

**PDSA ANIMAL WELLBEING**

# **PAW**

**MINI REPORT**

**2025**



# Introduction and methodology

The PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report has been running since 2011, collecting data annually through a nationally representative survey of dog, cat, and rabbit owners. The findings help to understand how UK owners care for their pets, alongside estimating pet population numbers in the UK. The approach to the PDSA PAW data is conducted in stages:

- An incidence question about pet ownership is asked to a large sample representative of the total UK population (the “incidence” data). In 2025, this comprised **10,975** UK adults aged 18 and over.
- The incidence data is then used to provide an understanding of how pet owners are distributed across the UK population’s demographics (e.g. age, gender, region).
- A large sample of UK dog, cat, and rabbit owners is drawn from the YouGov panel of over 2.5 million adults signed up to take part in research (the “pet owners” data).
  - In 2025, a total of **5,387** pet owners were surveyed, of which **2,566** were dog owners, **2,587** were cat owners, and **234** were rabbit owners. Fieldwork was conducted online between 17 December 2024 and 12 January 2025.
- The pet owners’ data is sampled and weighted to be representative of the pet-owning population in the UK, based on the incidence data.
- The data in this report summarises key findings from the PAW Mini Report 2025, with some analysis from previous years.
- Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses being allowed.

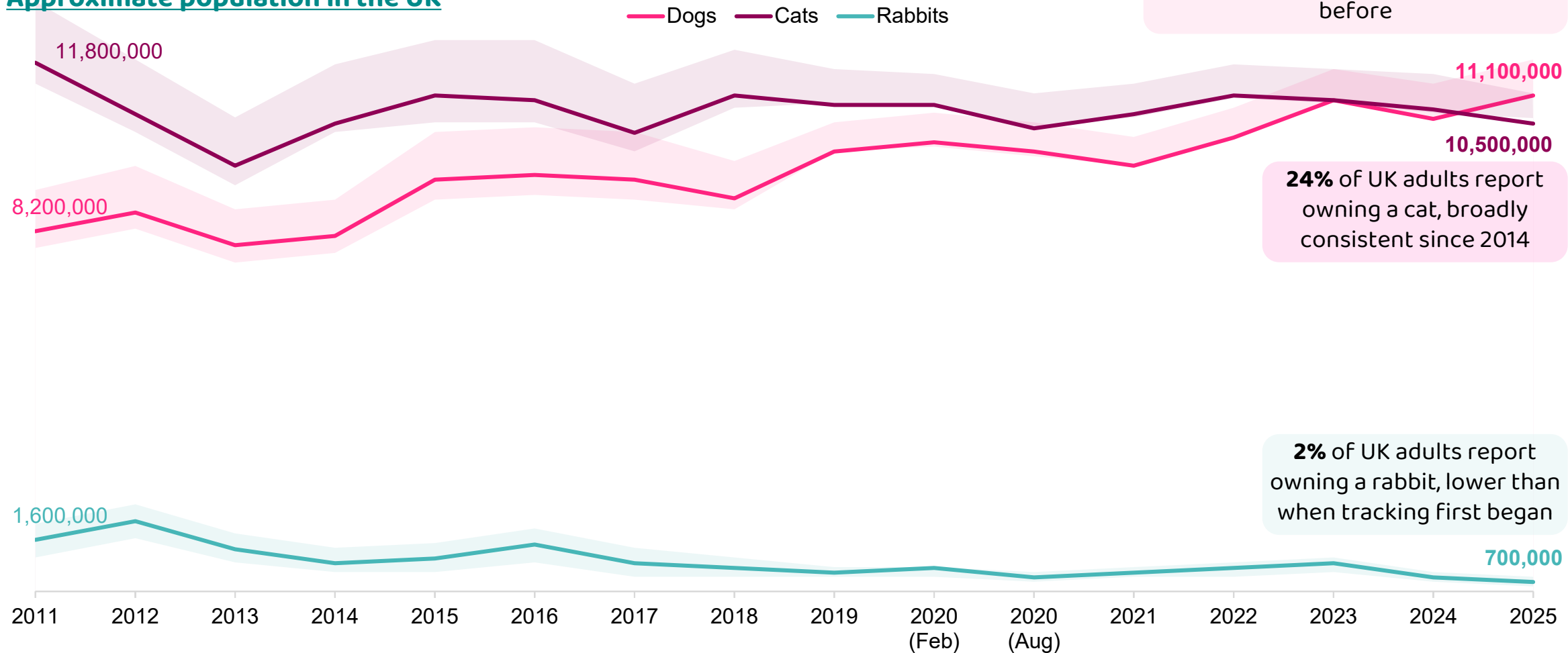
# Key findings

- The estimated population of dogs continues to grow, now at its highest ever level, with **11.1 million** dogs in the UK. The population of cats is relatively steady (**10.5 million**), while the number of rabbits estimated in the UK continues to decline (**700,000**).
- People most commonly get their dog from a breeder (**33%**), and half (**50%**) visit on more than one occasion before taking them home. Cats are most commonly acquired from a rescue (**33%**), with just over two-fifths (**43%**) visiting on more than one occasion before taking them home.
- Perceptions around the cost of owning a pet continue to increase, with over **two-fifths** saying owning a pet is more expensive than expected (higher than when last asked in 2023). Nearly all think that the cost of owning a pet has increased, also significantly higher than in 2023.
- Half are worried about being able to afford the cost of veterinary care for their pet (**51%**). If asked to pay an unexpected vet bill, a quarter would draw from savings (**23%**), while **15%** would put it on a credit card.
- Nearly two-fifths (**38%**) of dog owners walk their dog for 30 minutes or less each day. The most common reasons for this are that their garden is big enough (**30%**), their dog doesn't need any more exercise (**28%**) or because they have more than one walk a day (**24%**).
- Seven in ten dog owners say their walks have unrestricted sniffing/exploration (**69%**) or interaction with other dogs (**69%**). Urban dog owners are less likely to say they have the opportunity for each type of enrichment (except owner interaction).
- Nearly half (**46%**) of dog owners say their pet has eaten something they shouldn't have, while around a quarter of cat (**24%**) and rabbit (**26%**) owners say the same.
- Dog owners tend to be the most well-informed about how to protect their pets' health (e.g. toxic food, signs of heatstroke), but cat and rabbit owners are more likely to know what plants are toxic (**47%** dog owners, **56%** cat owners, **56%** rabbit owners).
- **16%** of dog owners believe their pet has some form of mutilation (i.e. docked tail, no dew claws, cropped ears, debarking), with **9%** saying their dog has a docked tail.
- Nearly all pet owners who've experienced the loss of a pet say they will live on in their memory (**94%**), but less than half (**42%**) would consider donating to charity in their memory.
- Only **25%** are aware of a PDSA Pet Hospital in their local area, but around half (**51%**) live within a PDSA catchment area. Those in more deprived areas are more likely to be aware and more likely to live within a hospital catchment area.

# UK pet populations

The estimated population of dogs continues to grow, while the population of cats is broadly steady, and rabbits continue to decline.

### Approximate population in the UK

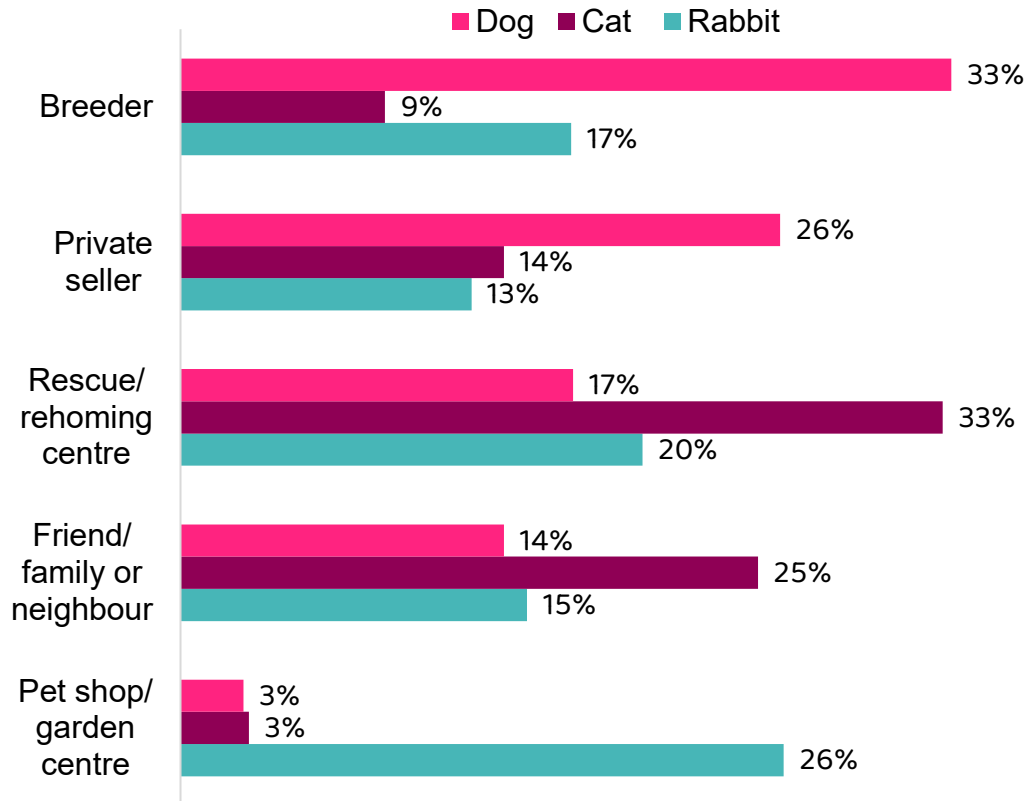


Pet population estimates are calculated from a combination of individual survey responses and household data from the ONS. There is a margin of error associated with the estimates; the shaded area indicates the high and low bounds of the pet population estimates for each year.

# Getting a pet

## The most common place to get pets remains the same with prior years: dogs from breeders, cats from rescues, and rabbits from pet shops/garden centres.

### Where did they get their pet from?



**6%** of owners say their pet is from abroad, including UK-based rescues for pets from abroad

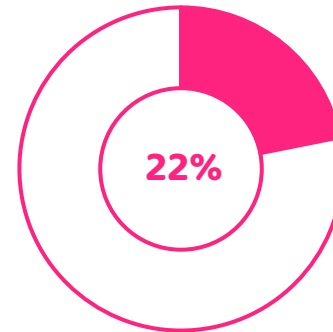
Q232. Where did you get [pet] from?

Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2556; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

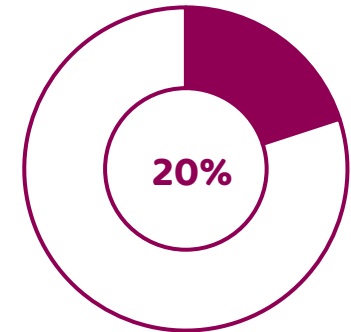
\*Breeder includes breeder of one or multiple breeds but does not include private sellers or puppy farms.

Around **a fifth** say they saw their pet advertised on a social media site before they got them

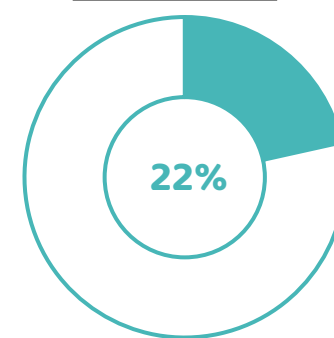
Dog owners



Cat owners



Rabbit owners



PP1\_N25. Which, if any, of the following social media sites did you see [pet] advertised on before you acquired them?

