we have gained insight into the use of accessories such as leads/harnesses and backpack carriers, which indicates they are more widely used than thought. Many of these accessories are associated with increased stress for cats

Companionship and challenges to ownership

- The wellbeing benefits of cat ownership are still the main driving force behind having a cat
- The cost of living continues to be a barrier to cat ownership
- Many potential cat owners continue to cite living in rental accommodation as a barrier

State of the nation

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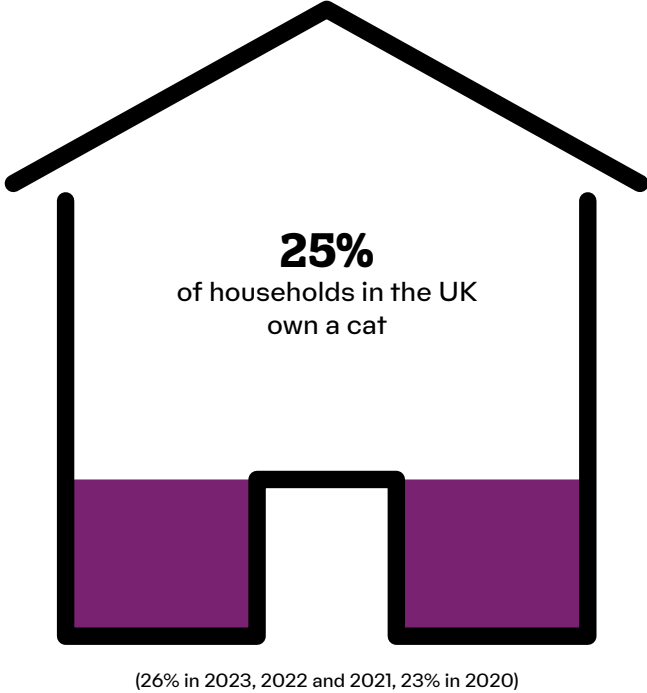
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Key takeaways

- There are 10.6 million owned cats across the UK, a slight fall from 11 million in 2023
- There remains a younger age skew for cat owners, compared to the general population
- Cat ownership continues to skew towards more affluent people, but this previously widening gap appears to have stabilised

Cat population¹



There are **10.6 million owned cats** across the UK.

(11 million in 2023)

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, cat ownership in the UK has levelled out, with a small decline year-on-year.

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

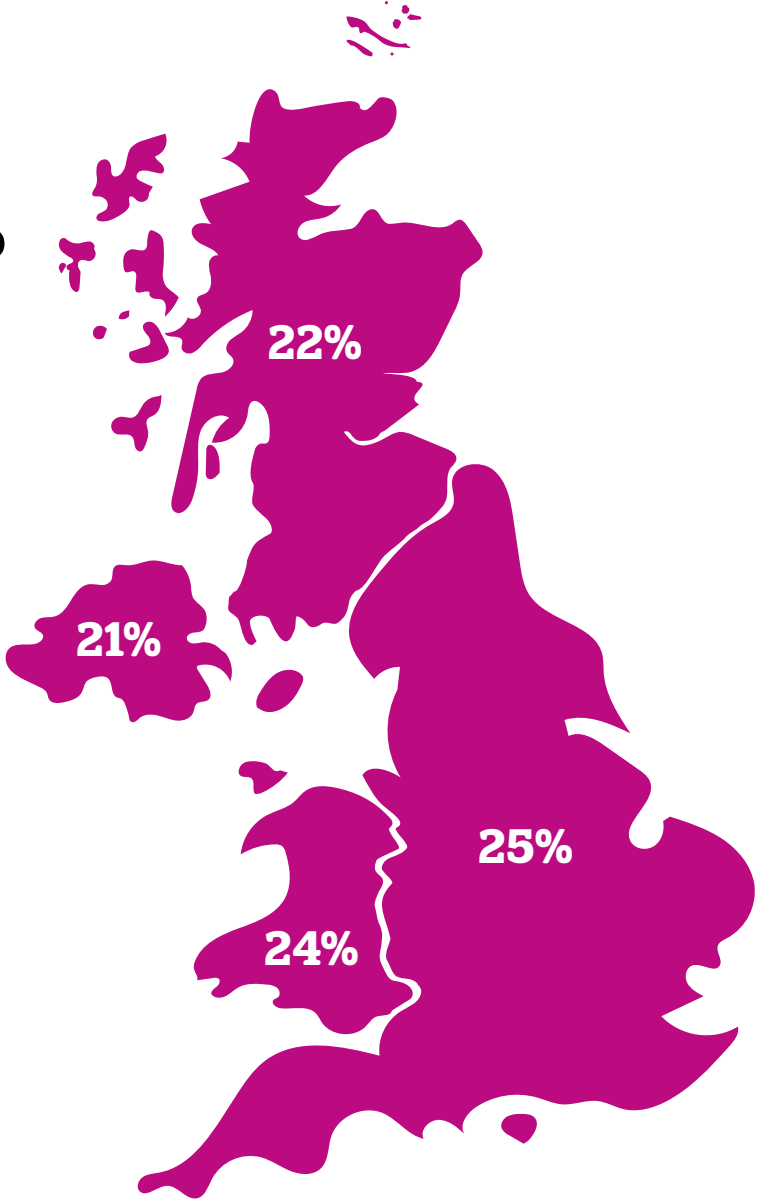
¹ Questions asked: Do you currently have a cat/s (that live with you)?/How many cats do you have in your household?

Example calculation: 25% own a cat in the UK x 28.1m UK households* x 1.5 cats owned on average = 10.6 million cats owned across the UK.

*Source: 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 25% of households in England, with no statistically significant changes from last year's figures. Wales, however, has seen a decline in ownership levels.

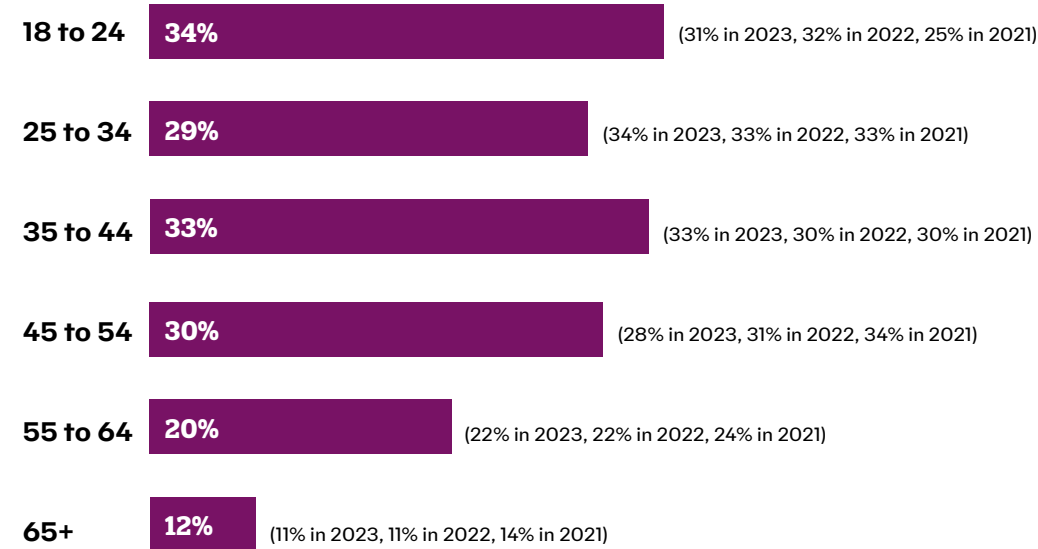


The distribution of the owned cat population remains largely the same across the UK.

	In millions		% of cat-owning households	
	2023	2024	2023	2024
Total UK	11.0	10.6	26%	25%
England	9.2	9.0	26%	25%
Wales	0.6	0.5	29%	24%
Scotland	0.8	0.8	22%	22%
Northern Ireland	0.2	0.2	21%	21%
Yorkshire and the Humber	1.0	1.2	28%	32%
Greater London	1.4	1.5	29%	31%
South East England	1.4	1.5	25%	26%
North West England	1.1	1.1	23%	24%
South West England	0.9	0.9	25%	24%
East Midlands	0.7	0.7	22%	24%
East of England	1.2	1.0	30%	23%
West Midlands	1.1	0.8	30%	22%
North East England	0.4	0.2	22%	12%

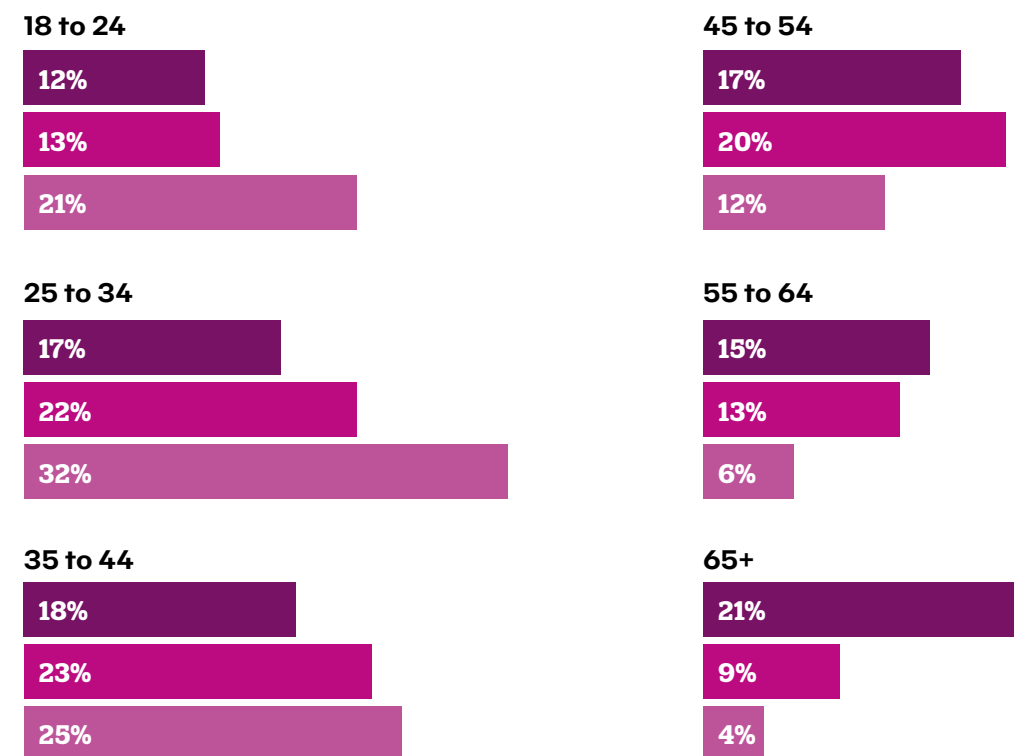
Profile of cat owners²

The proportion of each age group that owns a cat has remained stable.



However, those under 34 years old are still more likely to have recently acquired a cat.

■ UK adults ■ All cat owners ■ Cat owners who acquired a cat in the last 12 months



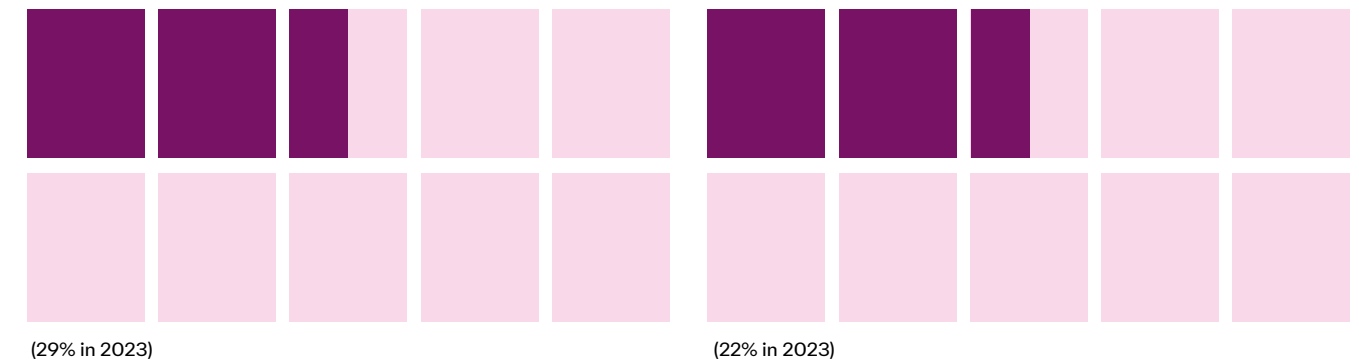
UK cat owners are less likely to be over the age of 65 when compared to the general population and those acquiring a cat in the last 12 months tend to be younger than the overall profile of cat owners.

² Questions asked: Do you currently have a cat/s (that lives with you)?/ How many cats do you have in your household?/When did you acquire (for example, buy/adopt) your cat?

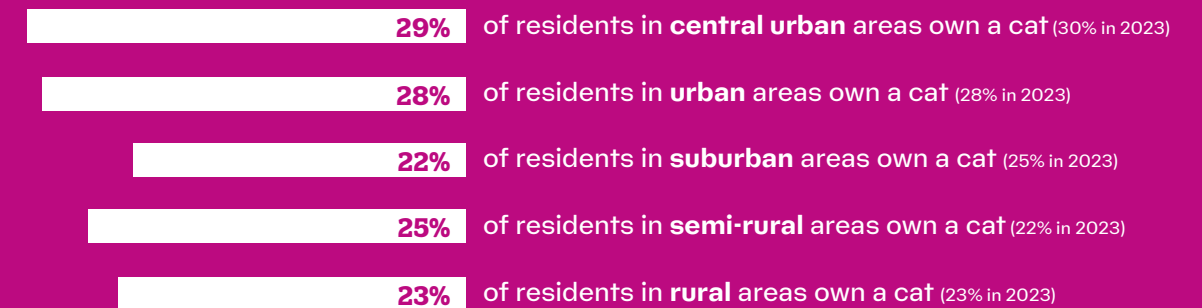
For the first time, the proportion of males has matched the proportion of females owning a cat.

25% of females in the UK own a cat

25% of males in the UK own a cat



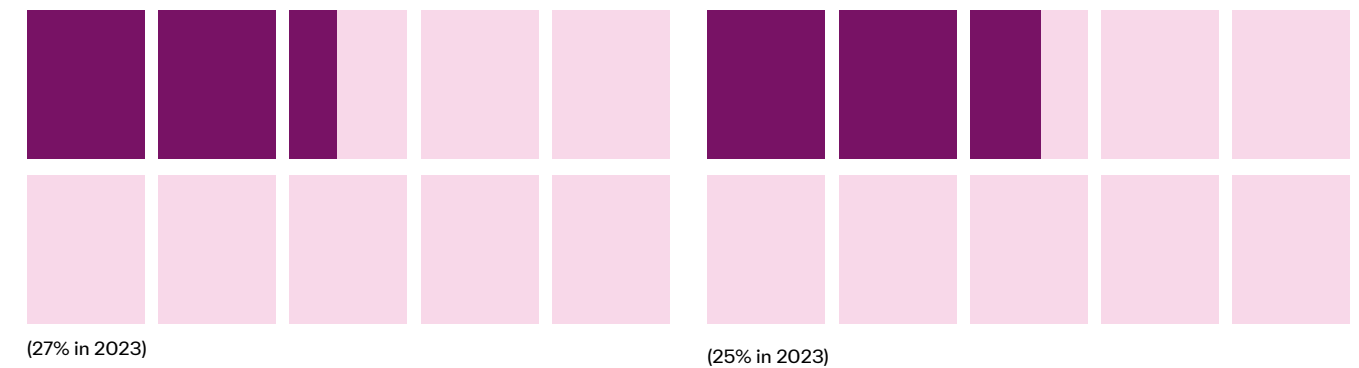
Where cats live remains consistent with last year³.



There has been a decrease in the proportion of those who rent their home owning a cat.

24% of those who rent a home own a cat

26% of those who own a home own a cat



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?

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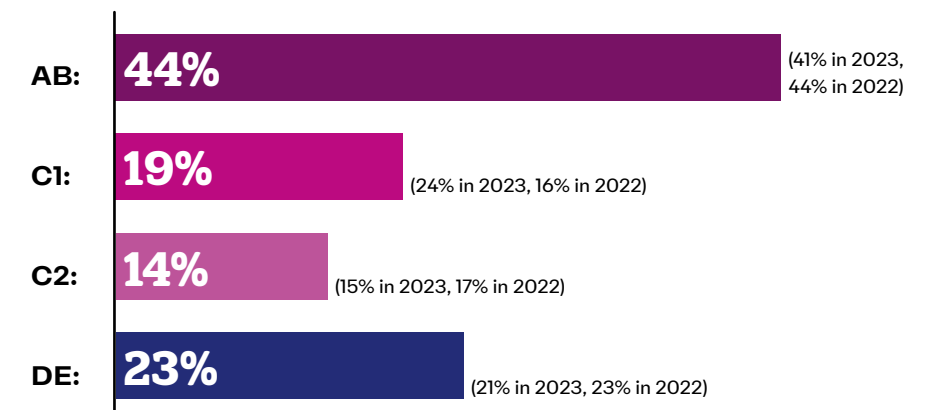
Are cost-of-living concerns affecting cat ownership⁴?