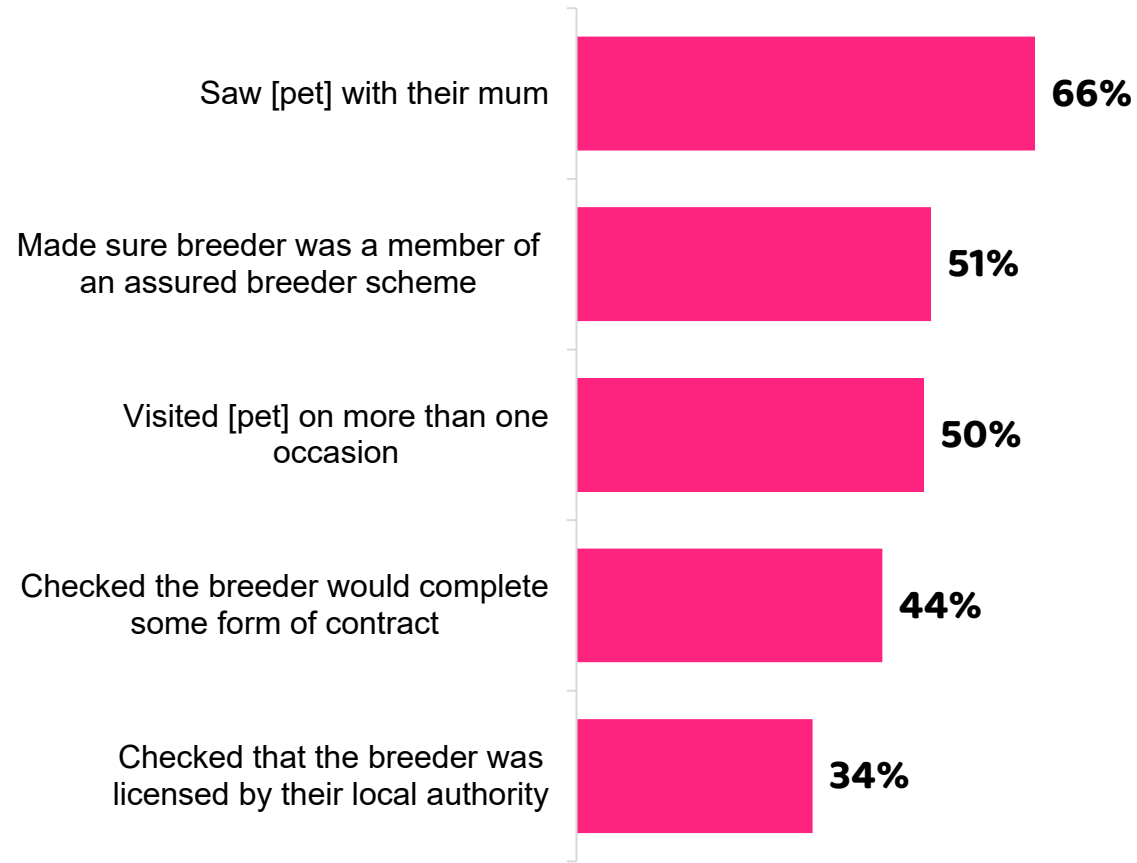
Base: All respondents (dog owners=2556; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

Note: Owners who said "Gumtree", "Pets4Homes", "Pre-loved" are not included as seeing their pet on "social media"

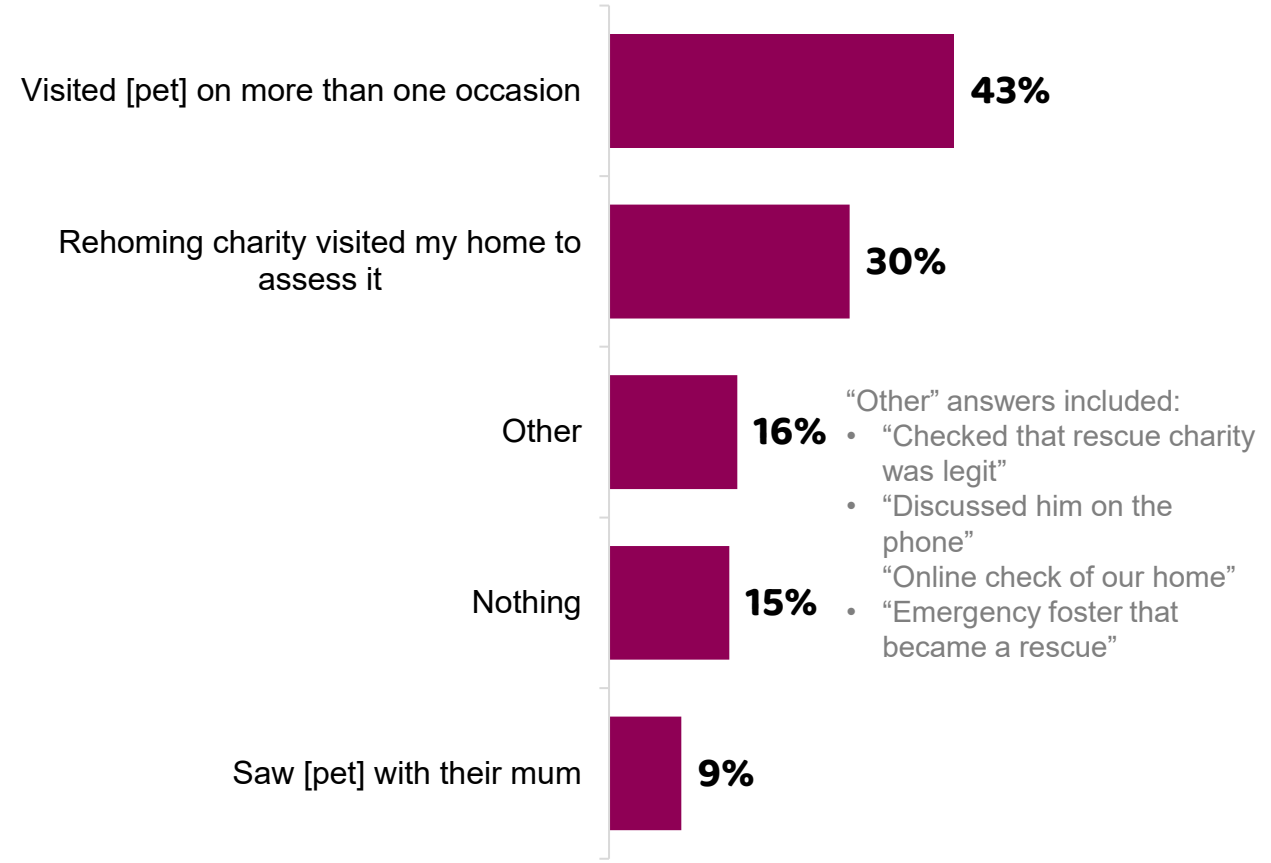
Half of those who got their pet from a breeder visited them on more than one occasion, and while this was the most common answer for those who got their pet from a rescue, slightly fewer had done so (around two-fifths).

### Top five activities before getting their pet

#### Got pet from a UK breeder



#### Got pet from a UK rescue



Q233. Which of these, if any, did you do before you took [pet] home? Please tick all that apply.

Base: All who got their pet from a UK breeder (1024)

\*Breeder includes a breeder of one or multiple breeds, but does not include private sellers or puppy farms.

Q233. Which of these, if any, did you do before you took [pet] home? Please tick all that apply.

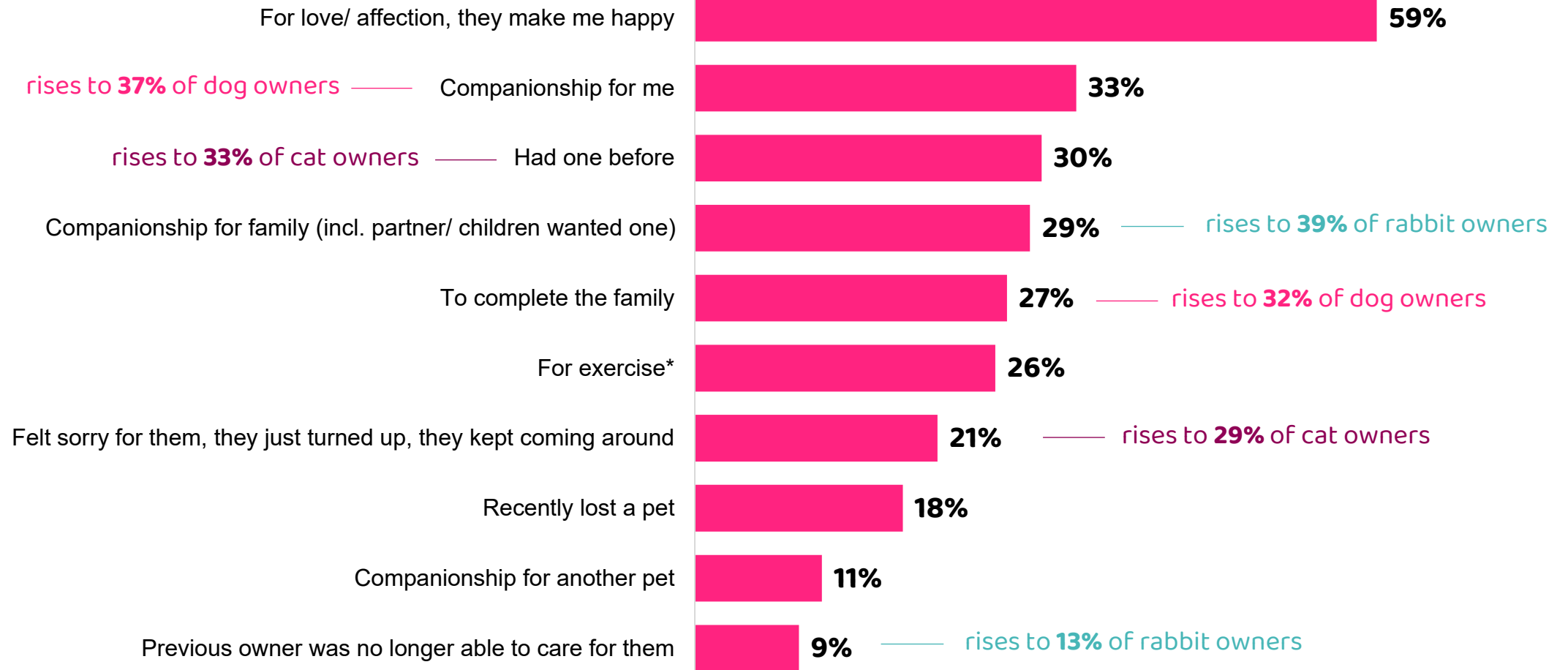
Base: All who got their pet from a UK-based rescue (1258)



# Companionship

# The top reasons to get a pet are for love and affection; for companionship for themselves or for their family.

## Reasons for getting their pet (top 10)



Q32. Why did you decide to get \$Q2? Please tick all that apply.

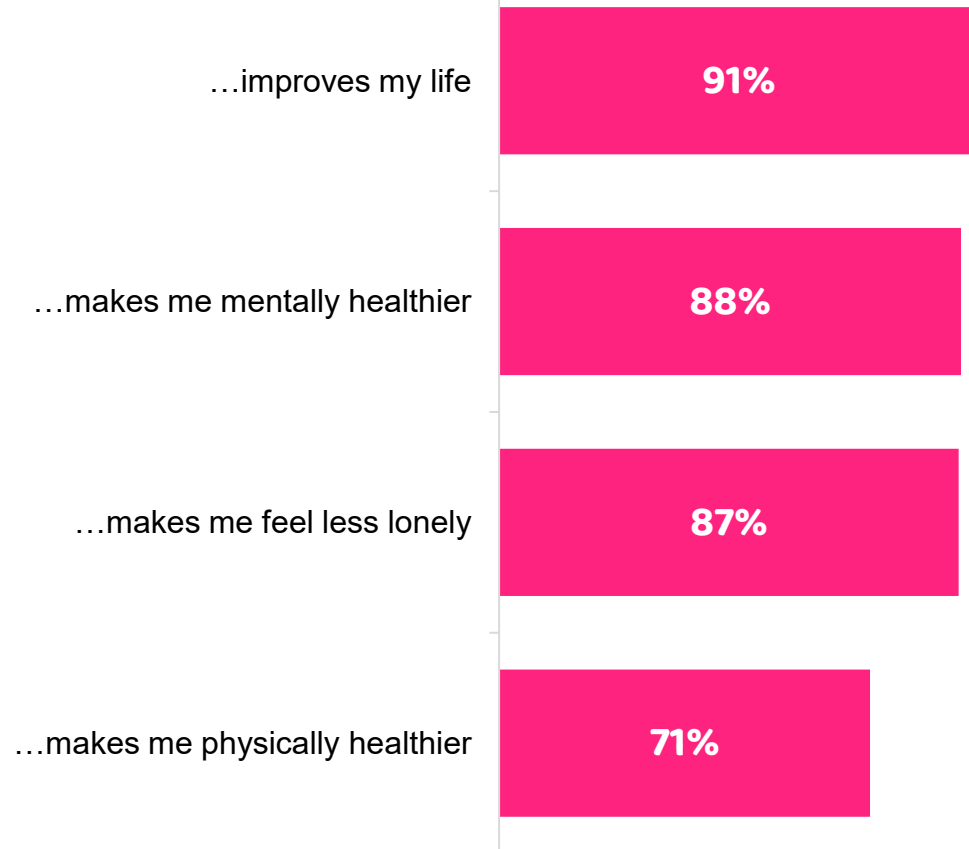
Base: All pet owners (5387)

\*"Exercise" option only included for dog owners, 26% of dog owners say they got their pet for exercise

# Pet owners are unequivocal about the improvement their pet brings into their lives

## Agreement with statements

### Owning [my pet]...



Q70. Thinking about owning a pet, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
Base: All pet owners (5387)

## Agreement with statements

Everyone deserves to experience the love and companionship of a pet

78%

Owning a pet has been a lifeline for me when times are tough

70%

My pet is my best friend

68%

OT6\_N25/ Q\_Own\_14. Thinking about owning a pet, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
Base: All pet owners (5387)

# Owners expressed what their pet means to them, with many affectionately referring to how important their pet is.



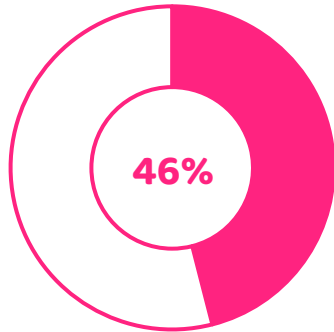
# Cost of living

## Many say owning a pet is more expensive than expected, and owners near-unanimously think costs have increased.

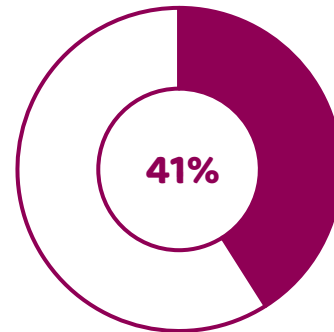
Two-fifths or more say owning a pet is **more expensive than they expected**. This has risen from 2023, when a third said the same

Nearly all think the **cost of owning** a pet has **increased**, with larger proportions agreeing than in 2023

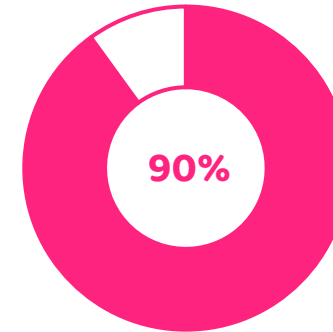
Dog owners



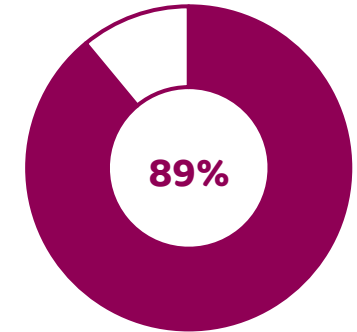
Cat owners



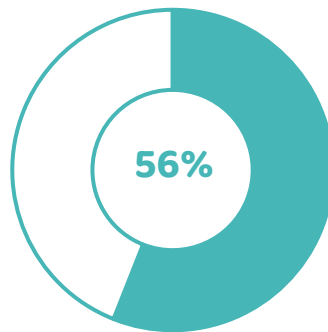
Dog owners



Cat owners

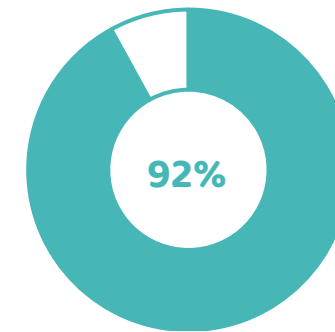


Rabbit owners



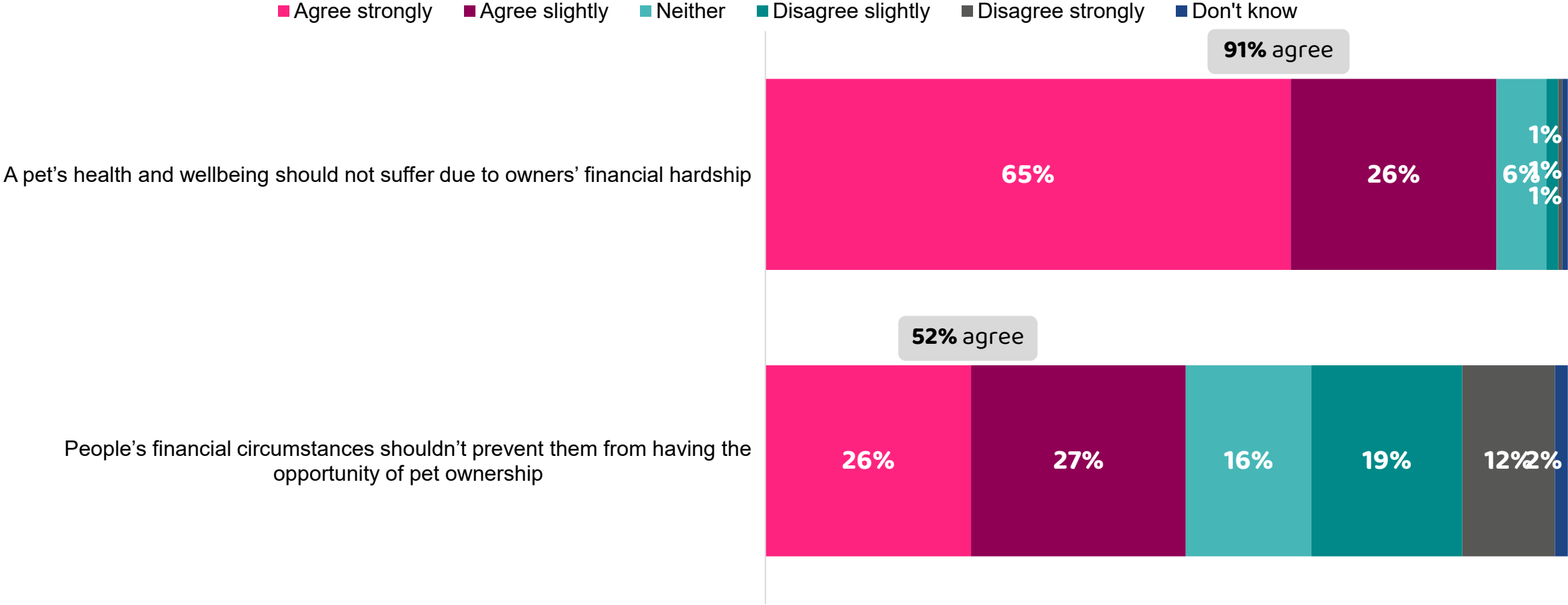
Since 2020, rabbit owners have been the most likely to say ownership is more expensive than they expected

Rabbit owners



While nearly all agree that a pet's health and wellbeing shouldn't suffer due to owners' financial hardship, people are more split around whether financial circumstances should prevent people from owning pets.

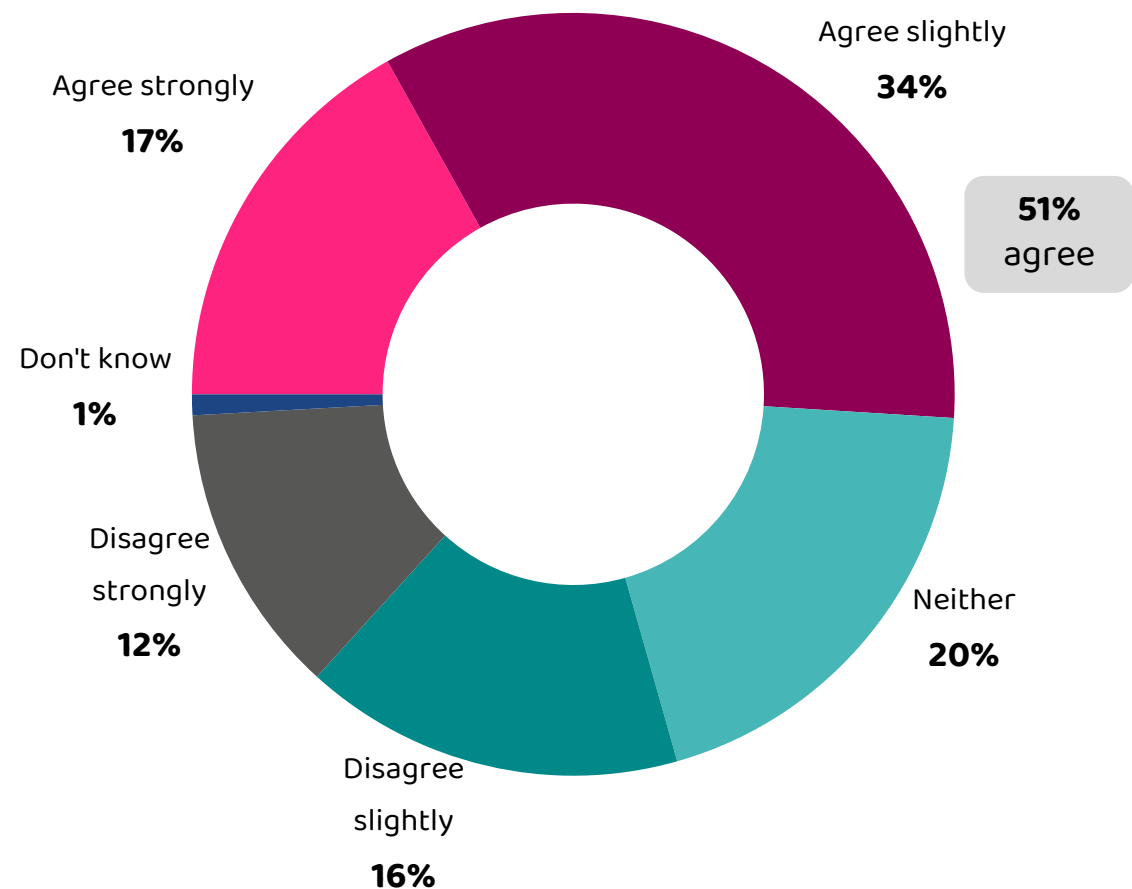
Agreement with statements



Q\_Own. Thinking about owning a pet, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
Base: All pet owners (5387)

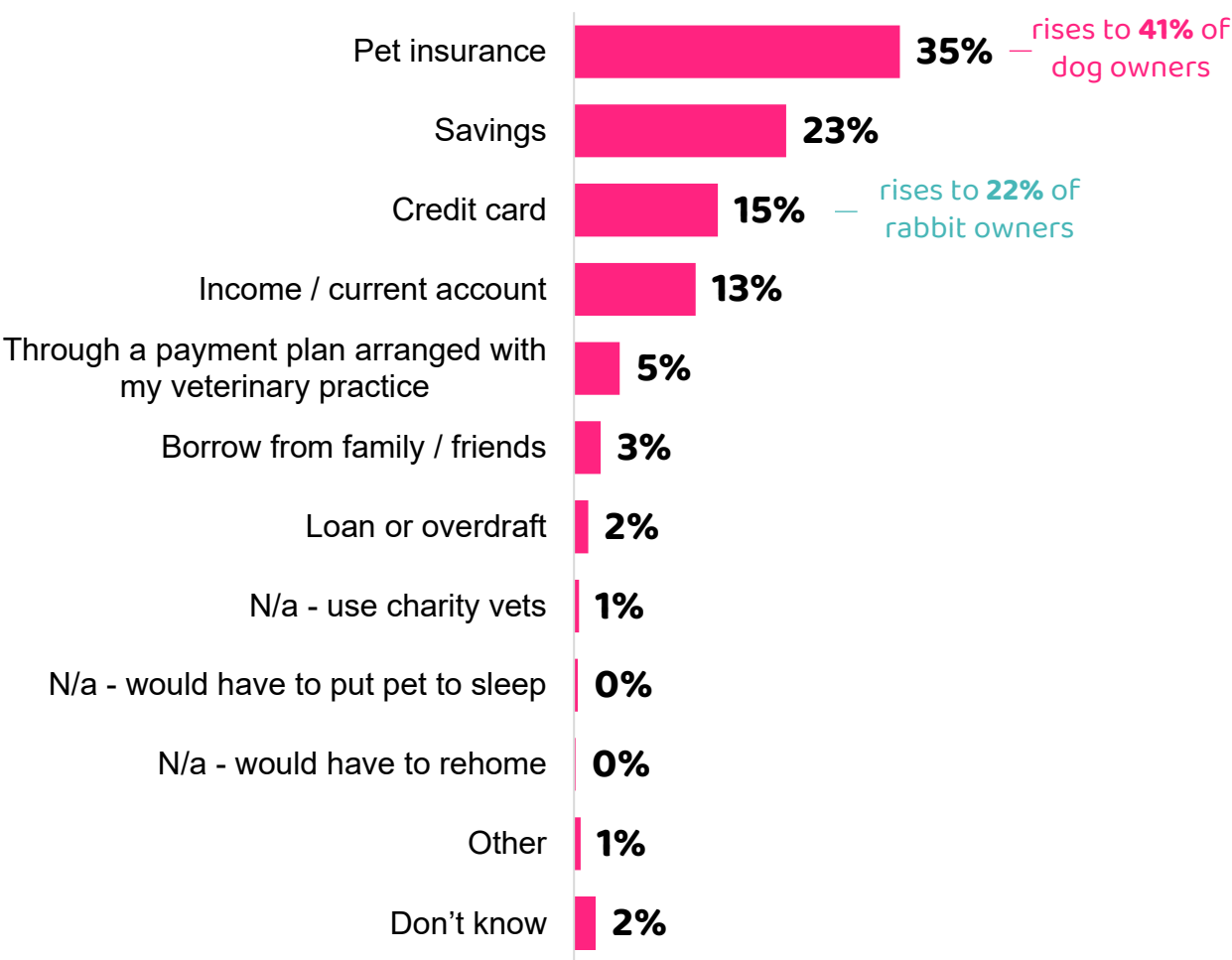
Half of pet owners are worried about the cost of vet care for their pet, and if faced with a bill, a quarter would pay via savings, while 15% would use a credit card.