More cats were acquired in socio-economic group ABC1 (more affluent people) compared to C2DE (less affluent people) in the last 12 months, although four-year data shows early suggestions that this previously widening gap is perhaps stabilising.

The fact that cat ownership continues to skew to more affluent owners may reflect that concerns over living costs are preventing people in less affluent socio-economic groups from acquiring cats though.

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.

A higher proportion of cat owners that have acquired a cat in the last 12 months are in more affluent social groups.



⁴ Question asked: Do you currently have a cat/s (that lives 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 ukgeographics.co.uk/blog/social-grade-a-b-c1-c2-d-e

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The cat market

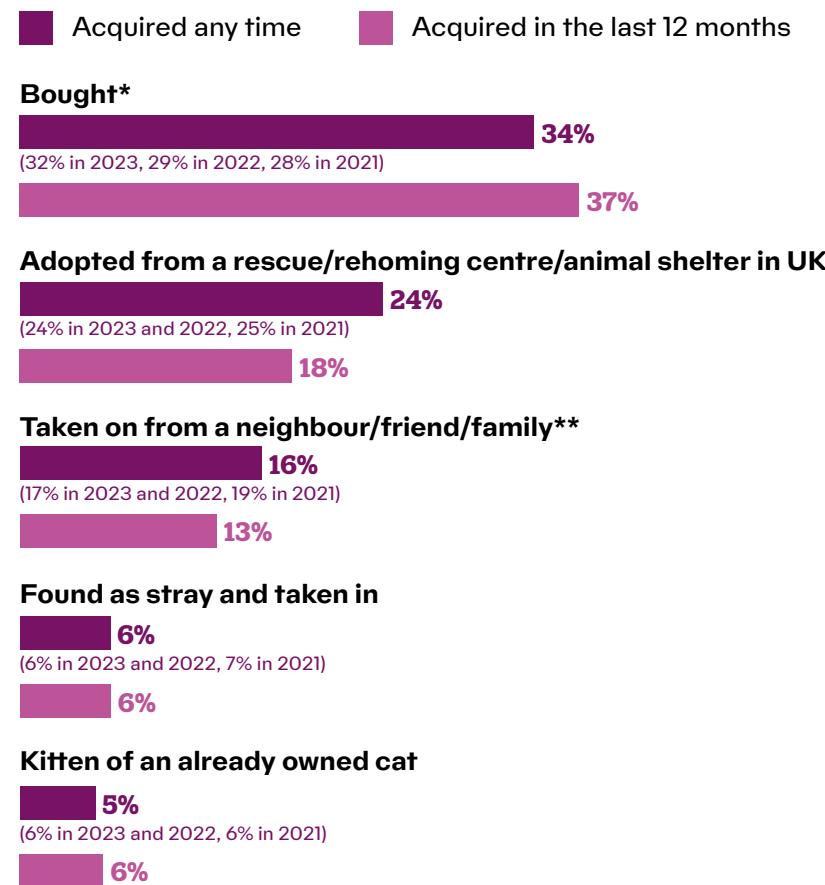
Key takeaways

- For the first time, more pedigree cats were acquired in the last 12 months than moggies
- There is concern around the potential for breeds with extreme traits to become more popular. 3% of cats acquired in the last 12 months were Scottish Folds⁵
- Social media has taken the top spot as a source to find a cat to buy

How cats are acquired

15% of the current cat population were acquired during the last 12 months⁶, equating to nearly 1.6 million cats. A slight decrease but no significant change from last year (16%, 1.8 million cats).

The proportion of the pet cat population that is 'bought' is continuing to increase (data shown for all cats in current population)⁶. The gap between purchase and adoption is wider for cats acquired in the last 12 months.



⁵ Question asked: What breed is your cat? Such as moggy, cross-breed, specific pedigree breed. Filtered by acquired in the last 12 months.
⁶ Questions asked: Where did you get/adopt your cat from?/When did you acquire (for example, buy/adopt) your cat? Excluding those who say they bought their cat but didn't pay anything.
 *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.

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

3.6 million were bought

640,000 in the last 12 months

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

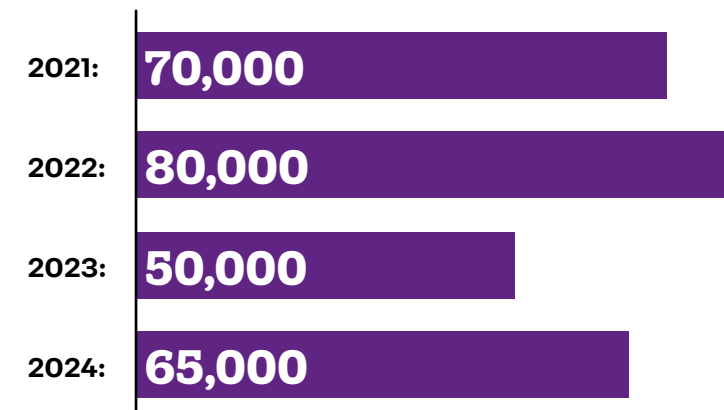
290,000 in the last 12 months

2.4 million were taken on or taken in

300,000 in the last 12 months

2% of the total cat population was acquired from overseas sources, rising to 4% for those acquired in the last 12 months⁷.

Number of imported cats in the preceding 12 months:



“The number of cats being imported each year remains a cause for concern as cats do not travel well, and long journeys can cause them a great deal of stress. Additionally, the smuggling of cats into the UK poses a public health risk, as diseases such as rabies (which can pass to humans) are still prevalent in parts of Europe. Unchecked cats entering the UK significantly increases the chances of disease spreading.

“This is why Cats Protection is calling for a ban on the import of cats under six months, pregnant cats and cats which have been declawed, a cruel procedure that is banned in the UK but is allowed in some other countries.”

Jade Emery, Advocacy & Campaigns Officer, Cats Protection

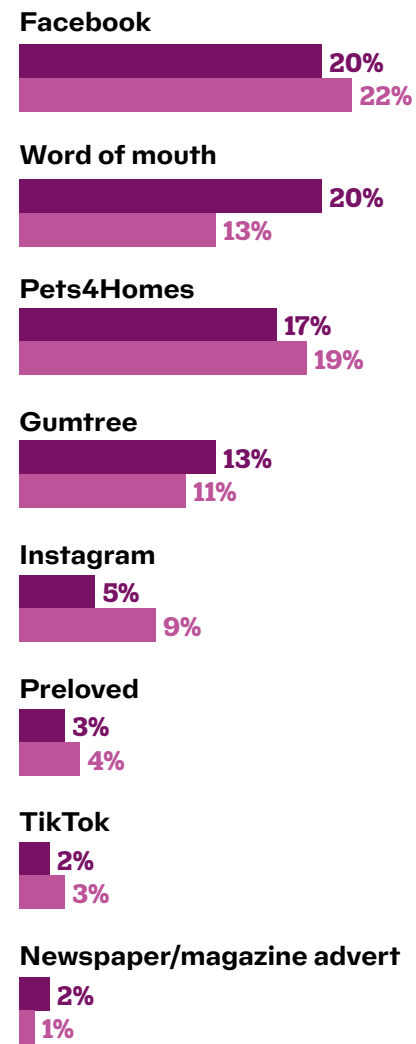
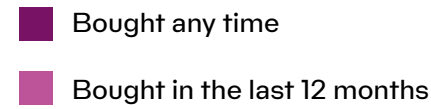


⁷ Questions asked: Where did you buy/adopt your cat from?/When did you acquire (for example, buy/adopt) your cat?

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Where people find cats to buy

Social media is a popular source for finding a cat to buy⁸.



⁸ Questions asked: Where did you find the cat or kitten you went on to buy/adopt?/When did you acquire (for example, buy/adopt) your cat? Filtered by bought cats and excludes those that say 'don't know/can't remember'.

*Figure calculated through those selecting Rescue/rehoming centre website, Pets4Homes, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Other social media, Gumtree, Preloved and Other website.



Of all cats purchased, 63% were bought from online sources*.

72% for those cats purchased in the last 12 months

Owners who choose to buy their cat tend to be younger and more likely to live in urban areas. Adopters tend to be older and live in suburban or rural areas, when compared to those who choose to purchase their cat.

“The Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) is extremely concerned about the rising popularity of acquiring cats via social media.

“For over 20 years, PAAG has worked to tackle irresponsible pet advertising, but there are little to no safeguards when it comes to advertising pets on social media, putting animal welfare at risk.”



Paula Boyden, Chair, Pet Advertising Advisory Group, and Veterinary Director, Dogs Trust

Social media: the wild west of the cat trade

Worryingly, social media is a significant source for acquiring cats; over a quarter (27%) of purchased cats were found on a social media platform, rising to 37% for those purchased in the last 12 months*.

Facebook is the single biggest individual source of acquiring cats to buy.

Unlike the top classified sites, which have committed to following the advertising guidelines set out by the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG), social media platforms simply define their own rules on pet sales, with little oversight.

For the first time, cat owners were asked specifically about Instagram and TikTok. While the proportion of cats acquired through Instagram and TikTok appears relatively low, acquiring cats via these platforms is rising in popularity, especially among younger cat owners, so will need to be closely watched. It is of note that cats sourced on Instagram are more likely to be pedigree, perhaps demonstrating the visual appeal of these breeds.

TikTok has a strong stance on pet sales, which “does not allow content that is facilitating the trade of regulated, prohibited or high-risk goods and services, including live animals”. Their rules include a ban on redirecting people off the platform to other websites, physical premises or people that sell animals too. Meanwhile, Facebook has a more complex set of guidelines around pet sales. Cats Protection is concerned that the multiple exemptions that allow the sale of pets on the platform result in a distinct lack of clarity and introduces easily exploitable loopholes for unscrupulous sellers.

Cats Protection advises that those looking to buy a pet should avoid social media.

Individuals unknown to the purchaser, but not specialist breeders, are increasing as a source for cats found via Facebook⁹.

Where the cats found on Facebook came from

Someone I didn't know, but not a specialist breeder



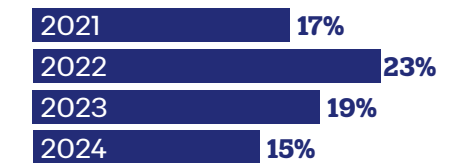
A neighbour/friend/family



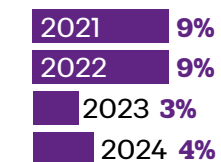
A specialist breeder in the UK



A pet shop**



A specialist breeder outside of the UK



⁹ Questions asked: Where did you get/adopt your cat from?/When did you acquire (for example, buy/adopt) your cat? Filtered all bought cats found on Facebook.

*Calculated through those selecting Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Other social media.

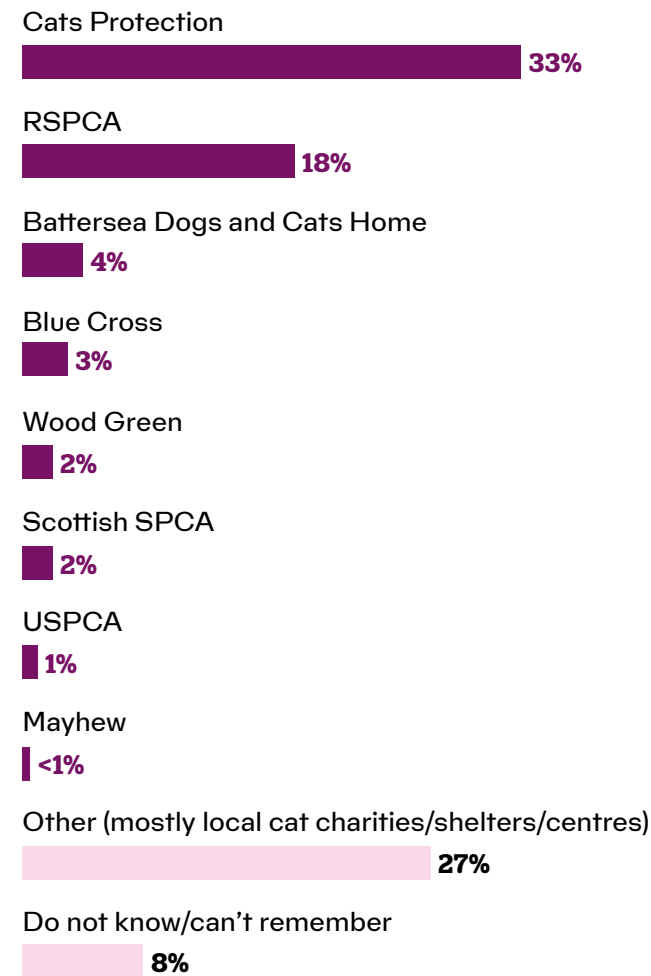
**Note: Facebook has a category it defines as 'pet shop' that is used on Business Pages, so these may be breeders.

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Where people find cats to adopt

Cats Protection remains a leading cat adoption source¹⁰.



¹⁰ Question asked: Where did you adopt your cat from?

In 2023 Cats Protection found new homes for 30,000 cats (2022: 30,000).

An average of 1,600 cats a month have been on waiting lists to come into rescue care at Cats Protection centres in the last 12 months*.

The top reason for choosing a specific source is most likely to be down to the individual cat^{11**}.



The cat themselves:



I fell in love with a video/photo of this cat



I very much wanted this particular cat



I specifically wanted a kitten



I wanted a particular breed



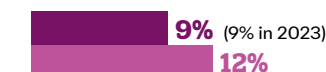
Convenience



Circumstance



Cost



¹¹ Question asked: Why did you end up buying/adopting your cat/kitten from this source?

*April 2023 to March 2024.

** Codes include:

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 themselves: 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.

Circumstance: 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.

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What type of cats do people have?

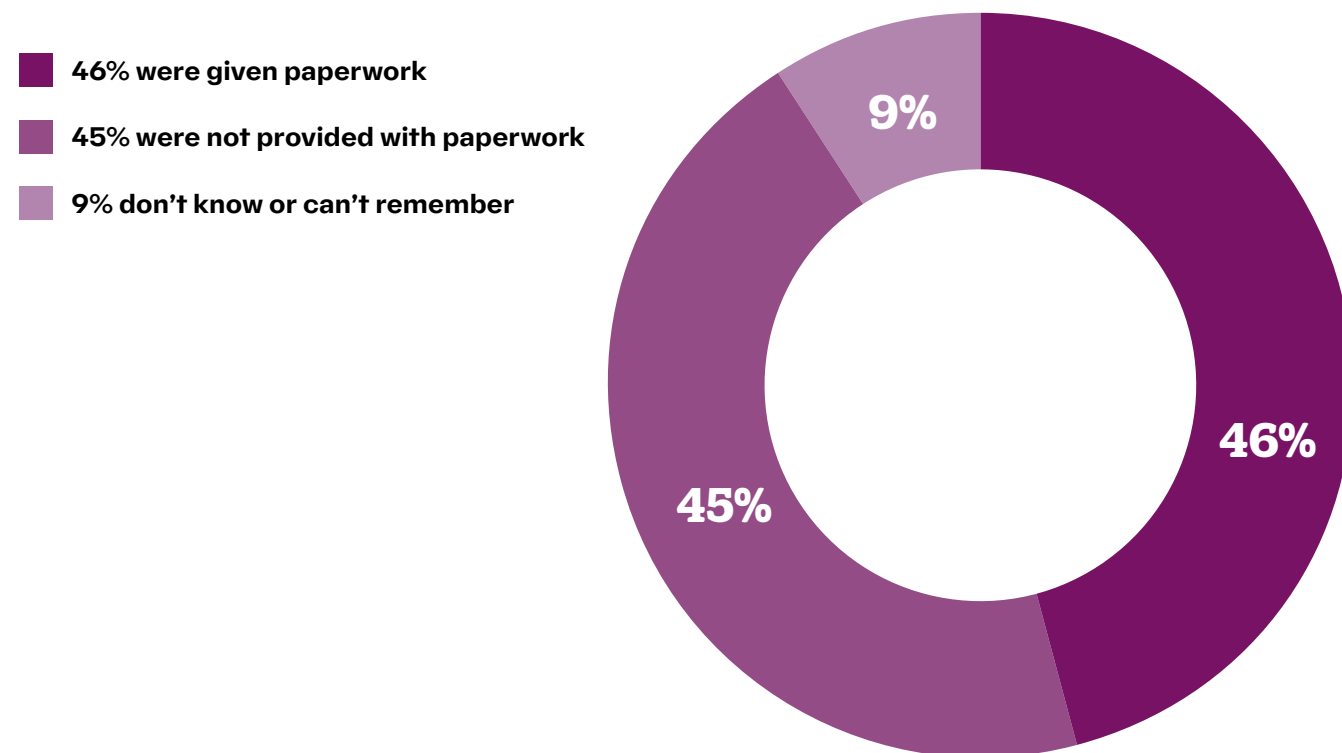
Pedigree vs purebred

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.

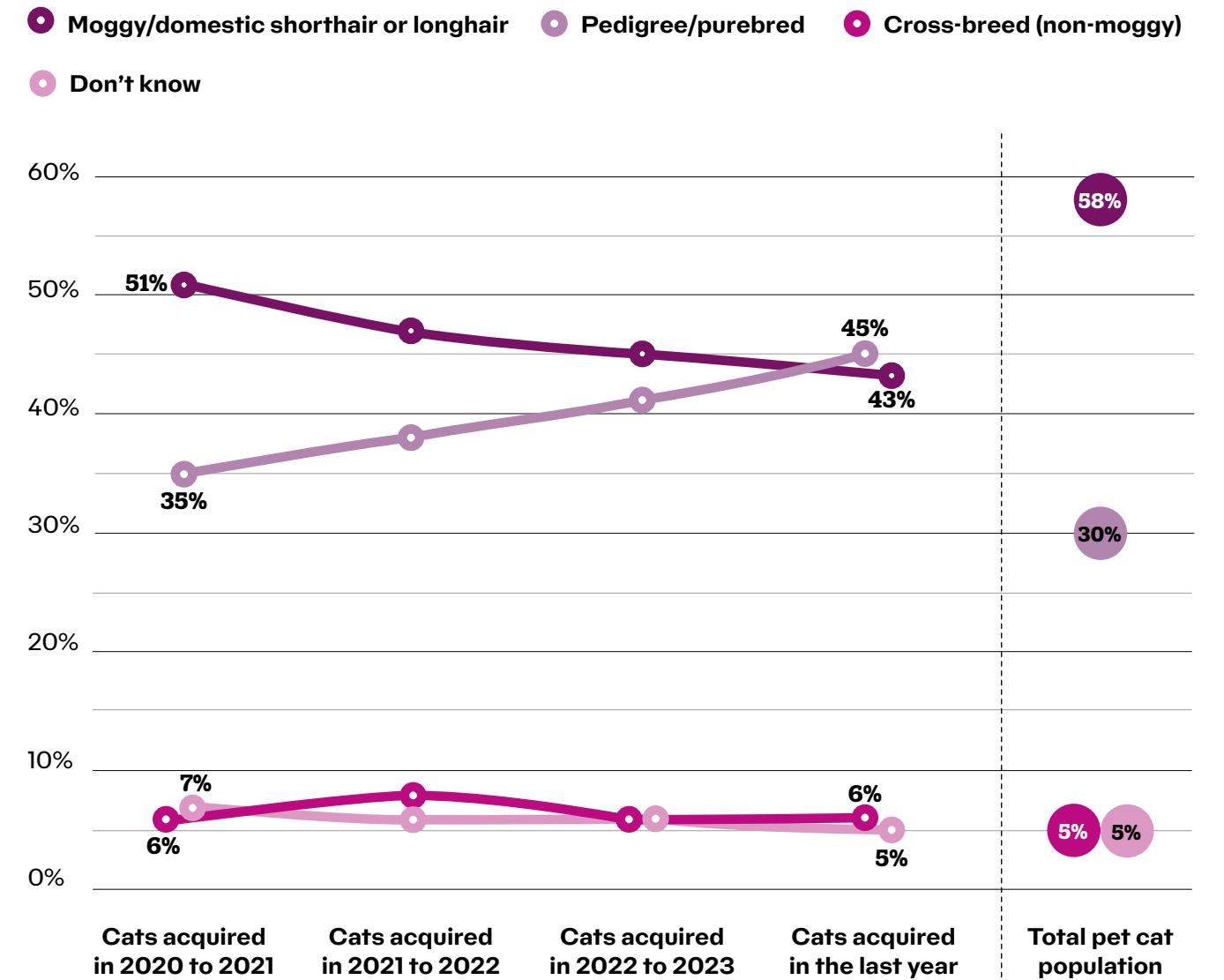
Pedigree: A purebred or cross-breed cat that is registered with a governing body, and the ancestry is recorded.

Of the non-moggy owners 46% say that they were given paperwork to confirm their cat's breed (45% in 2023)¹².



¹² Question asked: When you bought/adopted your cat were you given any paperwork or certification to confirm their breed?

For the first time, more pedigrees were acquired in the last 12 months than moggies¹³.



The growth in the popularity of pedigree cats does not appear to be slowing. Indeed, for cats acquired in the last 12 months, the proportion of pedigrees has overtaken moggies for the first time (45% vs 43%).

It appears to be younger, more affluent owners that are particularly driving this increase in pedigree popularity.

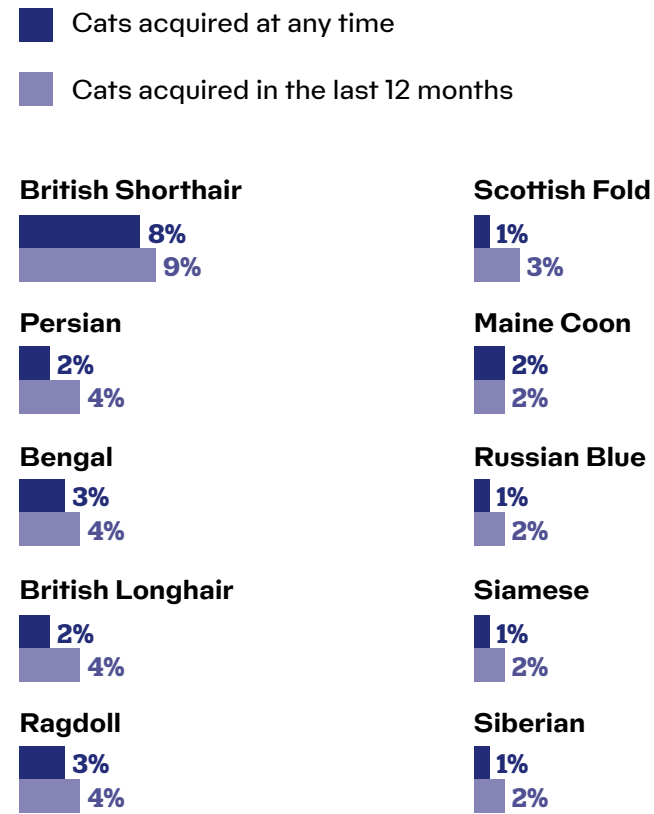
The proportion of 18 to 34-year-old cat owners owning a pedigree cat has seen a significant increase this year, with 41% now sharing their home with one (35% in 2023).

Male owners are also more likely to own a pedigree cat (36% vs 29% of females). Those in the ABC1 (more affluent) socio-economic group are more likely to own a pedigree. Pedigree ownership is becoming more common regardless of social group, gender or age however, with the notable exception of the over 55s.

¹³ Questions asked: What breed is your cat? For example moggy, cross breed, specific pedigree breed./When did you acquire (for example, buy/adopt) your cat?/ Where did you get/adopt your cat from? Base: Aged 18 to 34.

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There has been a significant rise in the popularity of Scottish Folds among recently acquired cats (breed identified by their owners)¹³.



Scottish Folds in focus

This year's data has shown a spike in popularity of the Scottish Fold cat, perhaps due in part to the release of the film *Argylle*, which features a Scottish Fold who was a strong focus of the film's marketing. This film caught the attention of many animal welfare organisations, including Cats Protection, who share concerns over the health conditions associated with this breed and have been working to highlight the significant issues the breed faces. Adding further fuel to the 'popularity fire', this breed is often featured on social media by influential celebrity owners, such as Taylor Swift and Ed Sheeran.

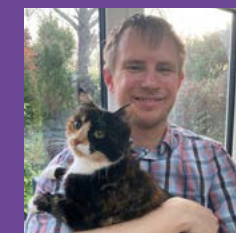
Due to the genetic mutation that creates the breed's distinctive folded ears, every Scottish Fold cat suffers from a condition called Osteochondrodysplasia (OCD), which causes deformities and painful osteoarthritis. It is not possible to 'breed out' this genetic defect without losing the essential breed characteristics of the Scottish Fold. Cats do not always express pain as we might expect and the 'laid-back' personality that Scottish Fold cats are renowned for may actually be linked to the pain they are experiencing and their reluctance to move.

Due to the welfare implications associated with this breed, many countries have made the bold and welcome move to ban the breeding of Scottish Fold cats. Within the UK, Scotland is the only nation to take steps towards this, specifying in guidance for licensing authorities that the breeding of Scottish Folds is likely a breach of conditions for licensed cat breeders. In the rest of the UK, Scottish Folds are not recognised by the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) for pedigree registration due to these welfare concerns.

Major selling platforms, including Gumtree and Preloved, are also taking welfare seriously and refuse to allow the breed to be sold on their sites. Sadly, despite these cats living a life of pain and misery, other major classified sites and social media platforms still allow sales of the breed.

"Cats Protection is working to educate owners and potential owners around the welfare implications of extreme traits being bred into cats. But with the resources of Hollywood promoting breeds such as the Scottish Fold, only government action to ban the breeding of cats with extreme features will truly stop the suffering."

Jeff Knott, Advocacy & Influence Director, Cats Protection



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The younger cat owner

Who are they?

Cat owners aged 18 to 34 are an important group, driving a lot of the trends that we see in this year's report. But who are they, how do they live their lives and what matters to them?

Owners aged 18 to 34 are more likely to:

- be living in urban areas, in rented accommodation
- be living in a flat, compared to the general cat-owning population
- own other pet species and care for a cat that does not live with them, such as a stray¹⁴

Younger owners are very much driven by the emotion of cat ownership, which seemingly starts before they even get their cat home.

- 26% say that the reason they share their life with their specific cat is because they fell in love with a photo or video of them (vs 20% of all cat owners)
- 22% had their heart set on their particular cat (vs 19% of all cat owners)¹⁵
- 28% say that one of the main reasons that they own a cat is to feel less lonely (vs 21% of all cat owners)
- 54% say that their cat gives them something to get up for each day (vs 45% of all cat owners)¹⁶

This strength of relationship appears to be reflected in an increased concern about their cat's welfare. Owners aged 18 to 34 are more likely to:

- worry about whether their cat is happy (48% vs 38% of all cat owners)¹⁷
- seek information or advice about their cat several times a week or more (21% vs 12% of all cat owners)¹⁷
- keep their cat indoors (45% vs 36% of all cat owners)¹⁷, although rather than concerns over their cat's safety outdoors, this appears to be more down to the fact that they simply want to spend more time with their cat

¹⁴ 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?/ Which of the following best describes your main home?/Do you currently have any of the below pets (that live with you)? Base: Aged 18 to 34.

¹⁵ Question asked: Why did you end up buying/adopting your cat/kitten from this source? Base: Aged 18 to 34.

¹⁶ Questions asked: What are the main reasons you have a cat/s?/To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about having a cat/s? Base: Aged 18 to 34.

¹⁷ Questions asked: How often do you tend to do each of the following?/ Which of the following best applies to your cat?/What are the reasons that your cat always stays indoors?/To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Base: Aged 18 to 34.

This group of owners are also consistently more concerned about the affordability of their cat's care and are more likely to have made adjustments elsewhere in their lives to save money¹⁷.

The care and concern seen among this younger group of owners seems to translate into increased rates of some healthcare measures. Cats of 18 to 34-year-old owners are more likely to be up to date with vaccinations and more likely to be insured.

It is important to continually and effectively communicate the benefits of routine healthcare to this engaged and caring group, as it could reap some of the most significant benefits for cat health and welfare. The CATS data suggests that online methods of communication, particularly social media, are going to be among the most effective methods of reaching this group¹⁸.

¹⁸ Questions asked: Is your cat up to date with their vaccinations (such as, has had their booster vaccinations as relevant to their age)?/Do you have pet insurance for your cat?/Seek advice or information about my cat/s (for example, online, from a friend, from my vet etc): How often do you tend to do each of the following? Base: Aged 18 to 34.



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What do their habits mean for the veterinary and animal welfare sector?

Younger owners and cat acquisition

People aged 18 to 34:

- now make up around a third of all cat owners (28%)
- are significantly more likely to have acquired a cat recently (23% have acquired their cat in the last 12 months, compared to 15% of all the cat-owning population)
- are more likely to buy a cat (39%), rather than adopt (19%)¹³
- are more likely to have a pedigree (41% own a pedigree cat compared to 32% of cat owners)

This group is therefore a real driver for recent acquisition trends. There is a need for a concerted focus by the animal welfare sector to engage with younger owners and promote adoption to them as an appealing and viable option for acquiring a cat. Targeted marketing, including via the social platforms that this demographic increasingly use for sourcing information, and encouraging volunteering are certainly areas to explore more.

Younger owners and welfare

The 18 to 34-year-old cat owning demographic are more likely to keep their cat indoors and also use accessories such as harnesses/leads and backpack carriers¹⁹. This could be a reflection of this group's increased desire to ensure that their cat is safe and demonstrates attempts to keep their cat well exercised and mentally stimulated¹⁶. This intention is great but must come with education about the possible negative welfare implications of these cat accessories and how best to mitigate them.

Younger owners and pedigrees

Younger owners are more likely to own a pedigree cat, and this is particularly driven by the more affluent owners in the 18 to 34 age bracket¹³. These cats are more likely to be up to date with vaccinations and insured¹⁸, a real positive for health and welfare, but these owners are also more likely to want their cat to have a litter of kittens¹⁹. With breeding carrying so many negative health implications and with so many unwanted cats available for rehoming, rash breeding decisions and more kittens looking for homes could exacerbate many of the problems we are seeing in the sector. That said, the 18 to 34-year-old demographic of cat owners are more likely to do the most research about how to care for their cat¹⁹, so making sure they have easy access to good information is important.

Currently, Cats Protection is not seeing significant numbers of pedigrees or a rise in pedigree cats coming into our care, despite pedigree cats overtaking moggies in popularity for the first time this year. This isn't necessarily surprising, as currently, demand for specific breeds remains high. This means pedigree owners likely have more options for rehoming their cat, making rehoming shelters more of a last resort for them. With pedigree cats often representing a higher level of financial investment, it may be that pedigree owners have given the purchase of their cat more consideration, creating a different and arguably stronger bond with their cat than non-pedigree owners?

This could all change if the market reaches saturation point though. With many pedigree breeds having specific care or behavioural needs, owners may find themselves struggling to meet their pedigree cat's requirements and subsequently look to rehome. For now though, owners are likely to be able to resell.

Another potential consequence of the rise in pedigree cats is additional pressure on the veterinary sector. Pedigree cats have been shown to be more likely to develop illness than moggies²⁰, including diseases affecting the heart, lungs and immune system. There are also concerns about the rise in popularity of pedigree cats bred to have extreme physical characteristics, such as brachycephaly, hairlessness or dwarfism; features that are detrimental to health and welfare.

“Younger cat owners are a cat-loving group, who are proactive in researching how they can best meet their cat's needs. They are likely to be receptive to good quality information and influence others with it. It is therefore essential for welfare organisations to engage with this group at every opportunity. Younger owners are best placed to help us tackle cat welfare issues and improve the lives of pet cats, now and into the future.”



Justin Parsons, Head of Service Design & Innovation, Cats Protection

19 Questions asked: What are the reasons your cat is not neutered? Filtered by owners of cats that are not neutered./ 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)?/Which of the following best applies to your cat?/Does your cat wear/get carried using any of the following? Base: Aged 18 to 34.

20 Hadar BN, Bonnett BN, Poljak Z, Bernardo TM. Morbidity of insured Swedish cats between 2011 and 2016: Comparing disease risk in domestic crosses and purebreds. Veterinary Record. 2023 Jun 17;192(12):no.

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Veterinary care

Key takeaways

- 58% of owners say that they do not visit the vet as often as they would like to
- Microchipping numbers have increased in the run up to the introduction of compulsory microchipping in England, but over 2.3 million cats remain unchipped
- More people are choosing not to neuter their cat because they want them to have kittens, but more kittens are being given away and being given up to rescue/rehoming centres, rather than sold

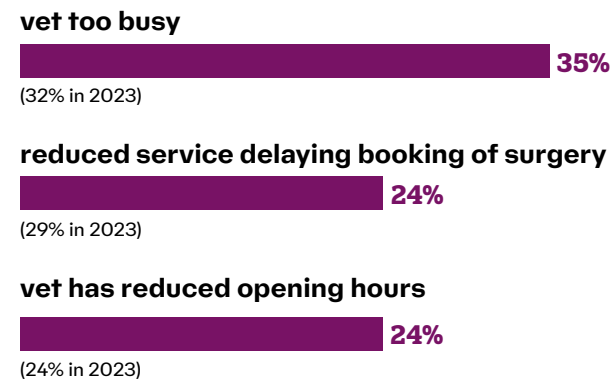
Veterinary capacity²¹

28% of owners state that they have experienced difficulty accessing a vet

(30% in 2023, 37% in 2022)

45% in central urban areas

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



²¹ 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?

Although there seems to have been slight improvement in vet accessibility this year, it remains an issue for many cat owners, especially those living in our towns and cities. This could be due to a combination of factors, including ongoing veterinary capacity issues.

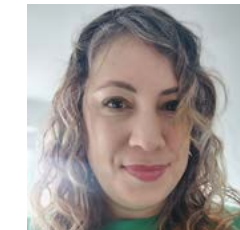
Alternatively, or additionally, some areas may experience increased demand for veterinary services.

For example, owners in central urban areas are more likely to have recently acquired a cat (26% for cats acquired in the last 12 months vs 15% for cats acquired over a year ago) and these areas are also more likely to be inhabited by younger owners (18 to 34: 23%, 35 to 54: 16%, 55+: 8%) who are also more likely to seek advice and support about their cat (18 to 34: 21%, 35 to 54: 11%, 55+: 2%).