"I am worried about being able to afford the cost of veterinary care for my pet"



Q236. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about \$Q2?  
Base: All pet owners (5387)

Main way to pay unexpected vet bill



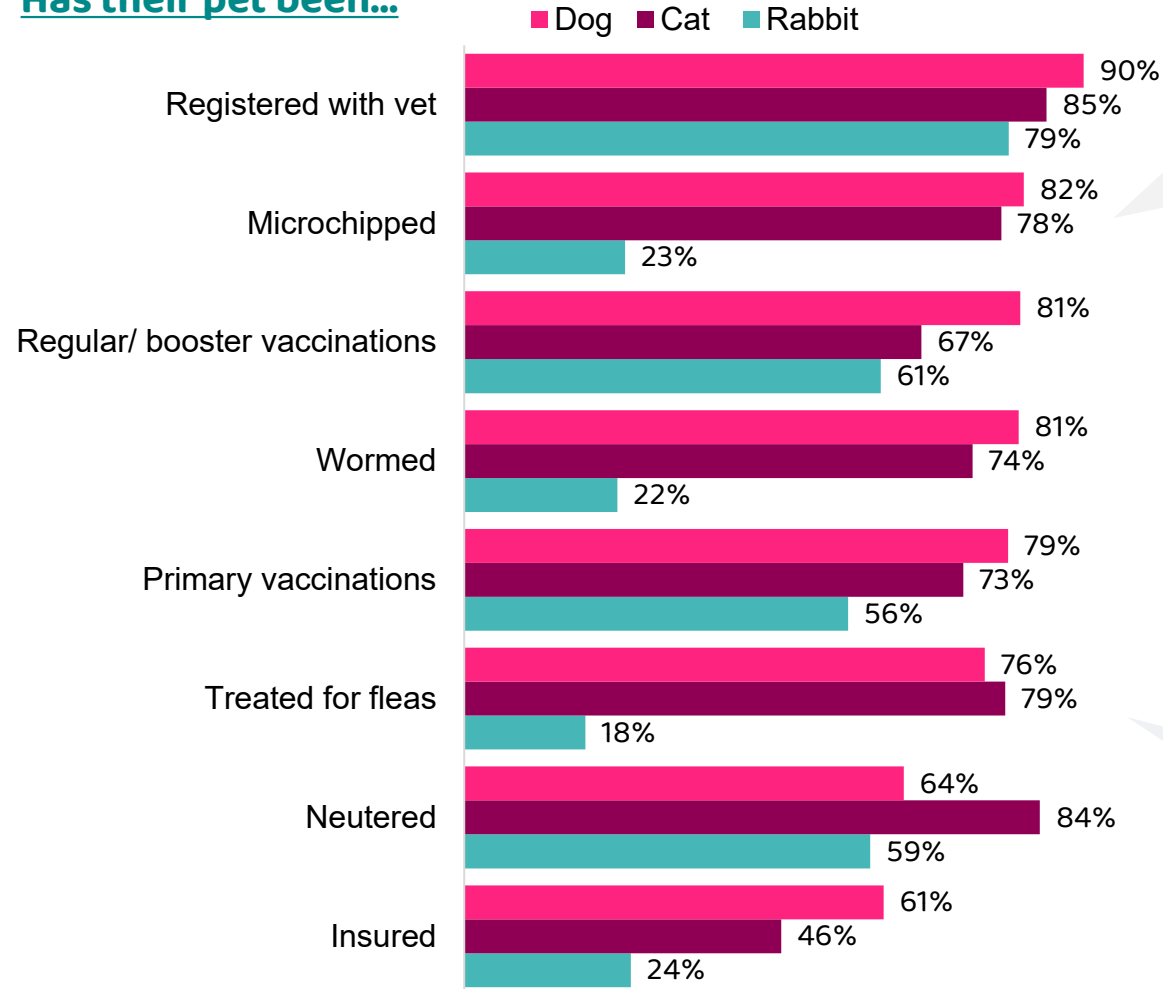
Q111. If you were to receive an unexpected vet bill, what would be the main way by which you would be most likely to pay for it? Please select one option.  
Base: All pet owners (5387)



# Ownership behaviour

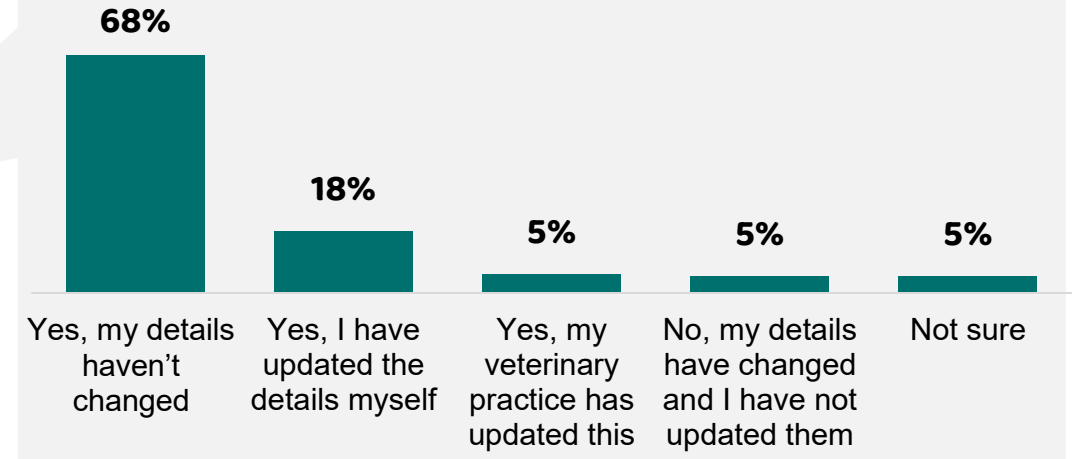
# Most owners have undertaken preventive care, and most microchips are up-to-date.

## Has their pet been...



Q55. Which, if any, of these has your pet had done?  
Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2556; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

## Are the microchip details up-to-date?



**91% say contact details are up to date**

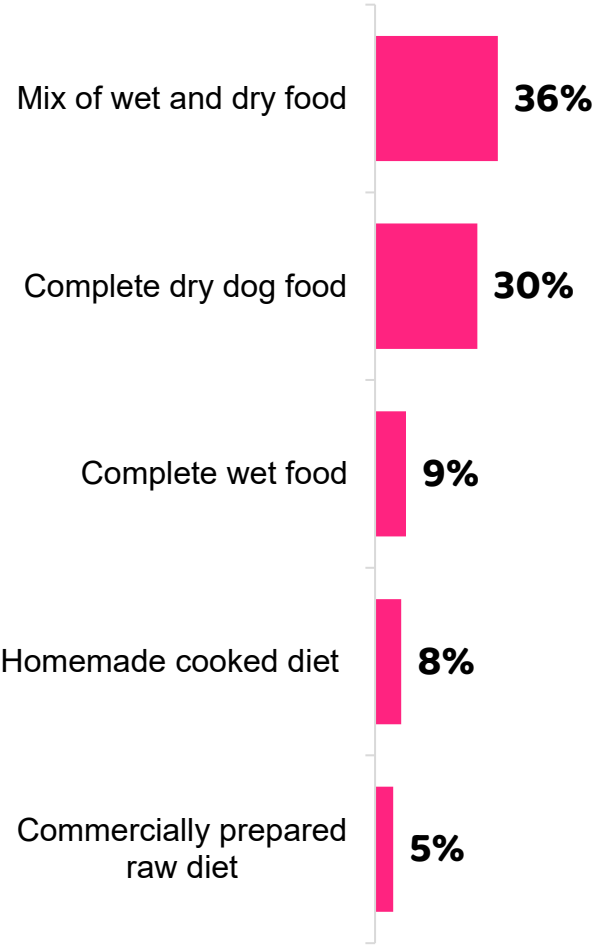
In 2024, the most common sources for worming/ flea treatment were:

- Vet practices (**60%**)
- Pet shops (**23%**)
- Online pharmacies (**17%**)

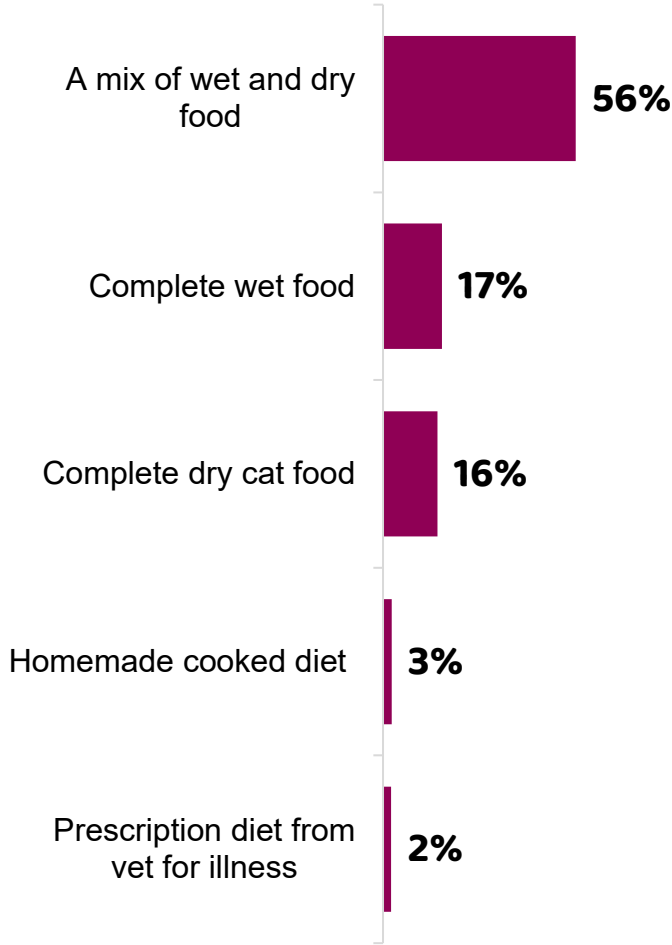
Q104. Do you know if your contact details are up to date on the microchip database where \$Q2 is registered?  
Base: All whose pet is microchipped (4239)

More than half of cat owners feed a mix of wet and dry food, while dog owners are more split, with three in ten mainly feeding their dog complete dry food.