“The landscape for both veterinary and charity sectors is challenging at the moment, with capacity issues in the veterinary profession still relevant and the backdrop of the cost-of-living crisis.

“Our work suggests that charities may be further disadvantaged by these difficulties compared to private clients, but the value the charity sector offers to improving animal welfare is still clear to vets. Cats Protection is exploring opportunities to support on some of these challenges and we aim to improve collaboration between sectors.”

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



The Cats Protection Vet Capacity Report UK, published in 2023, found that²²:

- of the 236 veterinary professionals surveyed, only 41% were able to meet demand and anticipated this to continue
- top reasons for difficulties meeting demand included:
 1. Staff shortages: 40% of respondents have, or have had, vacant posts unfilled by permanent or locum staff for over six months with vet surgeons being the most challenging role to fill.
 2. More pets registering.
 3. More pets needing treatment; 62% of respondents reported seeing more dogs, 53% reported seeing more cats and 27% reported seeing more pets in general.

- Issues reported as a result of reduced capacity:

long waiting lists for routine appointments

45% of respondents

difficulty fitting in urgent or emergency work

45% of respondents

long waiting lists for elective surgeries

42% of respondents

difficulties registering new clients

42% of respondents

²² Cats Protection 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.

Vet registration²³

9% of cats are not registered with a vet.

The number of cats who are registered with a vet has increased slightly to 91%, from 90% last year, which although a good proportion, still leaves almost a million cats not registered with a vet.

Higher for:

outdoor-only cats



uninsured cats



those in socio-economic group DE (less affluent)



Some cats and their owners will be at a greater likelihood of requiring veterinary advice, for example, outdoor cats due to their lifestyle putting them at greater risk of injury, and first-time owners. Every effort must be made to support access to veterinary care for these groups. It is however encouraging to see that a higher proportion of first-time owners have registered their cat with a vet, compared to last year (90% in 2024, 86% in 2023).

²³ Question asked: Is your cat registered with a vet?



Vet visits²⁴

62% of cat owners take their cat to the vet routinely each year.

Higher than average for:

insured cats



those who own a house



those in socio-economic group ABC1 (more affluent)



male owners



those who live in the South of England



Lower than average for those:

aged 18 to 24



in socio-economic group C2DE (less affluent)

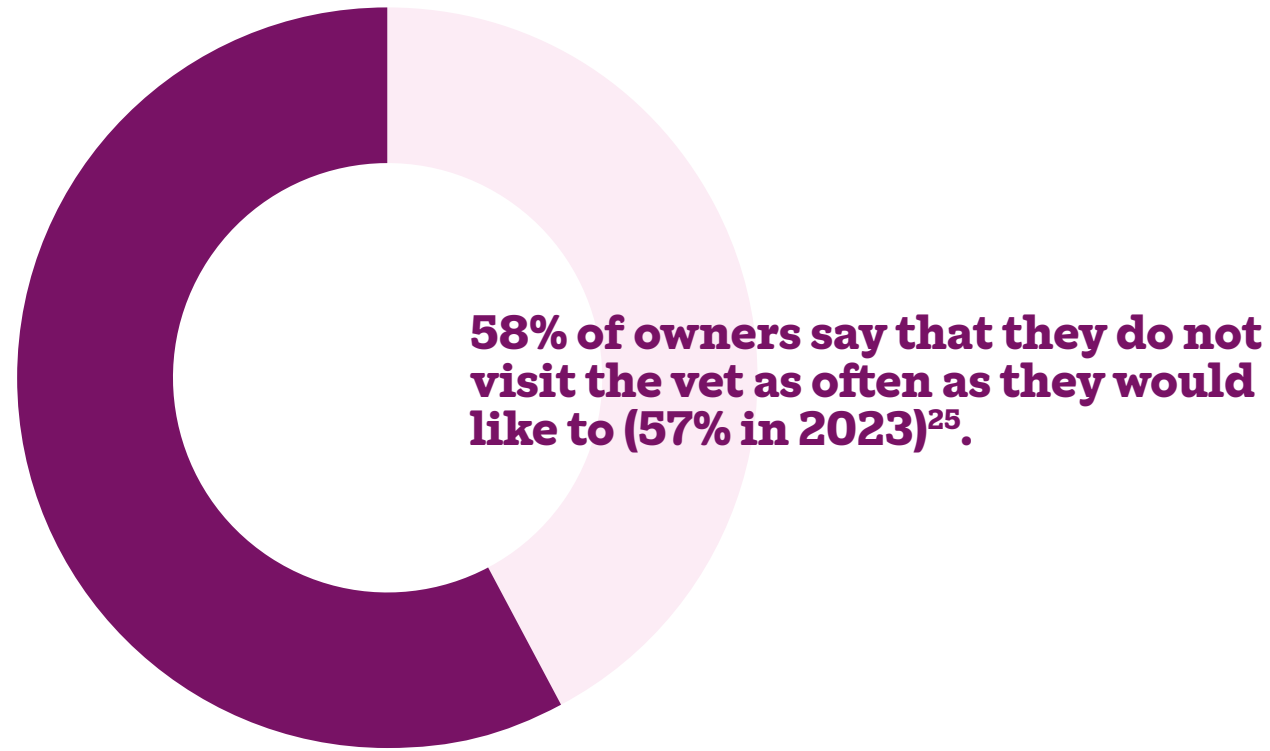


in rented accommodation



It is great news that more owners are taking their cat to the vet routinely each year, with this figure seeing a steady rise since 2020 (57%). This does mean that over 4 million cats are not receiving regular veterinary care, however. Regular vet visits are important to allow early recognition of disease and therefore early intervention. This risks not only affecting welfare, but also pushing up the cost of veterinary care when cats present with advanced disease or long-established health problems that could have been caught sooner.

²⁴ Question asked: Which of the following best describes how often you tend to go to the vet?



Cost remains the top reason for not visiting the vet as much as the owner would like²⁵.

The cost



Too stressful for me/my cat*



Although everyone’s concern over costs is currently amplified by the wider economic climate, people in socio-economic group C2DE (less affluent) and female owners seem to particularly be feeling the pinch when it comes to visiting the vet (32% and 30% respectively). Stress, for both cat and owner, is still a main barrier to owners visiting the vet with their cat though, so tackling this must remain a focus for veterinary practices and welfare organisations.

Although 35% of owners say that they do visit the vet when their cat is injured or unwell, this relies on owners recognising signs of illness and pain. This can be notoriously difficult in cats²⁶, who are also often perceived as being self-sufficient²⁷. These factors combined may mean that some cats who require veterinary care do not receive it and is the reason why Cats Protection is working hard to provide resources and support to owners, to help them to see the world through their cat’s eyes.

*Net of responses related to these themes.

²⁵ Question asked: Which of the following, if any, prevents you from taking your cat to the vet as often as you might like to?

²⁶ Gowan R, Iff I. Chronic pain and behaviour. In: Heath S (ed.) Feline behavioural health and welfare. St Louis: Elsevier, 2016, pp 184–212.

²⁷ 2021 AAHA/AAFP Feline Life Stage Guidelines - Jessica Quimby, Shannon Gowland, Hazel C Carney, Theresa DePorter, Paula Plummer, Jodi Westropp, 2021 (sagepub.com).

“While it’s great that more owners are taking their cat to the vet routinely, it’s disappointing to see that over half do not visit the practice as much as they’d like. Given recent high inflation and pressure on household incomes, it’s understandable that costs, including vet care, are a concern. However, deferring regular, preventative health check-ups with the vet could be storing up bigger health issues, which could cost more in the long run. We encourage all pet owners to speak to their vet if they have any concerns around cost. Vets will always prioritise the wellbeing of the pets in their care and find tailored treatment solutions that are right for both the animal and their owner.”

Dr Anna Judson MRCVS, British Veterinary Association President



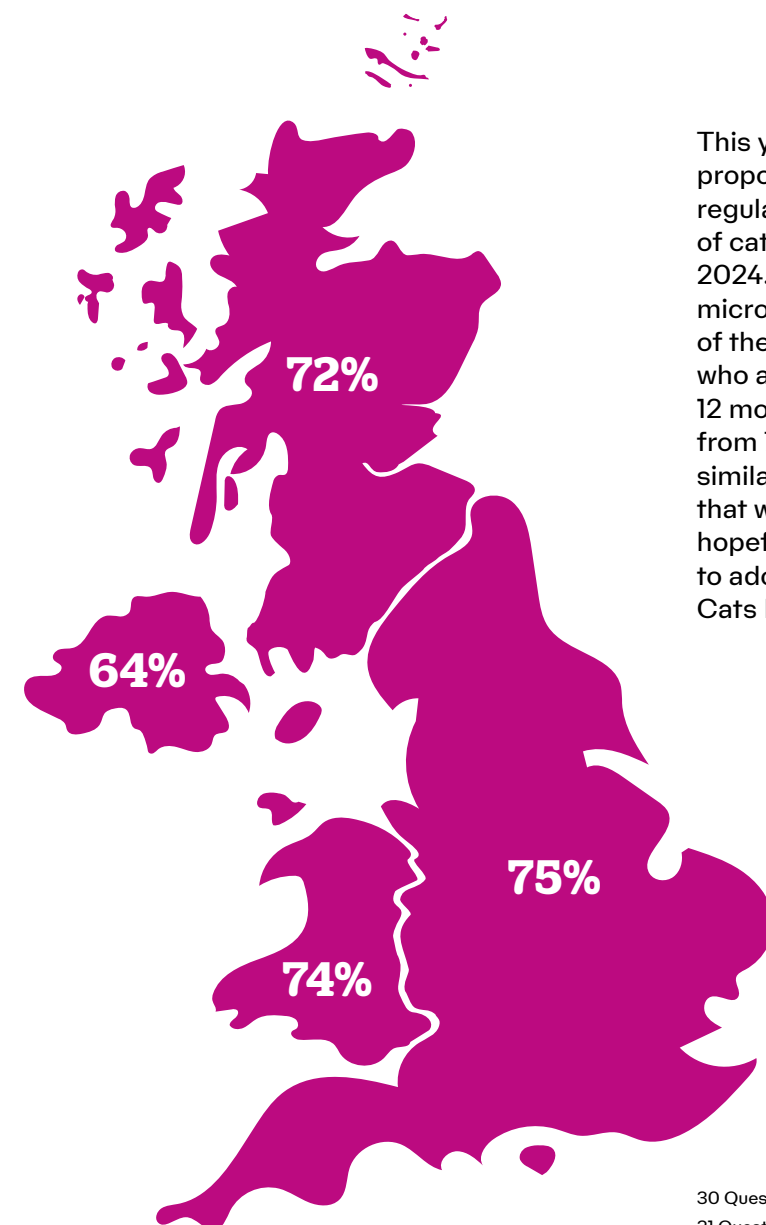
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Microchipping³⁰

Microchipping numbers are increasing in cats, following the introduction of compulsory pet cat microchipping in England.



Microchipping numbers across the UK:



This year has seen a significant rise in the proportion of cats that are microchipped, as new regulations regarding compulsory microchipping of cats have come into force in England in June 2024. 12% of owners say that they had their cat microchipped in response to the announcement of the law change, rising to 23% of those owners who acquired a cat for the first time in the last 12 months³¹. Microchipping numbers for dogs rose from 75% to 92% in the first four years following similar legislative changes and signs are positive that we will see the same result for cats³². This will hopefully help encourage the devolved nations to adopt similar legislation, something that Cats Protection continues to campaign for.

³⁰ Question asked: Is your cat microchipped?
³¹ Questions asked: In England from 10 June 2024, it will be compulsory to have your cat microchipped from 20 weeks of age. How have you responded to the law change?/When did you acquire (for example, buy/adopt) your cat?
³² Microchipping your pet is the best New Year's resolution you could make. GOV.UK



The cats less likely to be microchipped

Despite increasing microchipping numbers, over 2.3 million cats are still without a microchip, reducing their chances of being reunited with their owners, should they get lost or stolen.

Cat owners are choosing not to get their cat microchipped because they don't appreciate the risks of their cat getting lost³³.

My cat doesn't go outside
 26%

My cat doesn't stray/go far
 19%

I just hadn't thought about microchipping my cat
 14%

My cat has a collar instead
 14%

I can't afford it
 11%

8% of owners were not aware of the new microchipping regulations, and over a quarter that choose not to microchip their cat do so because they are kept indoors. This shows that there is still work to be done in raising awareness that these regulations apply to all cats. This is especially so, as indoor cats are arguably at greater risk of becoming lost, should they find themselves outside in unfamiliar surroundings.

Cats with younger owners are less likely to be microchipped, with just 69% of those aged 18 to 34 owning microchipped cats. Younger owners are also less likely to know about the legislation changes (10%), suggesting that they are perhaps an important group to target with awareness campaigns.

³³ Question asked: Which of the below best describes the reasons why your cat is not microchipped?

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Microchips and keeping details up to date³⁴

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

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



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

However, this leaves almost 850,000 cats who are microchipped with details that are out of date, potentially rendering their microchip useless, should they become separated from their family.

To help owners and their cats receive the benefits of microchipping, it is important that microchipping databases play their part to proactively remind owners of the need to update their details, as required.

“The introduction of compulsory microchipping for pet cats in England is a massive victory for cat welfare. Animal welfare charities like Cats Protection take in thousands of cats without a microchip every year. As we start to see more cats being microchipped, we’ll be able to return many more cats to their families.

“Cats Protection continues to campaign for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland follow suit and introduce similar requirements for cat microchipping so that cats are better protected, wherever they are in the country.”



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

³⁴ Questions asked: Are your cat’s registered microchip details up to date?/Which of the following microchip details are up to date?

Insurance³⁵

The number of cat owners with pet insurance is increasing



The year-on-year trend for increasing numbers of cat owners taking out insurance for their cat continued this year, with half the cat population now insured. 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: 78%, uninsured 46%). Pedigrees are also more likely to be insured than moggies (60% vs 45%).

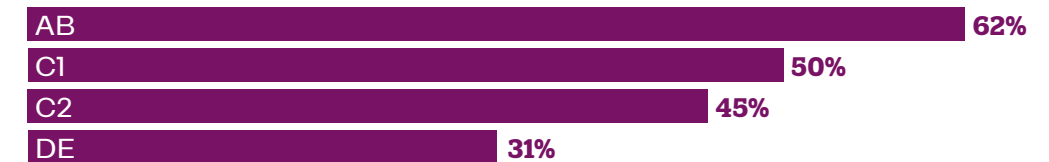
Younger owners are more likely to have their cat insured:



This group are also more concerned that they won’t be able to pay the bills and cover living costs in the next 12 months.



More affluent owners are more likely to have their cat insured.



As well as age of owner, the likelihood of a cat being insured drops with the socio-economic group of their owner, suggesting that affordability of insurance is a factor. Where a cat lives also has an effect, with those living in urban areas more likely to be insured (urban: 51%, rural: 42%).

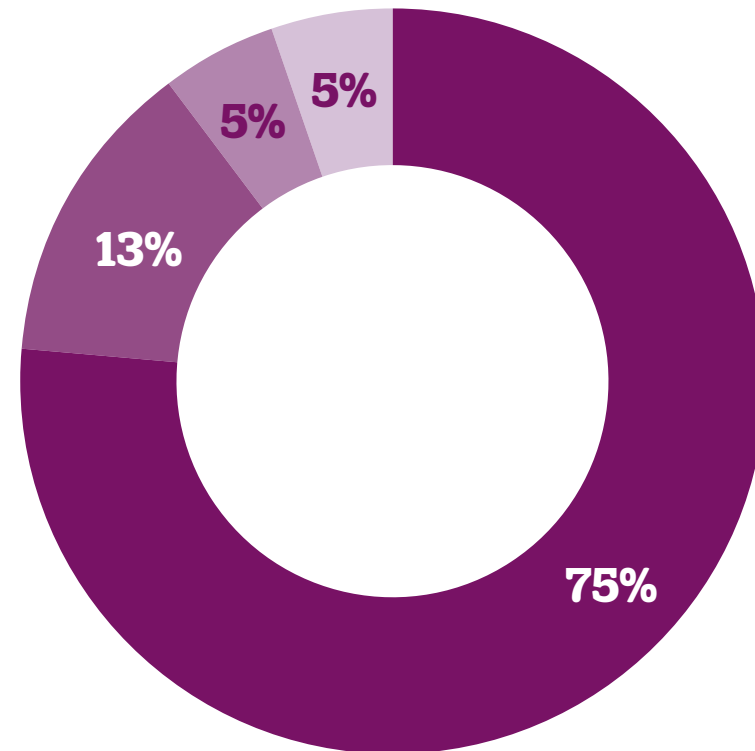
³⁵ Question asked: Do you have pet insurance for your cat?

Vaccinations³⁶

There has been a significant rise in the number of owners saying their cat is up to date with vaccinations. This may be a sign of the pandemic backlog finally clearing, as vets are no longer running a reduced service and vaccination appointments are more readily available. Alternatively, or additionally, it may be a positive trend for owners to be more motivated to vaccinate their cat than ever, perhaps linked to the recent rise in younger, more affluent owners who want to do the best for their cat.

More cats are vaccinated.

- **Up to date: 75%** (72% in 2023)
- **Has had some, but not up to date: 13%**
- **Has had no vaccinations: 5%**
- **Don't know: 5%**



Vaccination numbers are lower for cats whose owners are less affluent (C2DE: 71%), living in rented accommodation (71%) or who haven't insured their cat (64%).

Parasite treatments³⁷

Most owners continue to use flea and worm treatments as advised, with 64% regularly using flea treatment throughout the year, and 62% worming their cat regularly throughout the year.

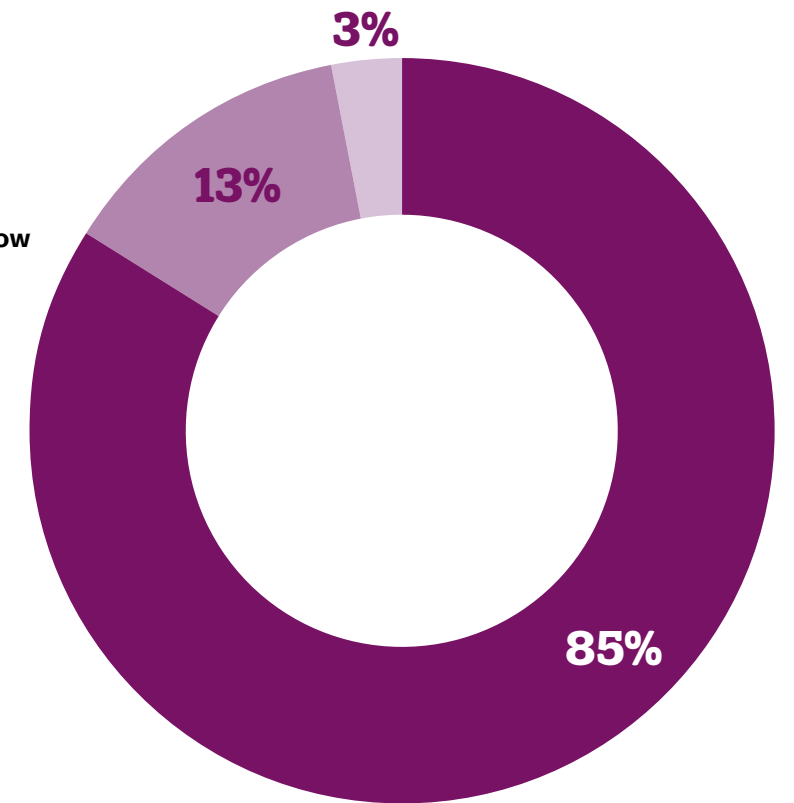
An individual cat's risk of becoming infected with parasites is strongly linked to their lifestyle, including whether they go outdoors and their diet. Parasite treatment recommendations should therefore be evaluated on a risk-benefit basis, and vets should educate owners about the best treatment protocol.

³⁶ Question asked: Is your cat up to date with their vaccinations (for example, has had their booster vaccinations as relevant to their age)?
³⁷ 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?

Neutering and breeding³⁸

The number of cats neutered has remained stable since last year.

- **9 million (85%) are neutered**
- **1.4 million (13%) are not neutered**
- **300,000 (3%), the owner does not know**

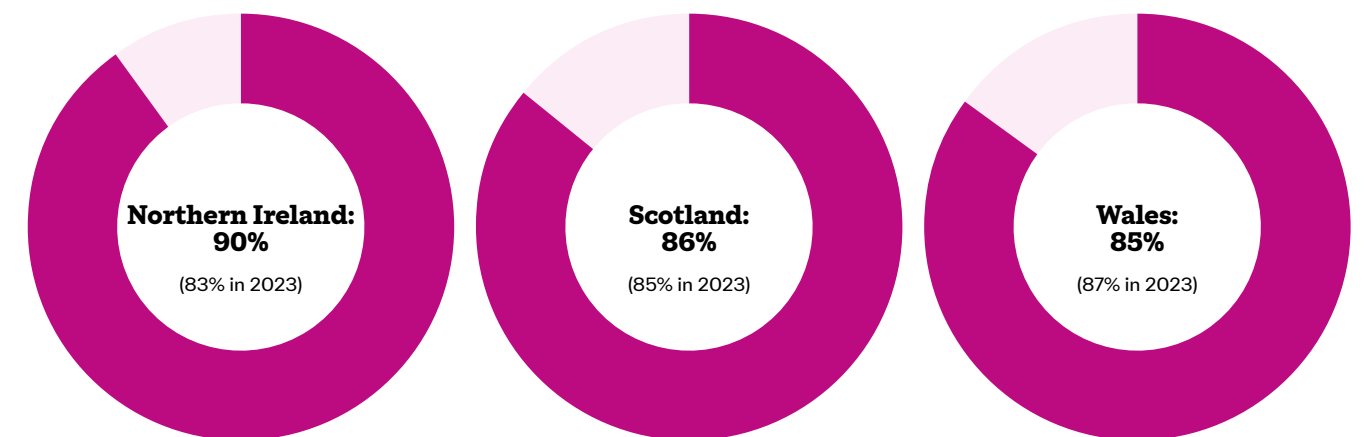


While the proportion of cats that have been neutered remains in line with last year, the number of cats neutered have fallen significantly over time since 2020, 88%.

The cats less likely to have been neutered

Younger cat owners aged 18 to 34 are less likely to have neutered their cat (77%), compared to 86% of 35 to 54-year-olds and 95% of those aged over 55.

Neutering numbers across the devolved nations.



³⁸ Question asked: Is your cat neutered/spayed?

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Wanting their cat to have kittens is increasingly a reason that owners choose not to neuter their cat³⁹.

My cat doesn't go outside



I want my cat to have kittens



I can't afford it



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



While it is good to see that cost is perhaps becoming less of a barrier to neutering cats, levels of concern about costs haven't returned to pre cost-of-living crisis levels (10% in 2022).

As well as overall numbers of cats neutered, age of neutering is also a crucial aspect of cat population control. Cats can become reproductively active from the age of four months, so for cat population control to be truly effective, cats should be neutered by the time they reach this age. 20% of owners report that their cat was neutered by four months old, with 82% saying their cat was neutered by one year old⁴⁰. This means that many cats may already have had a litter by the time they are neutered.

Of those cats who have had a litter, almost half (48%) of the litters born in the last 12 months were unplanned (48% in 2023)⁴¹.

However, more people seem to want their cat to have kittens, particularly younger and more affluent owners. Owners of pedigree cats are also more likely to want their cat to have kittens, which is likely part of the reason that pedigree cats are less likely to be neutered than moggies (78% vs 90%). Younger owners are more likely to own a pedigree cat (18 to 34: 41%, 35 to 54: 31%, 55+: 16%), so there is certainly overlap in the demographics driving this trend.

Of the planned litters from the last 12 months, 35% were from moggies, and 71% were from pedigree cats (38% and 65% in 2023)⁴¹.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ Question asked: When were they neutered/spayed?

⁴¹ Questions asked: Has your cat had kittens?/How many of these litters were in the past 12 months?/Which of the following best describes this litter/these litters that your cat has had in the past 12 months? Filtered by cats who have had one or more litters of kittens in the last 12 months.

More kittens are being given away to friends or family or a rescue/rehoming/cat centre⁴².

What happened to the kittens born to the respondent's cat in the last 12 months?

I gave them to neighbours/friends/family



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



I sold them on a classified ad website*



I sold them using social media



I gave them away for free on a classified ad website*



I gave them away for free using social media



If this trend is due to people struggling to sell their kittens, this could be an early warning sign that the market is about to reach saturation. This would be a concern for animal welfare organisations, who are already struggling to meet the demand for cats waiting to be rehomed. More research is needed to better understand this group of owners' motivation to breed their cat, and to engage them with appropriate cat welfare messaging and education.

“Cats Protection is still seeing large numbers of cats on waiting lists for rehoming services up and down the country and significant numbers of unowned cats living on the streets in localised areas. We must consider how best to direct resources to help and reduce the number of unwanted cats, aiming for a ‘balanced’ cat population. As part of this, it is important for Cats Protection to understand variation across communities in terms of cat health and welfare priorities, the people they live alongside and the wider environment.

“That way, resources can be directed towards interventions that are bespoke and targeted, to generate the most benefit for cats. In doing so we will also be in a better position to explore a neutering offer that reaches those cats that are most in need.”



Dr Jenni McDonald, Feline Epidemiologist, Cats Protection

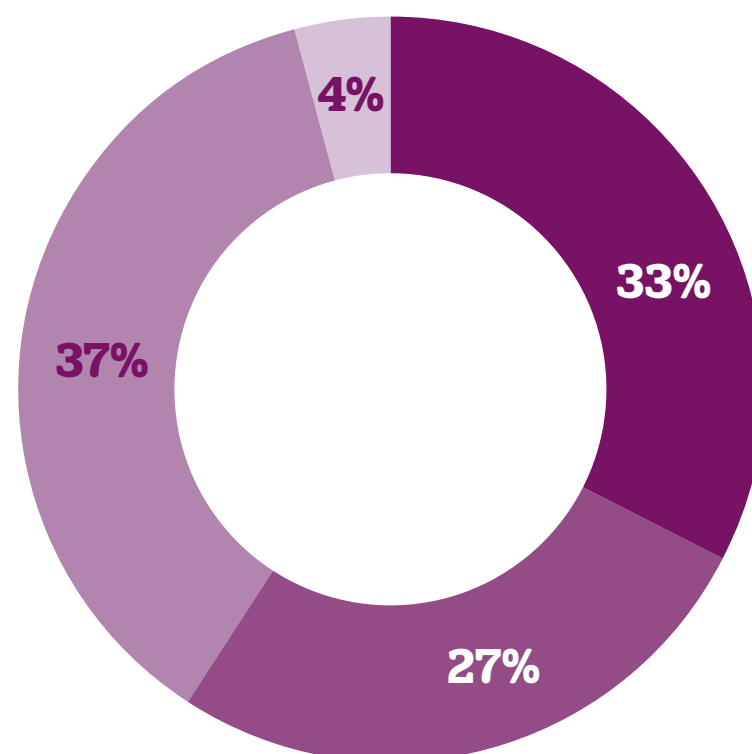
*for example, Gumtree.

⁴² Question asked: What happened to the kittens your cat had in the last 12 months?

Diet and body weight⁴³

Owner perception of their cat's weight.

- Overweight: 33%**
- Ideal weight: 27%**
- Underweight: 37%**
- Don't know: 4%**



Those who acquired their cat in the last year are more likely to identify their cat as underweight (46%), as are owners who are concerned about paying bills (43%). These groups may be particularly sensitive to ensuring that they are providing the correct food in the right quantity, either due to lack of confidence/inexperience, or concerns about having to make choices based on price.

Veterinary professionals generally believe that the prevalence of obesity in the pet population has increased over the last five years, predicting as many as 44% of cats in the UK are overweight or obese⁴⁴. What is clear is that support for all groups to understand how to accurately assess the body condition of the nation's cats, as well as evidence-based advice on how to best manage a cat's weight, would be beneficial. For example, the two factors found to be independently associated with an increased risk of cat obesity (at around one year of age) were cats with restricted/no outdoor access, and cats fed dry food as the only or major (greater than 50%) type of food in their diet⁴⁵.

⁴³ Question asked: Which of the following descriptions and images would you say best reflects your cat in relation to their size?

⁴⁴ ukpetfood.org/resource/pet-obesity-report-2019.html

⁴⁵ Rowe E, Browne W, Casey R, Gruffydd-Jones T, Murray J. Risk factors identified for owner-reported feline obesity at around one year of age: Dry diet and indoor lifestyle. *Preventive veterinary medicine*. 2015 Oct 1;121(3-4):273-81.

Health conditions and injury⁴⁶

78% of cat owners state that their cat has no diagnosed health conditions, similar to last year (77%). The distribution of common health conditions that owners report in their cats is also similar to last year.

Most common health conditions in cats

Dental disease

4% (3% in 2023)

Lower urinary tract disease

3% (2% in 2023)

Digestive disorders

3% (2% in 2023)

Obesity

2% (3% in 2023)

Overgrooming

2% (2% in 2023)

Arthritis

2% (2% in 2023)

Hyperthyroidism

2% (2% in 2023)

Allergic skin disease

2% (2% in 2023)

Parasites (for example, fleas)

2% (2% in 2023)

It must be noted that this is owner-reported data, following diagnosis of a health condition. Vet-reported figures for some of the conditions listed are often much higher, for example, 15.2% prevalence of dental disease in cats⁴⁷. This could be indicative of owners struggling to recognise that their cat may be unwell or in need of veterinary care. Once again, the importance of owner education about how to spot signs of disease in cats and regular vet visits is highlighted, to identify health conditions before they become severe.

28% of owners said that their cat had been injured since they have owned them⁴⁷. The most common reason for injury is fights with other cats outside the household.

The most common reason for injury in cats is fights with other animals⁴⁸.

Fighting with another cat they don't live with

12%

Fighting with another animal

8%

Fighting with a cat they live with

4%

Road traffic accident

4%

⁴⁶ Question asked: Does your cat have any of the following diagnosed health issues/conditions?

⁴⁷ O'Neill DG, Blenkarn A, Brodbelt DC, Church DB, Freeman A. Periodontal disease in cats under primary veterinary care in the UK: frequency and risk factors. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*. 2023 Mar;25(3):1098612X231158154.

⁴⁸ Question asked: Since having your cat, has your cat ever been injured?

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Cat care, welfare and behaviour

Key takeaways

- Owners are increasingly researching their cat's needs, both before and after purchase, but first-time owners may require additional support to build their confidence in providing what is best for their cat
- Social media is growing as a source of information about cat care, particularly for younger owners
- For the first time, we have gained insight into the use of accessories such as leads/harnesses and backpack carriers, many of which are associated with increased stress for cats

⁴⁹ 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)?

Sources of cat care information

34% of owners did lots of research before getting their cat⁴⁹

(31% in 2023)

Higher for:

owners aged 18 to 34
43%

Lower for:

those in socio-economic group C2DE (less affluent)
28%

owners living in rural areas
28%

those not insured
24%

those not registered with a vet
22%

owners aged 55+
19%



32% of owners tend to do lots of research about how best to look after their cat⁵⁰

Higher for:

owners aged 18 to 34
44%

Lower for:

those in socio-economic group C2DE (less affluent)
28%

those not registered with a vet
26%

owners living in rural areas
23%

those not insured
23%

owners aged 55+
16%

85% of owners say that they are 'very confident' that they know what is best for their cat (84% in 2023)⁵¹. This high figure may be linked to the fact that owners are increasingly looking for information and support, both before and after acquiring a cat. 56% of owners say that they seek information or advice about their cat or watch informational videos online at least once a month (49% in 2023)⁵². This rises to 78% of 18 to 34-year-old owners.

While younger owners appear to be very proactive in researching their cat's needs, there are still groups of owners that may benefit from additional support.

For example, first-time cat owners are less confident that they know what's best for their cat (77%), despite being more likely to have done lots of research before getting their cat (36%) and about their ongoing care (36%).

⁵⁰ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with the following statement (I tend to do lots of research about how best to look after my cat/s)?

⁵¹ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with the following statement (I'm very confident I know what's best for my cat/s)?

⁵² Question asked: How often do you tend to do each of the following? Seek advice or information about my cat/s or Watch informational videos of cats online.

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Owners still turn to their vet first as a primary source of information about cats⁵³.