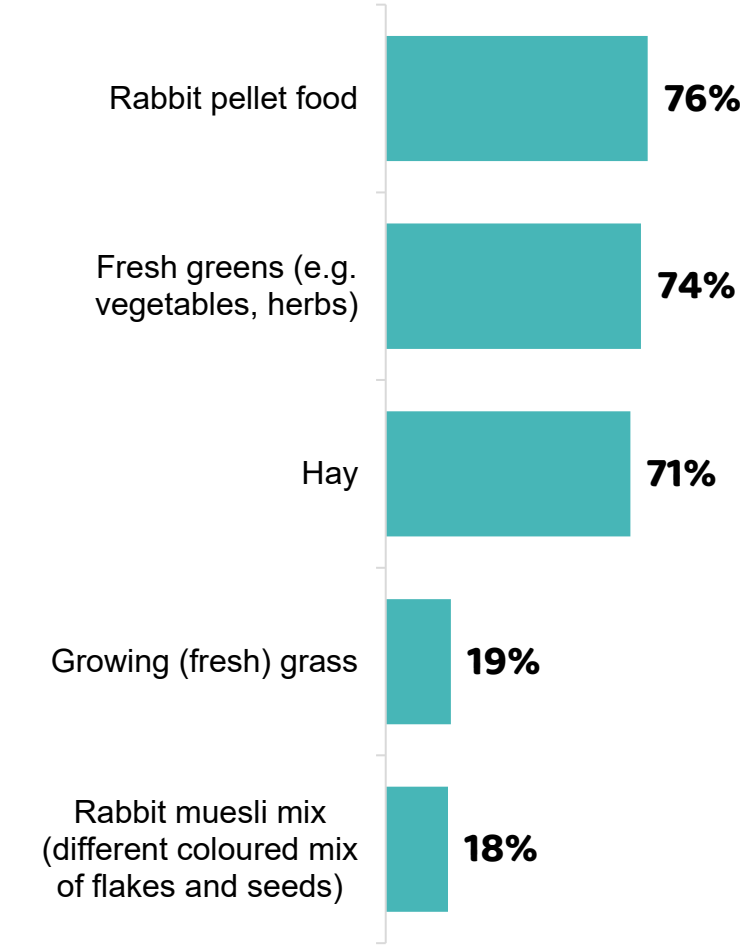
### Main dog food (top 5)



### Main cat food (top 5)



### Three main rabbit foods

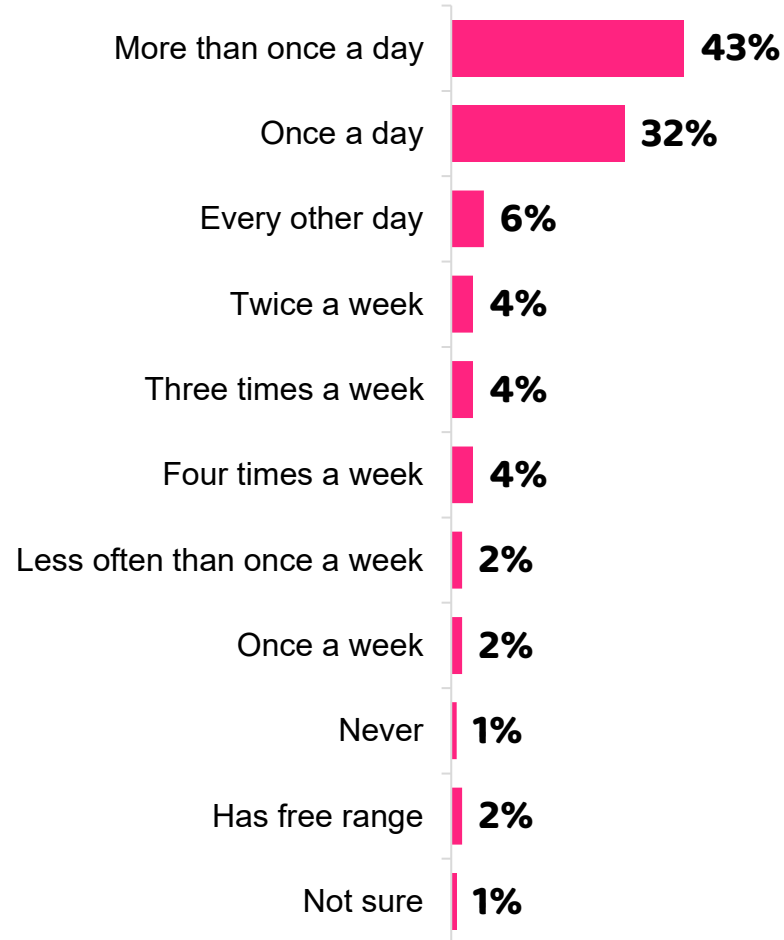


QDOG\_food. What is the main type of food your dog eats?/ QCAT\_food. What is the main type of food your cat eats?/ Q9RAB. What are the main types of food your rabbit eats? Please choose up to three.  
Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2556; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

# Pet enrichment

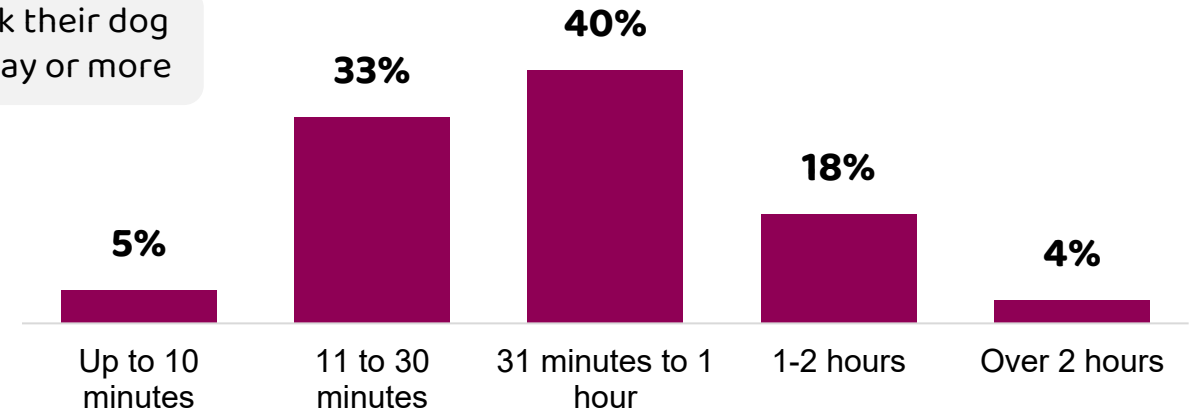
While three-quarters walk their dog once or more times a day, almost two in five walk their dog for half an hour or less.

### Dog walking frequency



75% walk their dog once a day or more

### Total duration of dog walks per day



38% walk their dog for 30 minutes or less

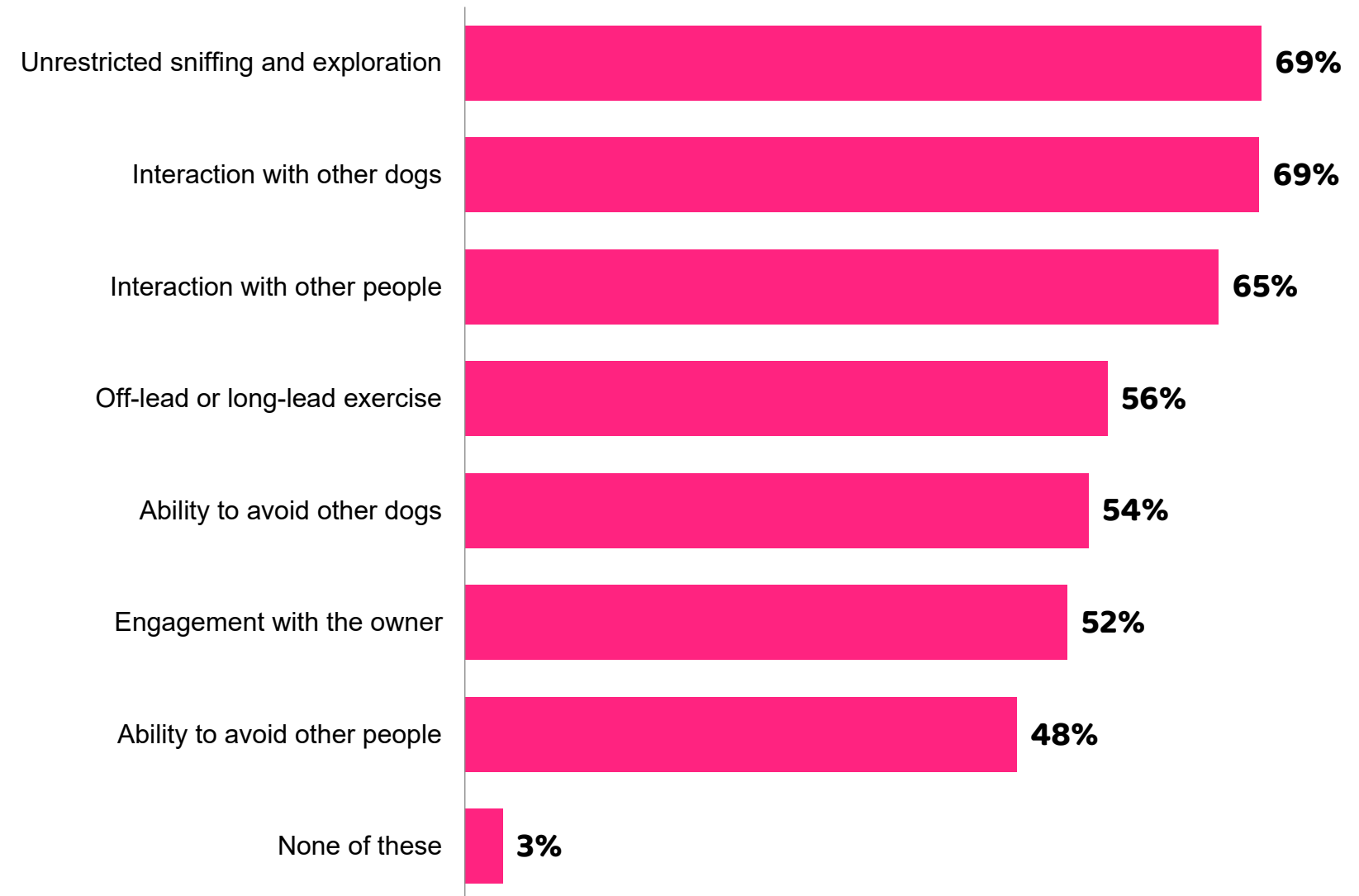
The most common reasons for going on short walks are:

- The garden is big enough for exercise (30%)
- Don't think my dog needs any more exercise (28%)
- They have more than one walk every day (24%)

## Seven in ten say their dog walks have unrestricted sniffing/ exploration or interaction with other dogs

- Two-thirds (**65%**) say that their dog walks include interaction with other people, while just under half say they can avoid other people (**48%**).
- Dog owners in urban areas are less likely to say their dog has the opportunity for each activity (except “engagement with owner”, which is consistent with rural owners).