Contact my vet



Search the internet/Google



Talk to my friends and family



Search social media



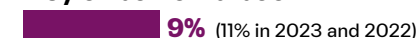
Contact an animal charity



Contact a pet shop

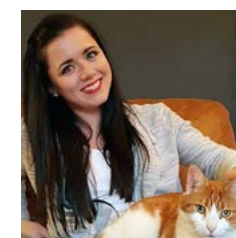


Buy or borrow a book

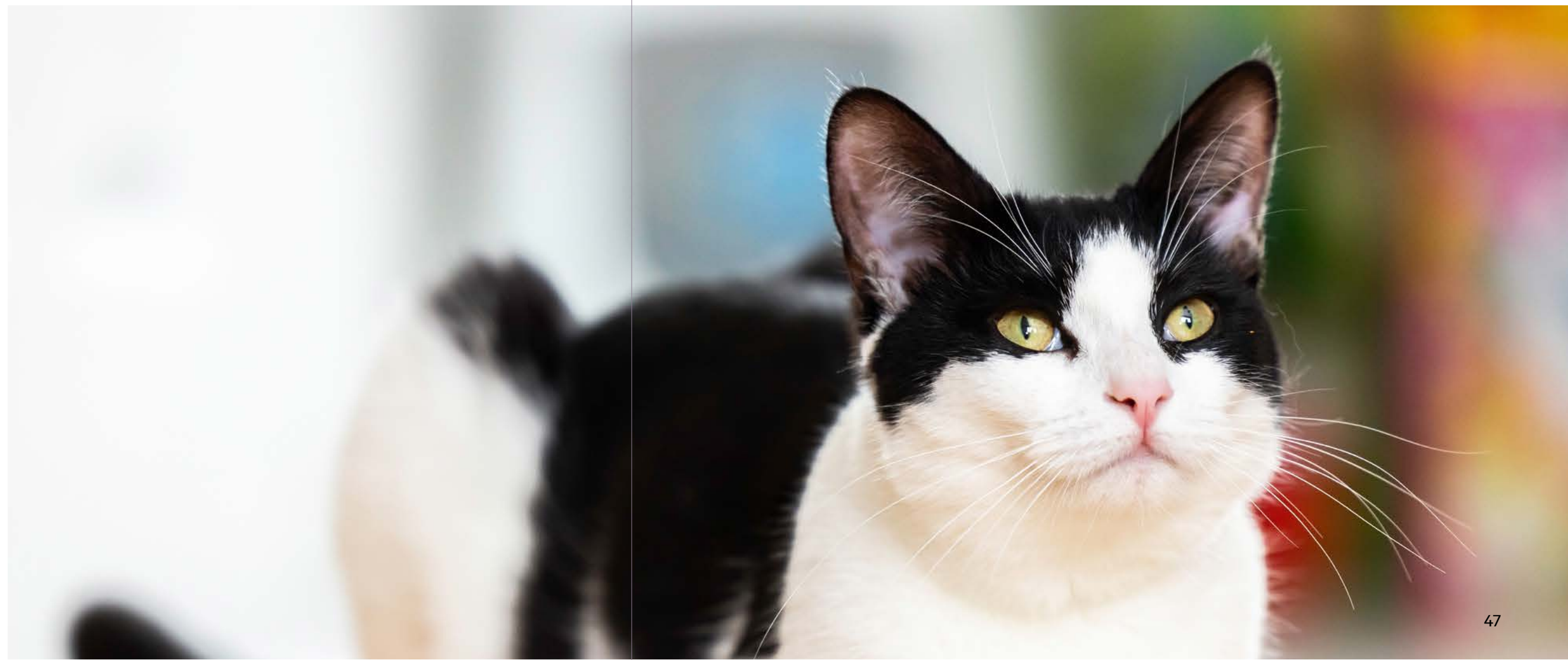


“Cat breeders are also a prominent source of information, particularly for younger owners, who are also the group most likely to purchase a pedigree cat. 32% of those who acquired a cat from a breeder in the last 12 months would contact a breeder if they were seeking information or advice about their cat. Cats Protection is working closely with the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) to influence breeders and ensure they are supported in giving advice to owners. It’s vital that breeders are giving out the right information, as well as producing kittens that are healthy, happy and well-socialised.”

Dr Sarah Elliott MRCVS, Central Veterinary Officer, Cats Protection



⁵³ Question asked: Which of the following would you do if you were seeking information or advice about your cat/s?



Younger owners are also more likely to use social media to seek information about their cat (18 to 34: 26%, 35 to 54: 19%, 55+: 7%). Video content seems particularly popular for younger owners too, with both YouTube and TikTok seeing significantly higher usage among this group. This group of owners are also more likely to talk to their friends and family (42%), making them an important group to engage, as they have great potential to influence other people too.

Social media platforms as sources of information about cats continues to grow⁵⁴.

Social media sources used:

YouTube

35% (34% in 2023, 33% in 2022)

Higher for 18 to 34-year-olds

41% (41% in 2023, 44% in 2022)

Facebook

30% (29% in 2023, 29% in 2022)

Instagram

20% (19% in 2023, 16% in 2022)

TikTok

19% (16% in 2023, 12% in 2022)

Higher for 18 to 34-year-olds

35%

X (formerly known as Twitter)

10% (11% in 2023, 12% in 2022)

Pinterest

9% (8% in 2023, 10% in 2022)

Snapchat

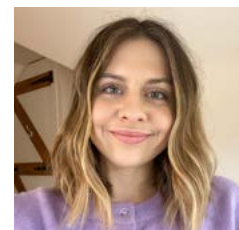
7% (7% in 2023, 8% in 2022)

LinkedIn

7% (6% in 2023, 8% in 2022)

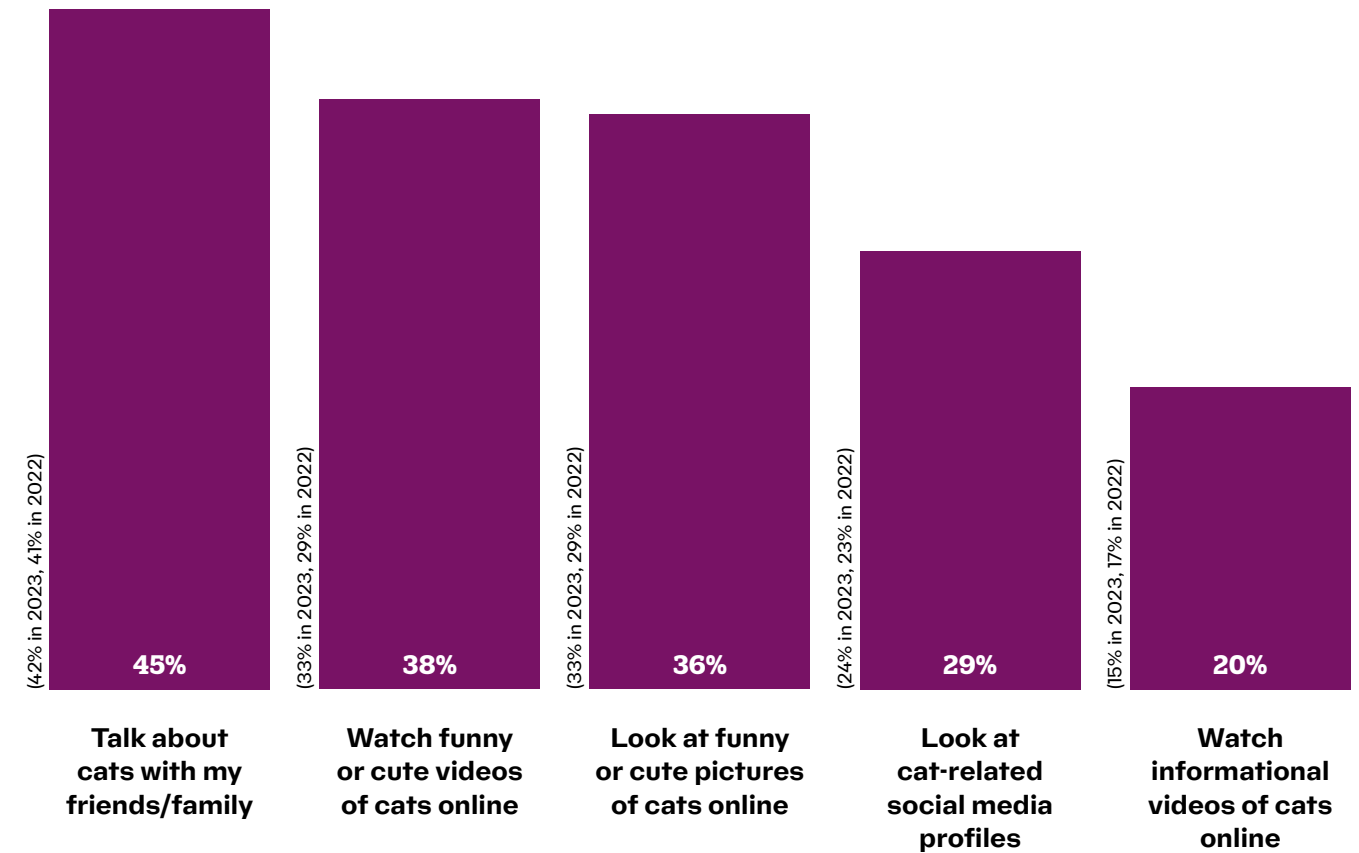
“Ensuring good quality and accessible content for younger owners is essential, and Cats Protection is dedicated to continually growing its presence online, particularly on TikTok. This includes a continued focus on ensuring appropriate representation of cats online and keeping a careful eye on the welfare concerns associated with certain breeds of cat.”

Faye Shellard, Social Media Manager, Cats Protection



⁵⁴ 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)?

Top five cat-related activities that owners engage in several times a week or more⁵⁵.



Cats continue to increasingly be enjoyed by cat owners online, with over three quarters (76%) saying that they look at funny or cute pictures or videos of cats online at least once a month⁵⁶.

Overall, Facebook and YouTube remain popular sources of ‘fun’ cat-related content (39% for each platform), but for younger owners aged 18 to 24, TikTok is by far the most popular social platform (68%, all cat owners: 33%)⁵³.

⁵⁵ 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).

⁵⁶ Question asked: How often do you tend to do each of the following?



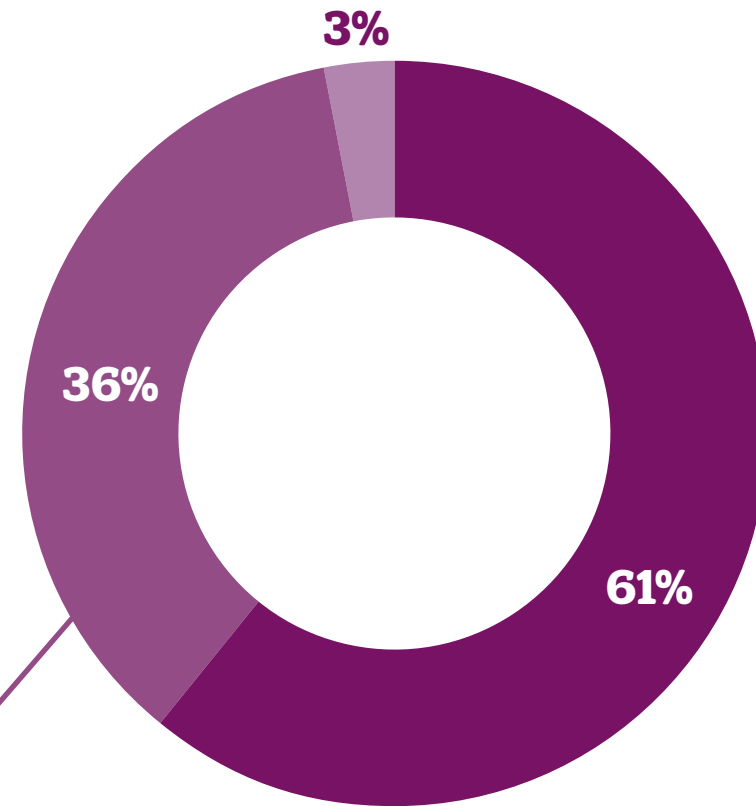
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A cat's environment

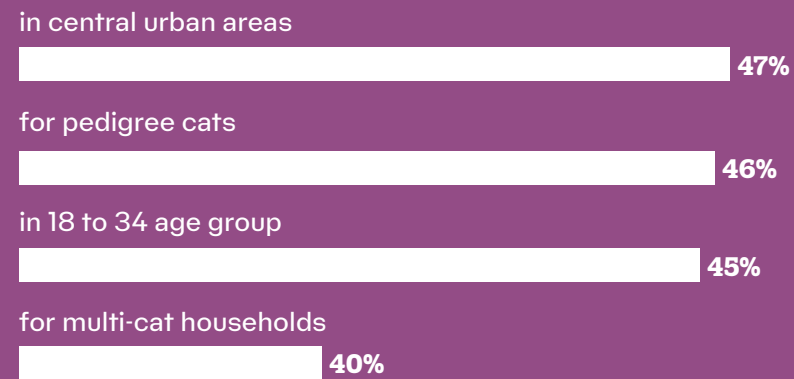
Indoor vs outdoor cats

Most cats have outdoor access⁵⁷.

- They go both indoors and outdoors: 61%
(61% in 2023, 60% in 2022)
- They always stay indoors: 36%
(37% in 2023, 37% in 2022)
- They always stay outdoors: 3%
(2% in 2023, 3% in 2022)



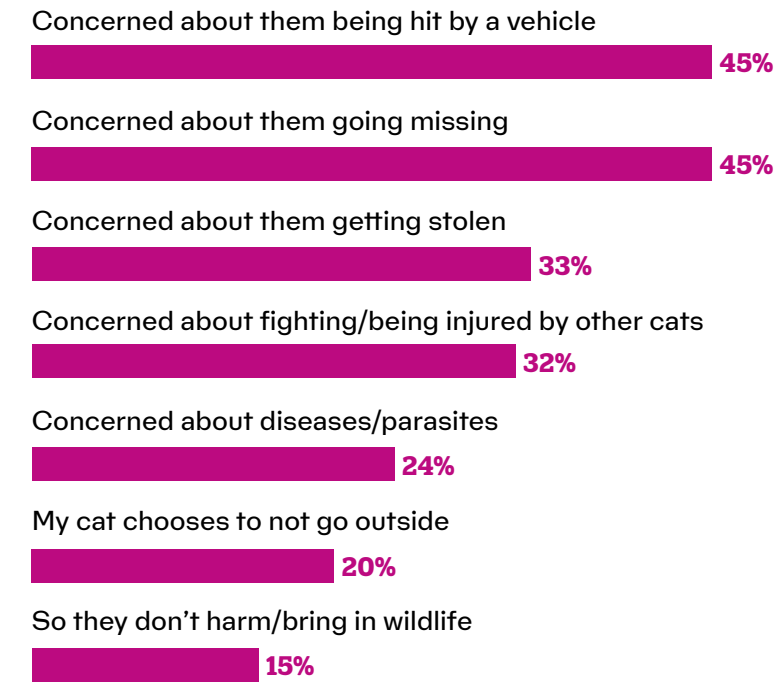
The number of cats that always stay indoors is higher:



⁵⁷ Question asked: Which of the following best applies to your cat?

For the first time, this year owners who choose to keep their cat indoors were asked why.

Owner concern over harm/disappearance keeps cats indoors⁵⁸.



“Earlier this year, a new specific offence of pet abduction came into law in England, something that Cats Protection has campaigned for. We hope that this new offence will act as a deterrent and in turn reduce the public’s concern about their pets getting stolen, so more cats can enjoy the benefits of being able to explore outside.”

Annabel Berdy, Senior Advocacy & Government Relations Officer, Cats Protection

Many people believe that pedigree cats should be kept indoors, perhaps because they believe them to be more at risk outdoors, compared to a non-pedigree cat. Cats Protection is empathetic to these concerns, but reassuringly, studies have shown that pedigree cats are at no greater risk of being hit by a vehicle compared to non-pedigree cats⁵⁹. Of the cats kept indoors though, pedigree cats are significantly more likely to be kept inside over concerns about them being stolen (40%), demonstrating owners’ increased anxiety here.

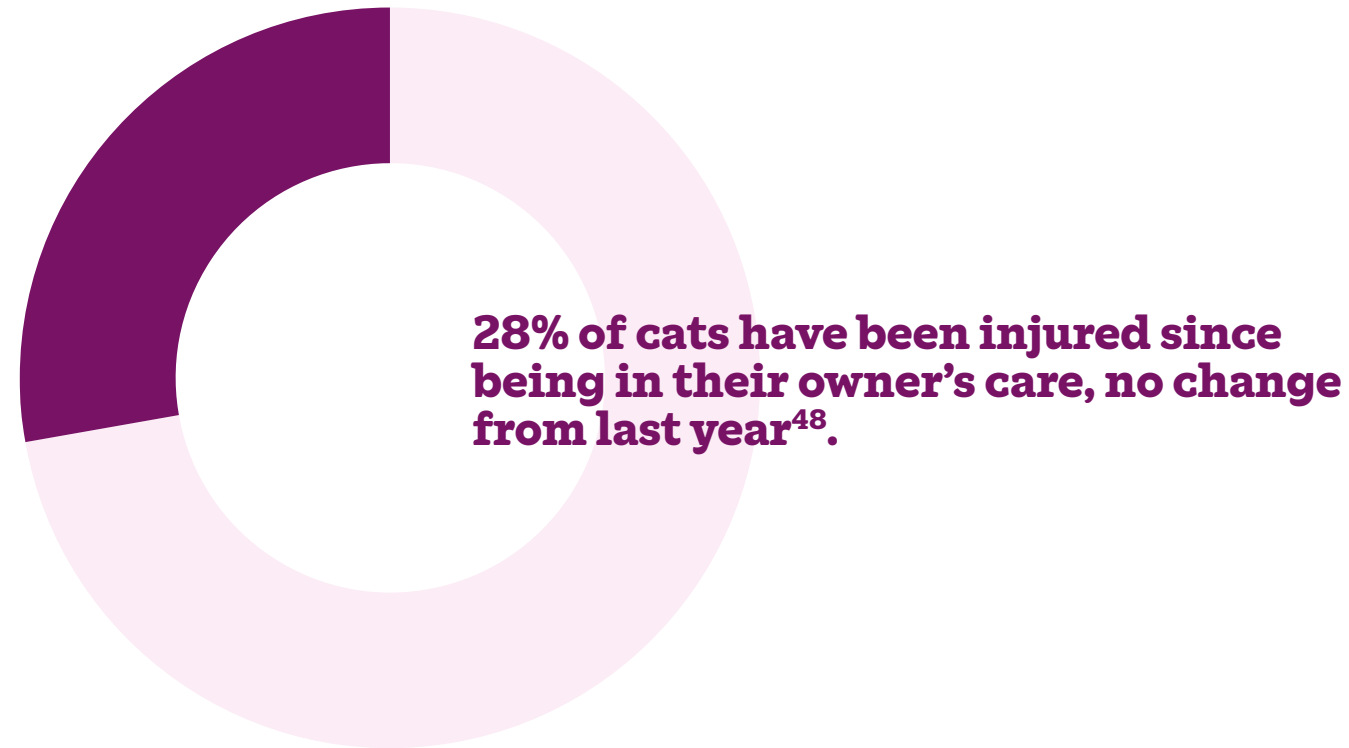
Cats Protection is concerned that cats kept exclusively indoors may not always experience the best welfare, particularly within a multi-cat household. Most cats would benefit from being allowed outside, as it enables them to get the mental stimulation and physical exercise that they need to stay healthy.