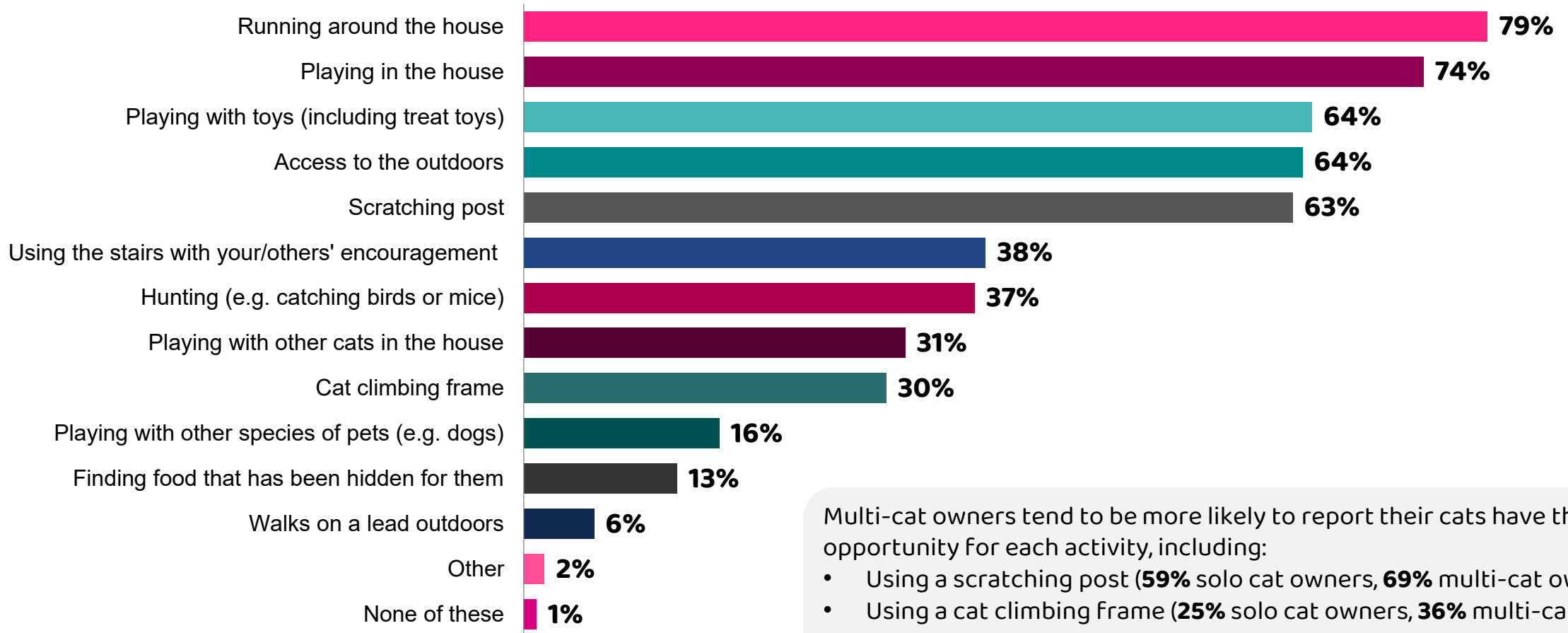
### Enrichment activities during a dog walk



Q228a. On a typical walk, does your dog have the opportunity to have/ do any of the following? Please select all that apply.  
Base: All dog owners (n=2566)

# Cat owners report that their pet exercises by running or playing around the house

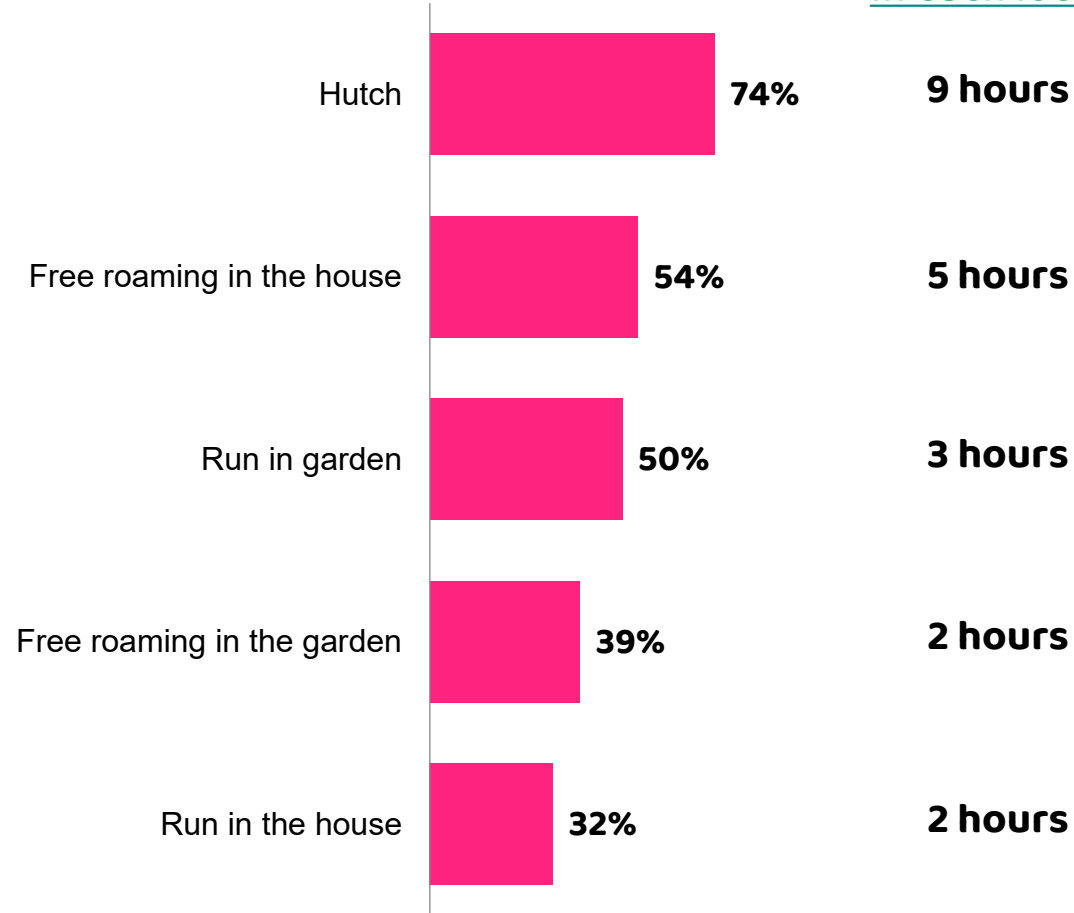
## Cat exercise opportunities



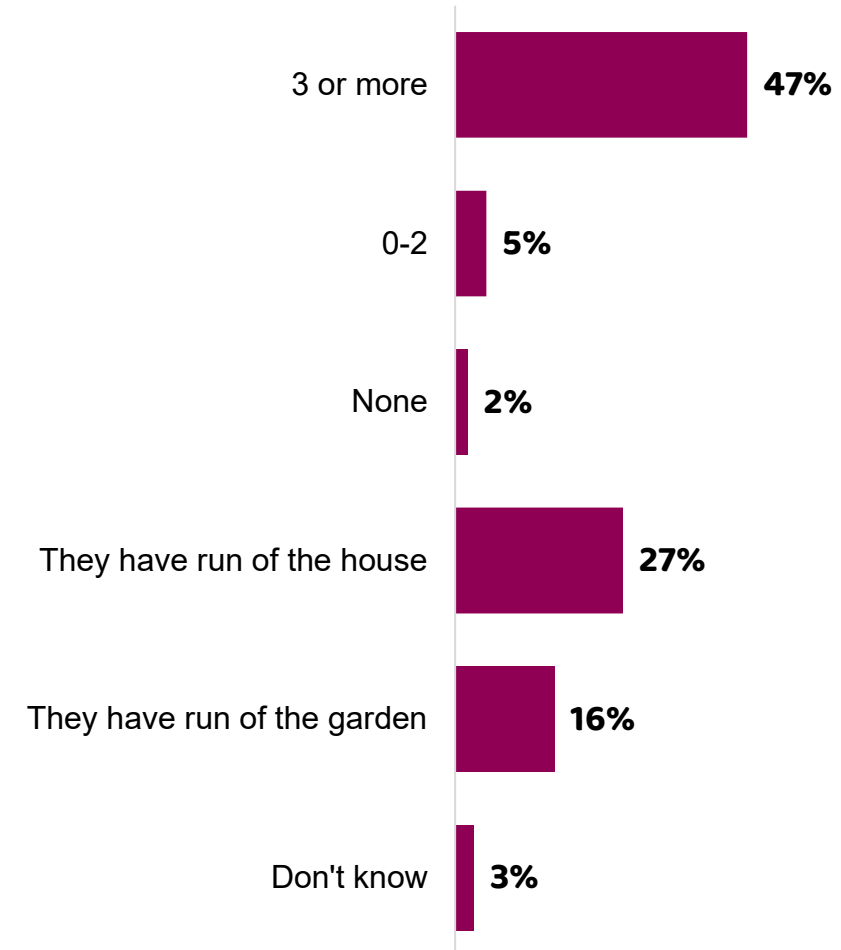
# Rabbit owners report that their pet spends most of their time during the day in a hutch with space to make three or more hops

## Spend any time in during a day

## Mean time spent in each location



## Number of hops across hutch/living space



Q\_rabbit hours. In a 24-hour period, typically how many hours does \$Q2 spend in each of the following areas? Please type a number between 0 and 24 into the box below to your best estimate.  
Base: All rabbit owners (234)

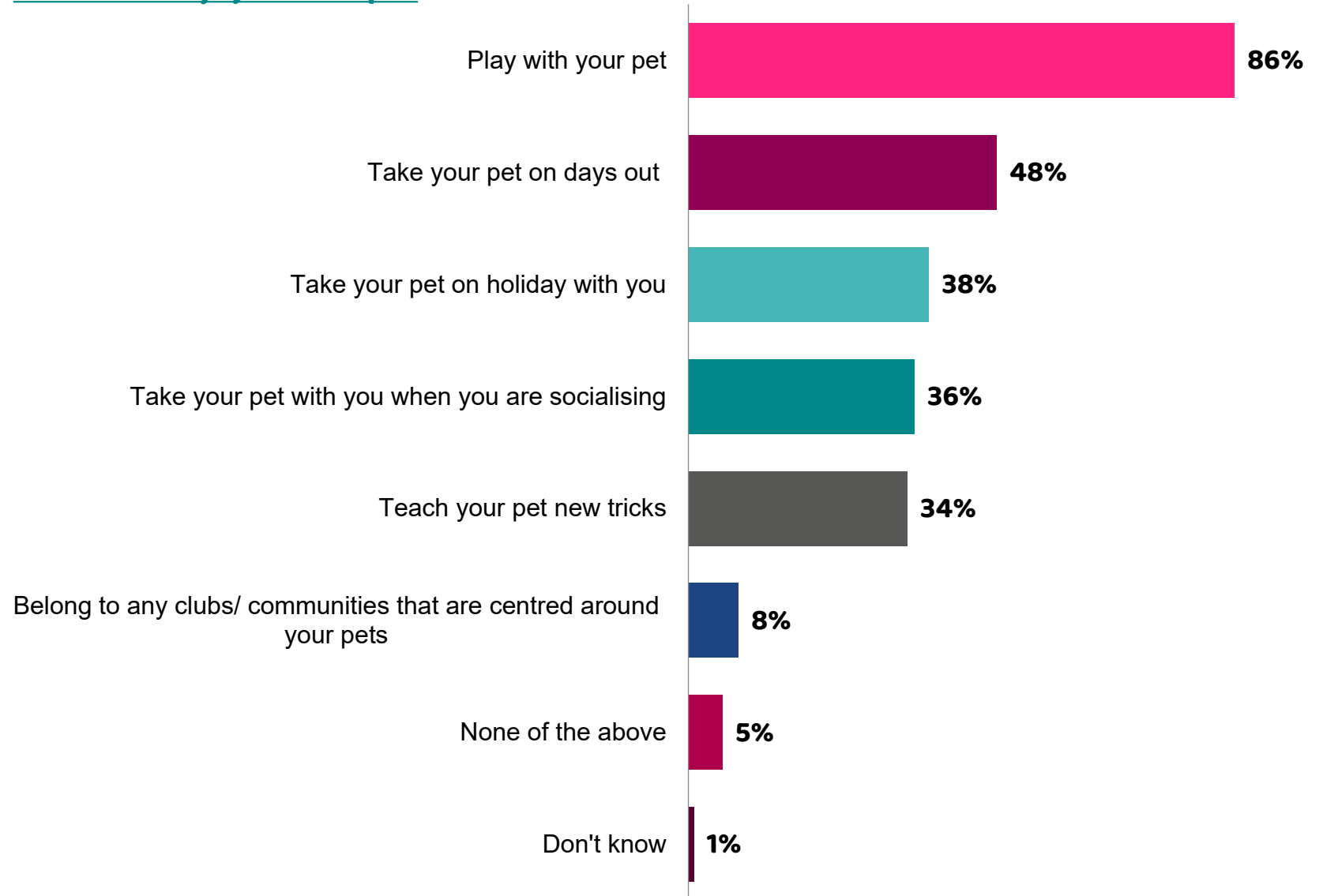
QRAB\_hops. Approximately how many hops can your rabbit do across the widest part of his/her living quarters? By living quarters, we are referring to the area of their hutch or other living space in which they spend their time when awake.  
Base: All rabbit owners (234)



## Nearly all pet owners say they like playing with their pet

- Dog and rabbit owners are more likely than cat owners to teach their pet tricks (**43%** dog owners, **37%** rabbit owners, **24%** cat owners).

### Activities enjoyed with pet



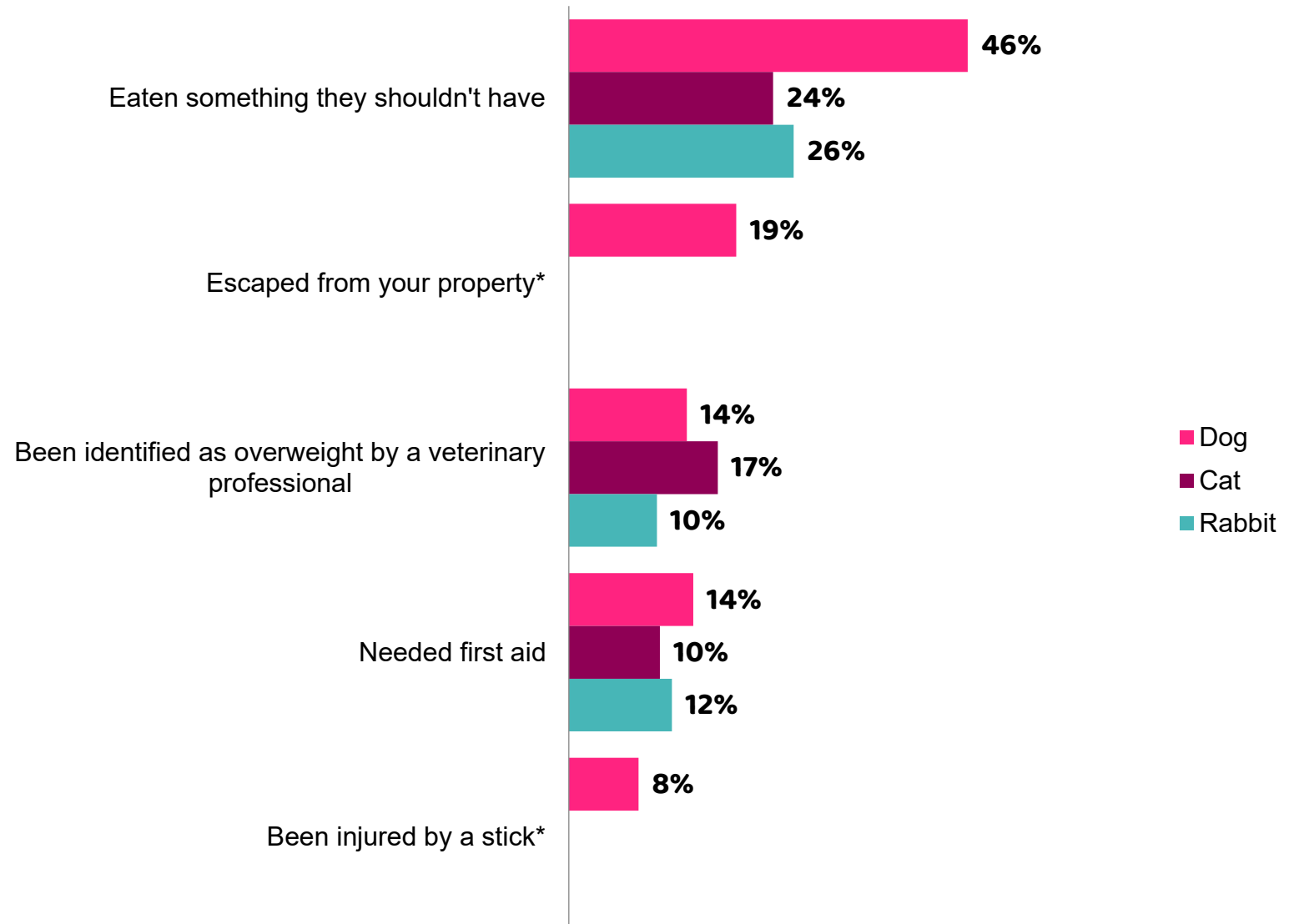
OT11\_N25. Which, if any, of the following do you like to do? (Please select all that apply)  
Base: All pet owners (5387)

# **Pet first aid/ health**

## A quarter of cat and rabbit owners report their pet eating something they shouldn't have

- Nearly half of dog owners report their pet eating something they shouldn't have, while cat owners are more likely to say their pet is overweight.

### Pet problems experienced



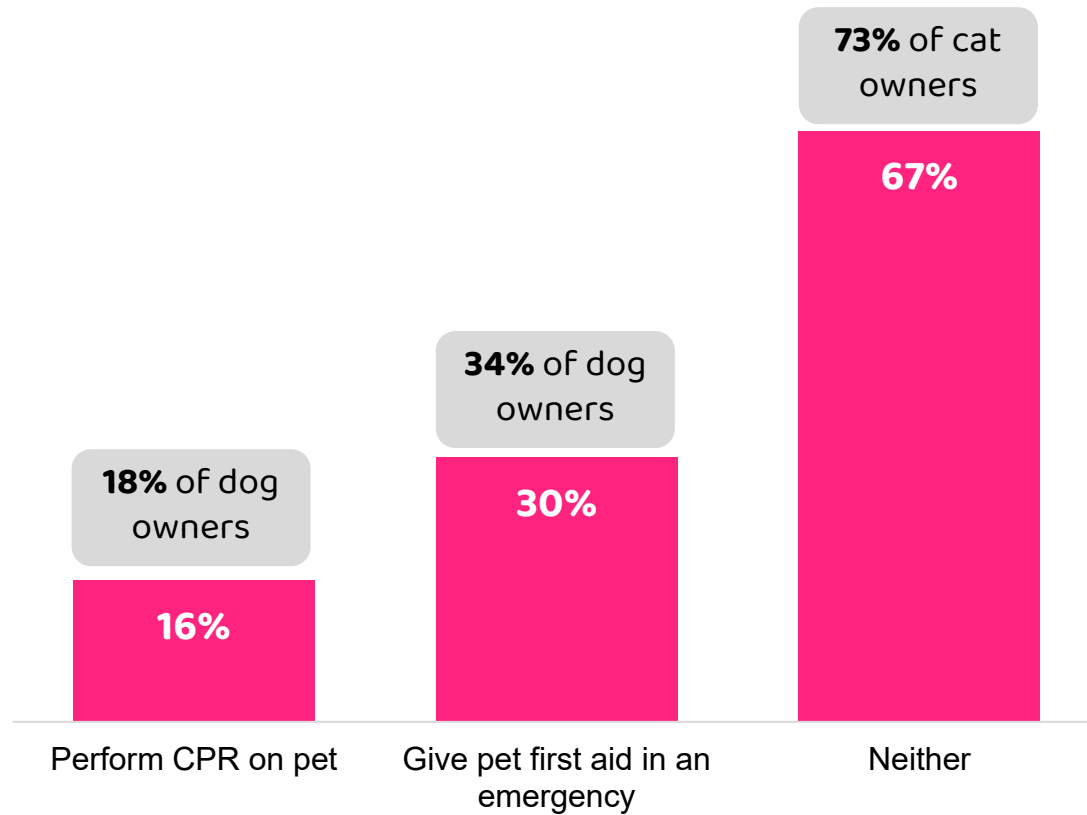
OT4\_N25. Which, if any, of the following apply to you? Please select all that apply.

Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2566; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

\*"Escaped from property" and "Injured by a stick" option only included for dog owners; 19% of dog owners say their pet has escaped, 8% of dog owners say their pet has been injured by a stick

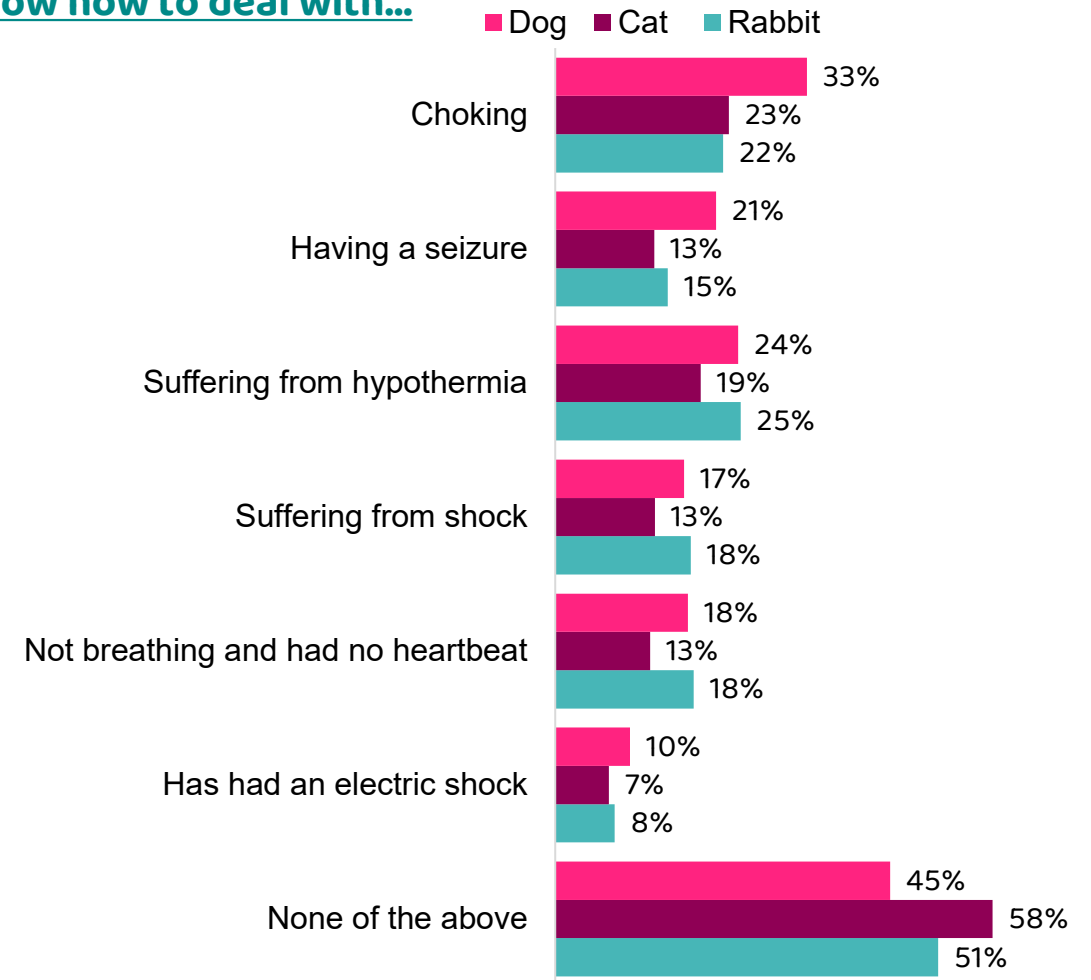
Overall, three in ten think they know how to give emergency first aid.  
But when asked about specific scenarios, most don't know what to do.

### Know how to give first aid/perform CPR...



OT1\_N25. Do you know how to do either of the following?  
Base: All pet owners (5387)

### Know how to deal with...



OT2\_N25. If a pet was experiencing the below, which would you know how to give pet first aid for? (Please select all that apply)  
Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2566; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

# Dog owners tend to be the most informed about how to protect their pets

- Except for the toxicity of plants – cat and rabbit owners are more likely than dog owners to understand which plants are toxic.