For owners that do choose to keep their cat indoors, it is essential that they go to extra efforts to provide what their cat needs. This includes the right diet and enough physical exercise to prevent obesity and its related health conditions and including toys and puzzle feeders into their daily routine to satisfy their instinctive behavioural needs. As a charity, we are passionate about providing owners of indoor cats with information and support to ensure their cats’ needs are met.

⁵⁸ Question asked: What are the reasons that your cat always stays indoors? Only responses over 15% shown.

⁵⁹ Wilson JL, Gruffydd-Jones TJ, Murray JK. Risk factors for road traffic accidents in cats up to age 12 months that were registered between 2010 and 2013 with the UK pet cat cohort ('Bristol Cats'). *Veterinary Record*. 2017 Feb;180(8):195.

Preventing harm to cats



Cat fights remain the most common cause of injury: 16%⁴⁸.

Were involved in a fight with another animal



Were involved in a road traffic accident



The high number of cat fight injuries indicates that owner education is needed on how cats interact and how to help avoid conflict. This is especially the case for the 4% of cats that were injured by a cat that they live with. Cats Protection is keen to build on current support for owners in tackling this issue.



Awareness of lily toxicity among cat owners has not improved:

52% are still not aware⁶⁰

(53% in 2023)

Higher for:

owners not registered with a vet



male owners



18 to 24-year-old owners



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 and, in some cases, prove 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.

To help increase awareness about the risks of these popular flowers, Cats Protection met with over 40 retailers of cut flowers through the British Retail Consortium to ask them to improve their labelling of lilies.

⁶⁰ Question asked: Which of the following popular cut flowers, if any, are you aware of being toxic to cats?

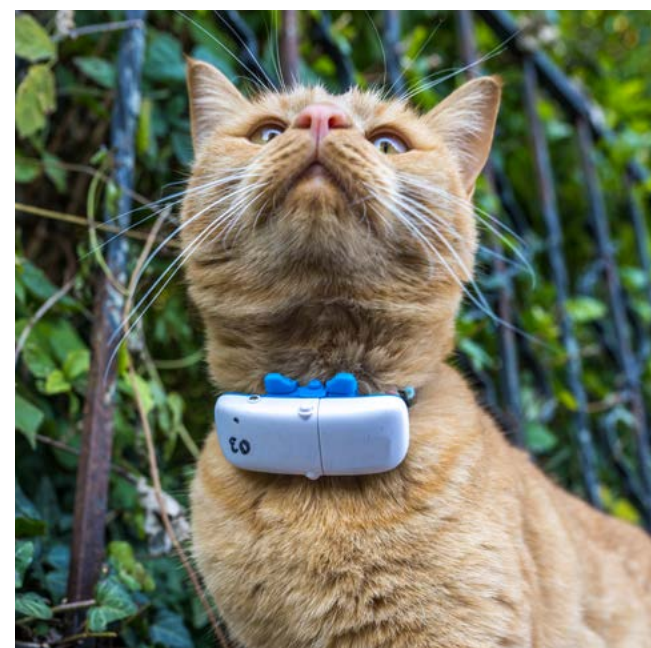
Accessories for cats⁶¹

Some cat accessories seem to be gaining in popularity but can be associated with stress for cats. For the first time, we asked about the use of these items, to help identify where there may be need for education.

The percentage of cat owners who use the following cat accessories:

Tracking devices: 11%

These can be bulky and uncomfortable for cats to wear and do not stop a cat from going missing. They can also be lost, or removed if a cat is stolen. Trackers should never replace a microchip as the primary means of finding your cat if lost.



A cat harness: 10%

If not well fitted, harnesses can be uncomfortable for cats or allow escape. Most importantly, they prevent the flight response and feeling trapped can significantly escalate stress in cats, which in turn can lead to other behavioural problems including, but not limited to, aggression towards people and house soiling. Cats are a highly territorial species and taking them out of their territory and safe space can contradict good welfare. If harnesses are to be used, time must be taken to acclimatise a cat to them in a positive manner.



⁶¹ Question asked: Does your cat wear/get carried using any of the following?

A cat backpack: 8%

Cats should be transported in safe and sturdy cat carriers, that are easy to clean. Carriers should only be used for unavoidable trips such as a visit to the vet or cattery, or when moving house. Cats are a territorial species and do not benefit from leisure outings or excursions away from their familiar home. Cat backpacks are often not big enough to allow a cat to sit or stand comfortably. Viewing windows tend to increase stress for cats and reducing their view of potential stressors is better for their welfare. It is also important to be aware of how durable fabric versions of the backpacks are, and the risk of escape should it become damaged



10% of owners say that they have taken their cat out for walks using a harness or lead, with this figure higher for younger owners (14%) and pedigree cats (21%).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this activity is also more common for those living in central urban areas (15%), where the risks of free roaming are greater⁶².

“While the use of harnesses and leads may be a great reflection of owners trying to cater to their cat’s needs, cats are very different to dogs and will usually find being walked on a lead stressful. They don’t have the ability to flee if frightened, which has a particularly negative effect when encountering stressors like dogs or loud noises away from the familiarity of their own territory. Additionally, it doesn’t meet their needs. Being walked around on a lead is not how cats would typically explore their territory so it can often be redundant as an attempt to add interest into their cat’s life, especially if it combines with the cat feeling more stressed.”



Daniel Warren-Cummings, Central Behaviour Officer, Cats Protection

⁶² Question asked: In what ways does your cat have access to going outside/coming inside?

Behaviour and stress⁶³

Many cats have shown potential signs of stress in the last 12 months.

Shows fear towards noise
29%

Runs away from people in the house
29%

Hides around the house for long periods of time
13%

Not get on with/fight with my other cats
9%

Shows aggressive behaviours towards people in my household
9%

Urinate (pee) outside of the litter tray/inside the house
8%

Defecate (poo) outside of the litter tray/inside the house
8%

Screams/screeches
8%

Not get on with/fight with my other pets (not cats)
5%

Sprays outside of the litter tray/inside the house
5%

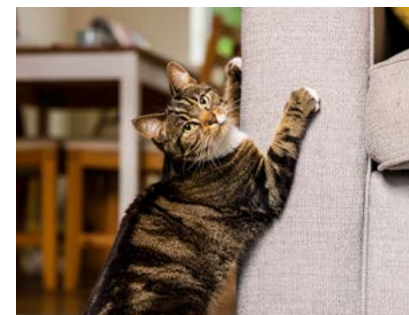
64% of cats have displayed at least one potential stress behaviour in the last 12 months.

Behaviour can be a complicated thing to analyse in cats, with a large degree of crossover between signs of some medical conditions, 'normal' behaviours, and those that indicate that a cat is stressed. Aggression and overt fear responses are more easily recognised, but typically only seen when cats are very stressed, with more subtle signs missed or dismissed by owners.

Sometimes, 'normal' cat behaviours are deemed problematic by their owners. This risks owners focusing on the wrong behaviours as concerning, which has knock-on effects for that cat's welfare.

⁶³ 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?

Behaviours that owners consider a problem are often normal cat behaviours.



Scratching furniture/carpets/walls

22% of owners would like to change

Scratching is 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, of the cat's preferred type, strategically placed within the home) is therefore important, to prevent the behaviour becoming 'destructive'.



Jumps onto work surfaces/shelves

11% of owners would like to change

Cats instinctively like to move vertically within their environment and feel more secure being able to survey their surroundings from an elevated position. Giving the cat more options to access vertical space in the home will help to deter cats from jumping onto no-go areas.



Wakes up members of the household at night/very early

11% of owners would like to change

Cats don't tend to sleep all the way through the night like humans do. Instead, they will sleep in shorter naps and are most active at dawn and dusk.

Increased understanding of cat behaviour is important for a cat's wellbeing and maintaining the cat-owner bond. This is why Cats Protection maintains a strong focus on owner education in this area.

"Stress, particularly chronic stress, is a significant welfare issue for cats, and one that is easily overlooked, as cats are unfortunately so good at hiding it. Our report shows that stress in cats not only affects the cats themselves, but also their caregivers. The good news is there are plenty of ways to reduce stress in cats. The key thing is knowing where to get expert support and advice, which is why Cats Protection recommends seeking help from a qualified behaviourist from the Animal Behaviour and Training Council once medical reasons for the behaviour have been ruled out."



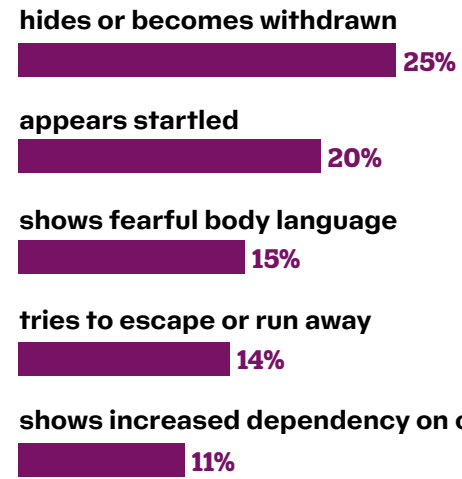
Nicky Trevorrow, Behaviour Manager, Cats Protection

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Fireworks⁶⁴

Fireworks can be really distressing for all animals, including cats. 64% of cat owners say that their cat has been affected by fireworks.

Fireworks continue to negatively impact cats. Top five behaviours shown by cats experiencing fireworks:



⁶⁴ 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.

“The distress caused by fireworks to wildlife, our pets and people can be minimised if the unpredictability of fireworks is managed. Scotland is leading the way by introducing fireworks regulations that will restrict the times and days the public can use fireworks and have introduced powers that allow local authorities to designate firework control zones.

“Cats Protection continues to call on governments across the UK to restrict the unplanned use of fireworks and reduce the maximum noise levels of fireworks. This would help owners anticipate displays and take appropriate action, and ease the stress of all animals, including cats.”



Alice Palombo, Advocacy & Government Relations Officer (Scotland and Northern Ireland), Cats Protection



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Companionship and challenges to ownership

Key takeaways

- The wellbeing benefits of cat ownership are still the main driving force behind having a cat
- The cost of living continues to be a barrier to cat ownership
- Many potential cat owners continue to cite living in rental accommodation as a barrier

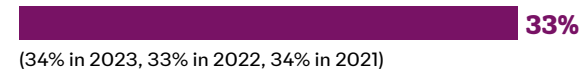
Why we have cats

The wellbeing benefits of cat ownership are still a strong motivator for having a cat⁶⁵.

As company for me/my family



I've always had cats



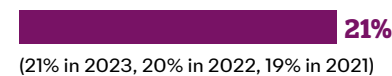
I grew up with cats and so wanted to get my own when I left home



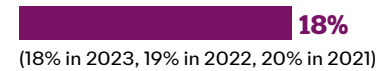
To help me feel less stressed/anxious



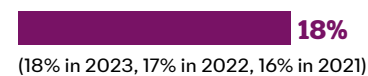
To help me feel less lonely



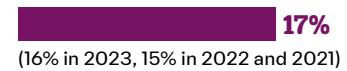
They needed looking after/to be taken in



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



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



My child/children wanted one



My partner wanted one/already had one



Once again, companionship, reducing loneliness and reducing stress are collectively the top reasons that people choose to own a cat, 54%, (55% in 2023, 51% in 2022 and 2021). Overall, the specific reasons for cat ownership show no significant differences to 2023.

For 18 to 34-year-olds though, cat ownership to help reduce stress or loneliness is significantly higher than the general cat owning population (29% and 28% respectively). This group also tend to be more concerned in general, for example, about the rising cost of living, so perhaps are in greater need of the calming influence of cats.

Owners form deep connections with their cat⁶⁶.

Having a cat brings me joy



I often talk to my cat



I hate leaving my cat when I go away



I love spoiling my cat



My cat gives me a reason to get up in the morning



I talk about my cat a lot



I think about my cat a lot when I'm not with them



I put my cat's needs before my own



92% of cat owners agreed that they consider their cat part of the family, clearly demonstrating their important position within the household⁶⁶. Females and younger people seem to particularly feel the love for their cat, with more of these owners agreeing to the statements above. People who live alone are also more likely to express these feelings of connection with their cat.

Those who are worried about finances are more likely to agree that their cat brings them joy and also more likely to say that they put their cat's needs above their own. The depth of feeling that cat owners develop for their cat is perhaps reflected by the fact that over a quarter (26%) of those who don't own a cat currently say that this is because they couldn't go through the pain of losing one again⁶⁷.

⁶⁵ Question asked: What are the main reasons you have a cat/s? Multiple answers allowed.

⁶⁶ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about having a cat/s?

⁶⁷ Question asked: Which of the following reasons for not having a cat currently apply to you?

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The majority of owners spend time with their cat at least once daily⁶⁸.

Sitting with/stroking my cat: 85%

Actively play together daily: 65%

Almost half (46%) of cat owners also have children living in the household, with the majority of these children being under 10 years old⁶⁹. The benefits of cat ownership are well documented in children, particularly young children, including increased confidence and improved social-emotional development⁷⁰.

“Our cat is important for teaching my children kindness to animals.”

Male, 55 to 64, Wales

“I feel it is important for children to have animals around.”

Female, 55 to 64, South East England

“Cats bring the family together.”

Female, 35 to 44, East England

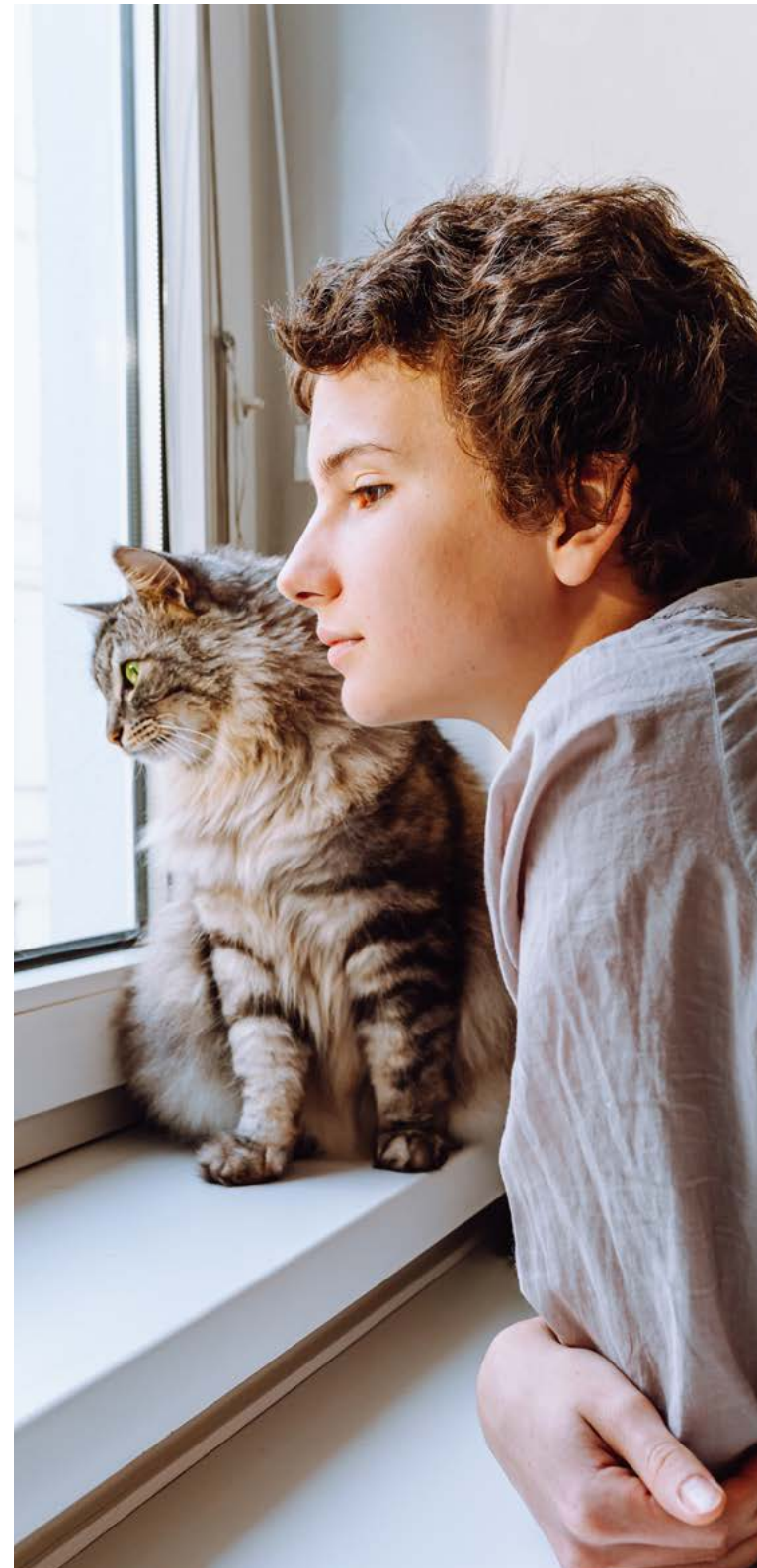
“We are very much cat people!”

Female, 55 to 64, South West England

⁶⁸ Question asked: In an average week, how often do you do each of the following with your cat?

⁶⁹ Questions asked: Do you have any children?/How old are your children?

⁷⁰ 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. *The Journal of Pediatrics*. 2020 May 1;220:200-6.



Lifeline. Supporting cat owners fleeing domestic abuse

In recognition of the importance of cats to their owners, Cats Protection provides a range of services that aim to support owners, especially when they are at their most vulnerable.

One example is the pioneering Lifeline, a specialist cat fostering service for people experiencing domestic abuse. Ensuring that their cat will be taken care of until they can be safely reunited, Lifeline offers peace of mind about one concern at a very challenging time.

Find out more about Lifeline at cats.org.uk/cp-lifeline

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline can be contacted via nationaldahelpline.org.uk or on 0808 2000 247.

“Sadly, perpetrators of domestic abuse will use their partner or family member’s love for their cat as a tool to coerce and control them. This may be by physically abusing the cat, or by controlling the owner’s access to finances and vet care for their cat. Using a beloved cat as a tool for coercive control can make it even more challenging for them to leave, due to concern about what will happen to their cat if left behind. Cats Protection Lifeline can offer people experiencing domestic abuse and their cats a much-needed way out, enabling them to escape to safety.”

Amy Hyde, National Lifeline Manager, Cats Protection



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“I love all cats, they are such unique, interesting animals.”

Female, 25 to 34, North West England

“I love cats more than humans.”

Female, 45 to 54, North West England

“I think cats are great, my cat is very intelligent and affectionate.”

Female, 55 to 64, Northern Ireland

“They’re jolly nice animals!”

Male, 25 to 34, East England

“Cats are loved within my religion, and I have always loved them.”

Female, 18 to 24, Yorkshire



Barriers to cat ownership

Many people want a cat soon but can't right now, often due to circumstance⁷¹.

I live in accommodation that is unsuitable for a cat



Having a cat does not fit with my lifestyle



I've only recently started wanting a cat



I can't afford a cat



I haven't been able to find a suitable cat yet



I live in rented accommodation and was not allowed a cat



Others in my household do not want a cat



I am waiting for my children to be older



I have other pets and having a cat would be unsuitable



I have only started working from home recently



Health reasons specific to having a cat prevent me



Health reasons not specific to having a cat prevent me



Reasons previous cat owners are choosing not to own cats⁶⁷

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



I have different pets now, instead of cats



I can't afford veterinary care for a cat



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



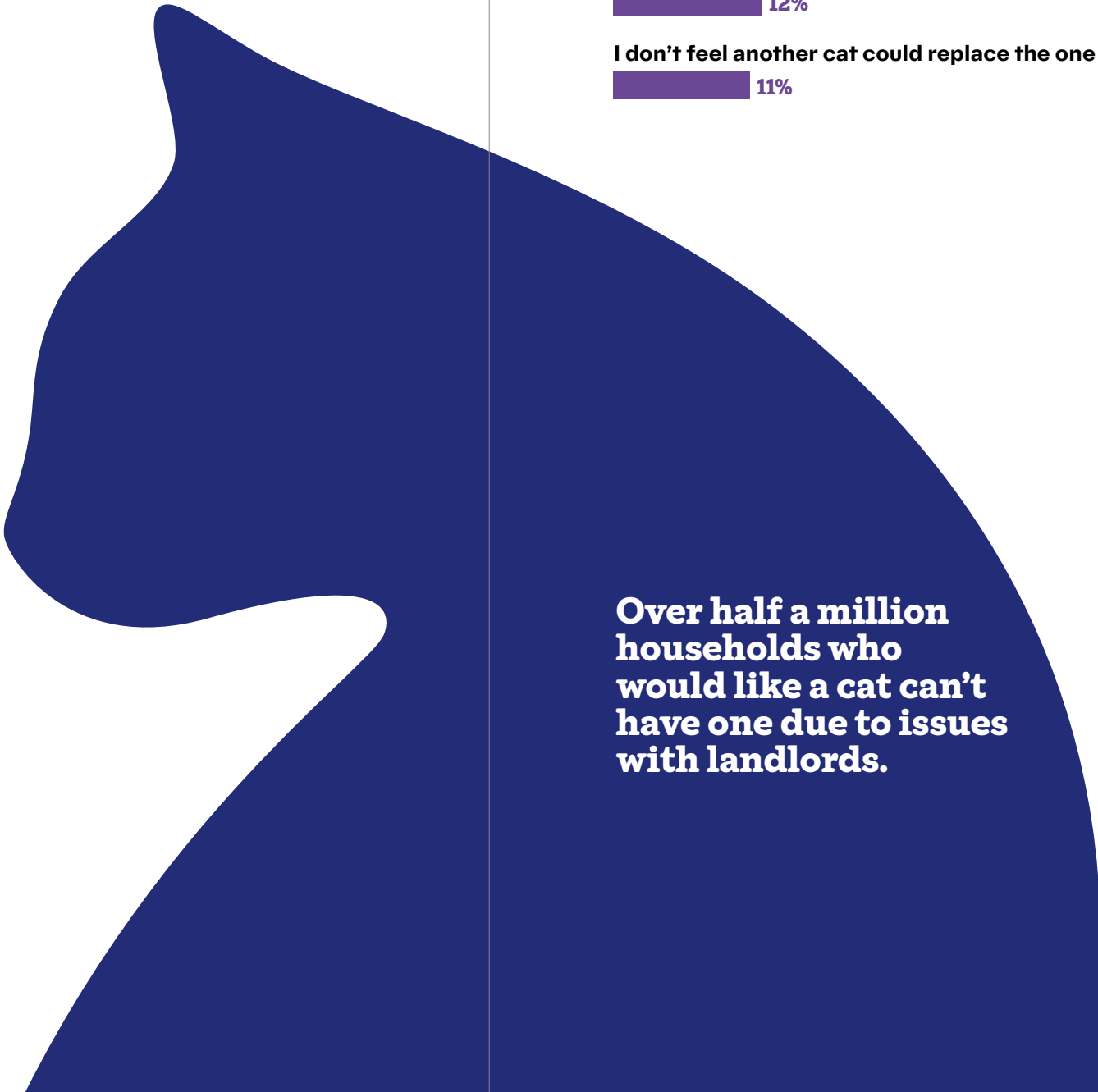
I can't afford to own a cat now (for example, food, litter)



I now live in accommodation that is unsuitable for a cat



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



Over half a million households who would like a cat can't have one due to issues with landlords.

Some barriers to cat ownership are very individualised and difficult to overcome but wider issues, such as cost concerns, clearly also prevent people from owning cats.

This year's CATS data shows that over half a million households who would like a cat don't have one because their rental agreements forbid it. Many landlords may have concerns that a cat will damage fixtures and fittings, yet 73% of cat-friendly private landlords report no problems at all from cats in their properties⁷². Renters with pets also tend to stay longer in properties.

Rented accommodation preventing cat ownership is something that Cats Protection continues to campaign hard to address, encouraging landlords to stop applying blanket 'no pet' policies.

Find out more about our campaigns at cats.org.uk/campaigning

⁷¹ Question asked: You said that you were planning to buy/adopt a cat soon; why have you not done so before?

⁷² Data from Cats Protection Perfect Landlords campaign

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Previous loss of a cat prevents a large number of people from owning a cat again.

The Paws to Listen grief support service was established to help owners who face one of the most challenging aspects of cat ownership: losing their cat. This free, confidential service puts grieving owners in contact with trained volunteer listeners who are ready to offer emotional support and practical information for owners whose cats have passed away, gone missing or are separated for other reasons such as rehoming.

“We know that the bond between people and their cats can be an incredibly strong one, and that the loss of a cat can be devastating. So much so that for some, as shown in this report, fear of experiencing this intense grief again in the future can be a barrier to having another cat in their lives. Our Paws to Listen grief support service offers a sympathetic ear to those experiencing the loss of their cat, to help them navigate this difficult time.”



Catherine Joyce,
Paws to Listen Team Leader,
Cats Protection

Find out more about Paws to Listen at cats.org.uk/paws-to-listen

Those aged over 65 are underrepresented among cat owners (9%), compared to all UK households (21%). For some older people, this may be because they worry about what will happen to their cat after they have gone. 8% of people that have never owned a cat but would like to, say that the concern about who will take care of their cat in their absence is enough to stop them from getting a cat altogether and this is significantly higher for those aged over 55 (15%)⁷³. 7% 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 up⁷⁴.

⁷³ Question asked: You said that you would like to buy/adopt a cat soon but can't, why is this?

⁷⁴ 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?



Cat Guardians was set up by Cats Protection to address exactly this. This 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 care and then in a new loving home that is perfectly matched to them. It is hoped that by providing this reassurance, people feel more comfortable welcoming a cat into their life during their later years.

Find out more about Cat Guardians at cats.org.uk/catguardians

Thankfully, only a small percentage of people lost a cat in the last 12 months⁷⁵.

7% of current cat owners

14% of current non-cat owners

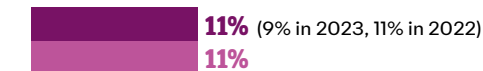
A large proportion of cats lost in the last 12 months passed away, but some were given up by their owners, for a variety of reasons⁷⁶.

■ Current cat owners ■ Current non-owners

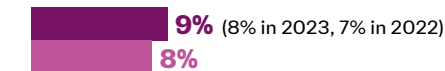
Cat passed away



Gave cat to someone I know



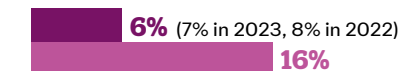
Cat given up for adoption to a rescue/rehoming centre/animal shelter



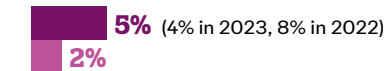
Cat went missing



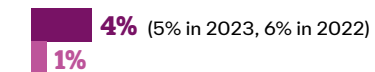
Moved away from family home (cat owned by parents)



Relationship split, partner kept cat



Cat was sold



It is beneficial for the cat and their owner when cats can remain in a stable, caring environment, so understanding why cats leave their homes is important to help try and remove some of the barriers to continued ownership.

This is why a lot of the work that Cats Protection does is focused on the provision of the most appropriate support to try and keep cats and their owners united, and the cat’s needs sufficiently met.

⁷⁵ Question asked: In the past 12 months, have you had a cat you no longer own?

⁷⁶ Question asked: Thinking about the cat(s) that left your company within the last 12 months, what happened to them?

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The impact of cost of living on cat owners

The impact of cost-of-living increases has not eased, with over a third (34%) of owners saying that they have been significantly and negatively impacted by the rise in living costs, matching last year⁷⁷. This seems particularly so in Wales (39%), where cat ownership has also dropped. 20% of cat owners are very concerned about being able to pay bills and other living costs over the next 12 months.

Younger, female and less affluent owners are particularly affected by cost-of-living challenges.



This concern translates across to care for cats too, with 14% of owners seriously worried about how they will meet their cat's needs in the future⁷⁸. 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 cat⁷⁹. Over a quarter of owners (26%) have doubts about how they would pay vet bills if their cat became sick or injured⁷⁸. In 2023, across the UK, 1,700 cats were given up to Cats Protection for financial reasons, representing 6% of all cats given up.

Cost concerns are also preventing many cats from entering loving homes in the first place. 16% of people who would like to share their lives with a cat, say they can't right now because of affordability⁷¹.

⁷⁷ Question asked: To what extent have your household finances been negatively impacted by the rising cost of living since January 2022?

⁷⁸ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

⁷⁹ Question asked: And thinking about the last 12 months, which of the below, if any, apply to you?

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Cats in summary

State of the nation

- Cat ownership:

	In millions		% of cat-owning households	
	2023	2024	2023	2024
Total UK	11.0	10.6	26%	25%
England	9.2	9.0	26%	25%
Wales	0.6	0.5	29%	24%
Scotland	0.8	0.8	22%	22%
Northern Ireland	0.2	0.2	21%	21%

- 25% of households in the UK own a cat (26% in 2023)
- There are 10.6 million owned cats across the UK, a slight fall from 11 million in 2023
- 67% of UK cat-owning households own one cat; 33% own two or more cats

The cat market

- For the first time, more pedigree cats were acquired in the last 12 months than moggies

	Cats acquired in...				Total pet cat population
	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	the last year	
Moggy/ domestic shorthair or longhair	51%	47%	45%	43%	58%
Pedigree/ purebred	35%	38%	41%	45%	30%

- The proportion of the pet cat population that is 'bought' is continuing to increase (data shown for all cats in current population)

	Cat was acquired...			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Bought	28%	29%	32%	34%
Adopted	25%	24%	24%	24%

Veterinary care

- Although there are still concerns regarding vet capacity, they appear to be easing. 28% of owners state that they have experienced difficulty accessing a vet (30% in 2023)
- 9% of cats (almost a million) are not registered with a vet
- 58% of owners say that they do not visit the vet as often as they would like to
- Microchipping numbers are increasing in cats, following the introduction of compulsory pet cat microchipping in England. 75% are microchipped, 22% are not microchipped
- Insurance numbers are increasing for cats, 50% of cats are insured
- There has been a significant rise in the number of owners saying their cat is up to date with vaccinations, 75% are up to date (72% in 2023)
- Neutering numbers have remained stable, 9 million (85%) are neutered, 1.4 million (13%) are not neutered

Cat care, welfare and behaviour

- Owners are increasingly researching their cat's needs, both before and after purchase:
 - 34% of owners did lots of research before getting their cat: (31% in 2023)
 - 32% of owners tend to do lots of research about how best to look after their cat: (28% in 2023)
- Most cats have outdoor access; 61% go both indoors and outdoors, 36% always stay indoors
- Some cat accessories seem to be gaining in popularity but can be associated with stress for cats. 11% use tracking devices, 10% a cat harness and 8% a cat backpack
- 64% of cats have displayed at least one potential stress behaviour in the last 12 months

Companionship and challenges to ownerships

The wellbeing benefits of cat ownership are still the main driving force behind having a cat:

- companionship, reducing loneliness and reducing stress are collectively the top reasons that people choose to own a cat (54%)
- Over half a million households who would like a cat don't have one because their rental agreements forbid it

Cost of living

- The impact of cost-of-living increases has not eased, with over a third (34%) of owners saying that they have been significantly and negatively impacted by the rise in living costs, matching last year
- Over a quarter of owners (26%) have doubts about how they would pay vet bills if their cat became sick or injured
- 14% of owners seriously worried about how they will meet their cat's needs in the future

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Where do we go from here?

A message from John May, Chief Executive, Cats Protection

In its fifth year, the CATS Report continues to shine a light on the changes we are seeing for cats, providing vital insight for the animal welfare sector, the veterinary profession and government.

Undoubtedly, one of the biggest shifts we are seeing is a new generation of cat owners coming through, who are drastically changing the feline landscape. This younger generation of cat owners care greatly for their beloved companions, spending more time searching for advice about how to best look after their cat, ensuring they have insurance and making sure their cat is up to date with vaccinations.

The changes we are seeing do however, present some major challenges and risks.

For the animal welfare sector, this younger demographic is significantly more likely to buy their pet than adopt. This potentially has long-term implications for our ability to rehome cats, but also removes an important interaction point with these cat owners.

Inextricably linked to the move to 'purchasing', is an increased interest in pedigree cats, which are, of course, less likely to be found in cat centres than moggies. These cats tend to be presented to the vet more regularly than moggies which may be a reflection of positive owner motivation or the potential likelihood for health issues in this group. We have also seen a disturbing rise in the popularity of extreme body types.

This is a vital time to consider how the animal welfare sector communicates with this new generation of cat owner. If we get it wrong at this crucial moment, the sector's expertise risks being drowned out by other, potentially less reliable, sources.

This is why Cats Protection is focussing efforts on reviewing our communication channels, ensuring the right information for cat welfare is available and accessible. We are also calling on the veterinary profession to stand up for cats, to make welfare a priority, and to support cat owners, particularly those new to cat ownership, in making the right decisions for cats.

The new government also has a key role in addressing these challenges. With a growing but largely unregulated market, we know there are unscrupulous individuals out there looking to make a profit, breeding cats in poor conditions and with extreme traits, detrimental to their welfare.

Cats Protection will continue to focus efforts on highlighting these challenges with government and hopes to see swift action with cat breeding regulations introduced to make a life better for cats, because life is better with cats.

John May OBE DL, Chief Executive, Cats Protection



Services

General advice and rehoming cats. A helpline for those with any questions regarding their own cats, or cats in general, and for those looking to adopt a cat or to have theirs rehomed.

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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

Lifeline. A free and completely confidential pet-fostering service for families fleeing domestic abuse.

cats.org.uk/cp-lifeline or **0345 260 1280**

Making a better life for cats, because life is better with cats

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

Cats Protection is a registered charity 203644 (England and Wales), SC037711 (Scotland) and is listed as a Section 167 institution by the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland.
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