## Know how to protect pet

I know how to tell if it is too hot to take my dog for a walk\*

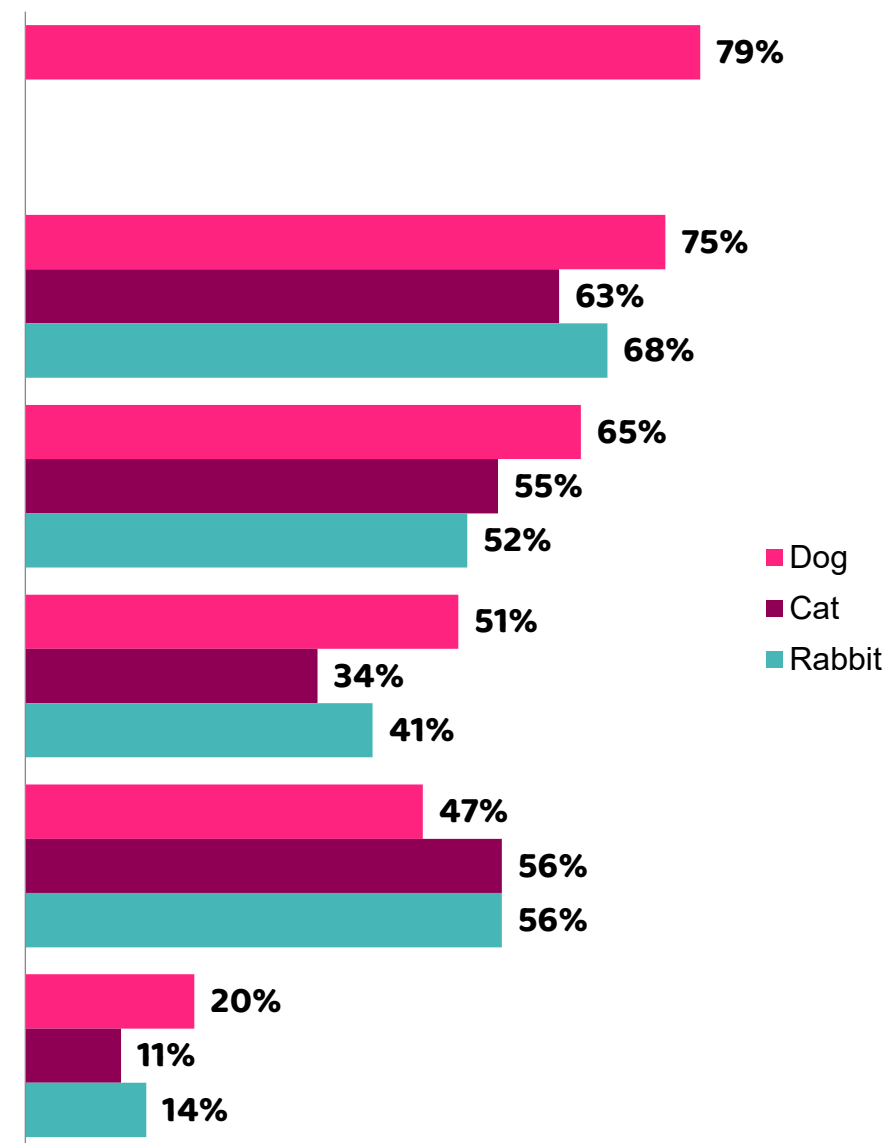
I know which foods are poisonous to pets

I know what to do if I saw a dog in a hot car

I know the signs of heatstroke in pets

I know which plants are toxic to pets

I own a pet first aid kit



OT3\_N25. Which, if any, of the following apply to you? Please select all that apply.

Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2566; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

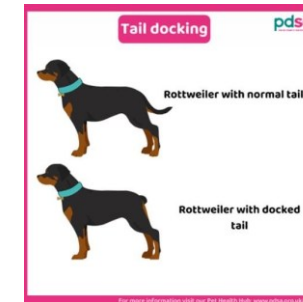
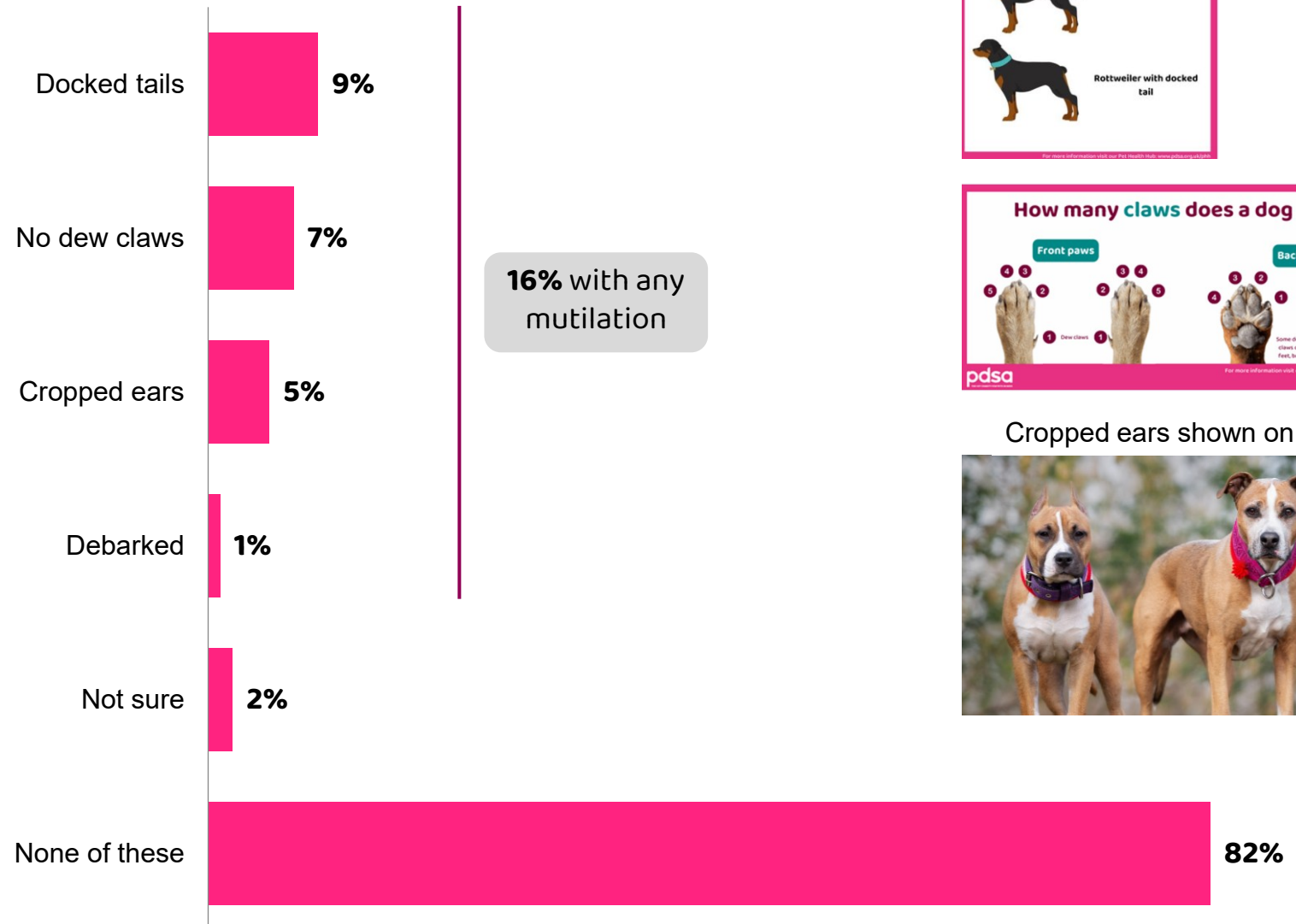
\*"Tell if it is too hot to take my dog for a walk" option only included for dog owners; 79% of dog owners report knowing how to do this

# Dog aesthetics

# One in seven reports that their dog has at least one type of listed mutilation

- Note: this is self-reported data. Pictures were provided to assist owners with an understanding of what each mutilation looks like.

## Dog mutilations

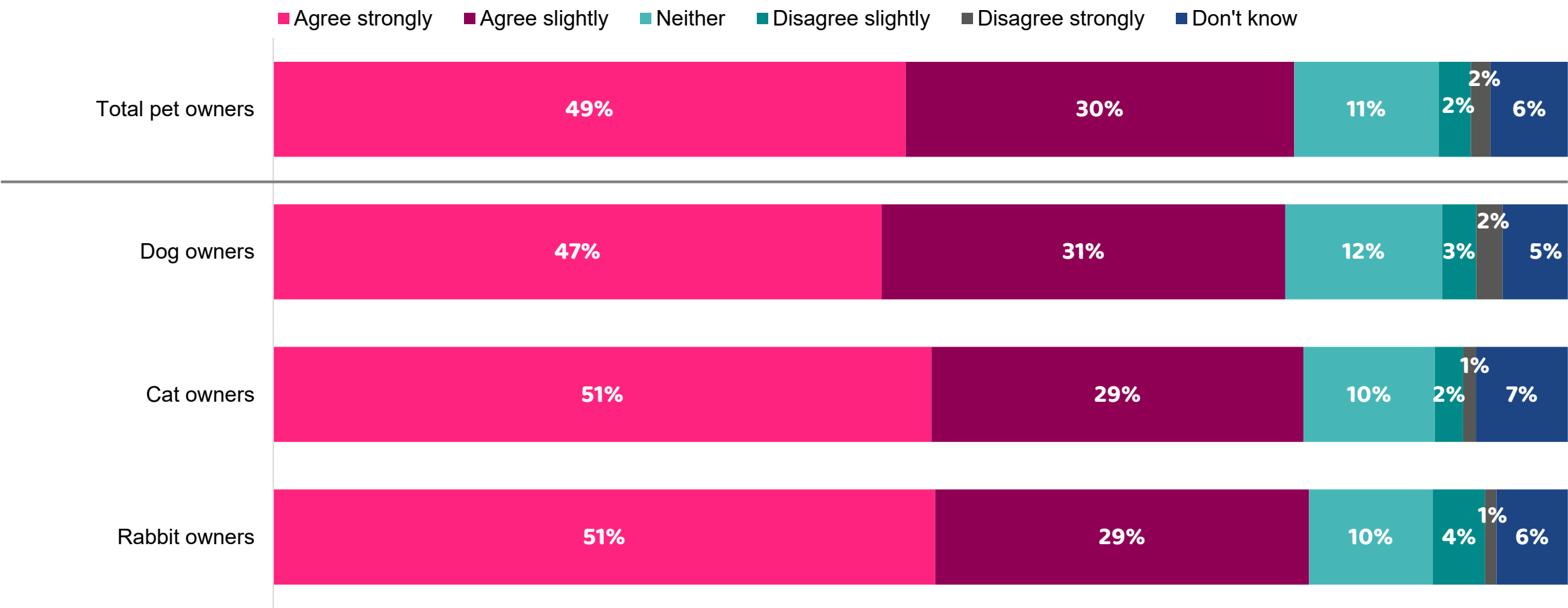


Cropped ears shown on left



The vast majority agree that a dog having a flat face negatively impacts their welfare, but dog owners are slightly less likely to strongly agree that this is the case.

Agreement that having a flat face negatively impacts a dog's welfare



ea1\_n25\_1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: - Having a flat face (e.g. breeds such as Pugs, French Bulldogs, English Bulldogs) negatively impacts a dog's welfare  
Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2566; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

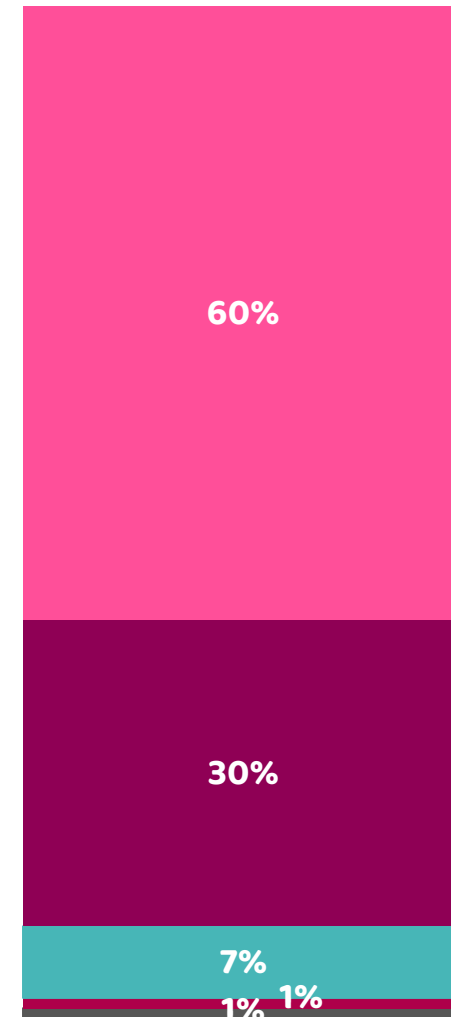


# Charitable giving and legacy

**A vast majority agree that a charity providing free veterinary treatment for those in financial hardship is important**

**Agreement that “a charity providing free and reduced cost veterinary treatment to the most vulnerable in society, is important in helping people and pets in times of financial hardship”**

- Agree strongly
- Agree slightly
- Neither
- Disagree slightly
- Disagree strongly
- Don't know/ Not applicable

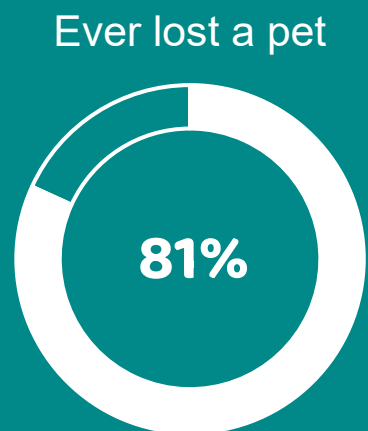


**90% agree**

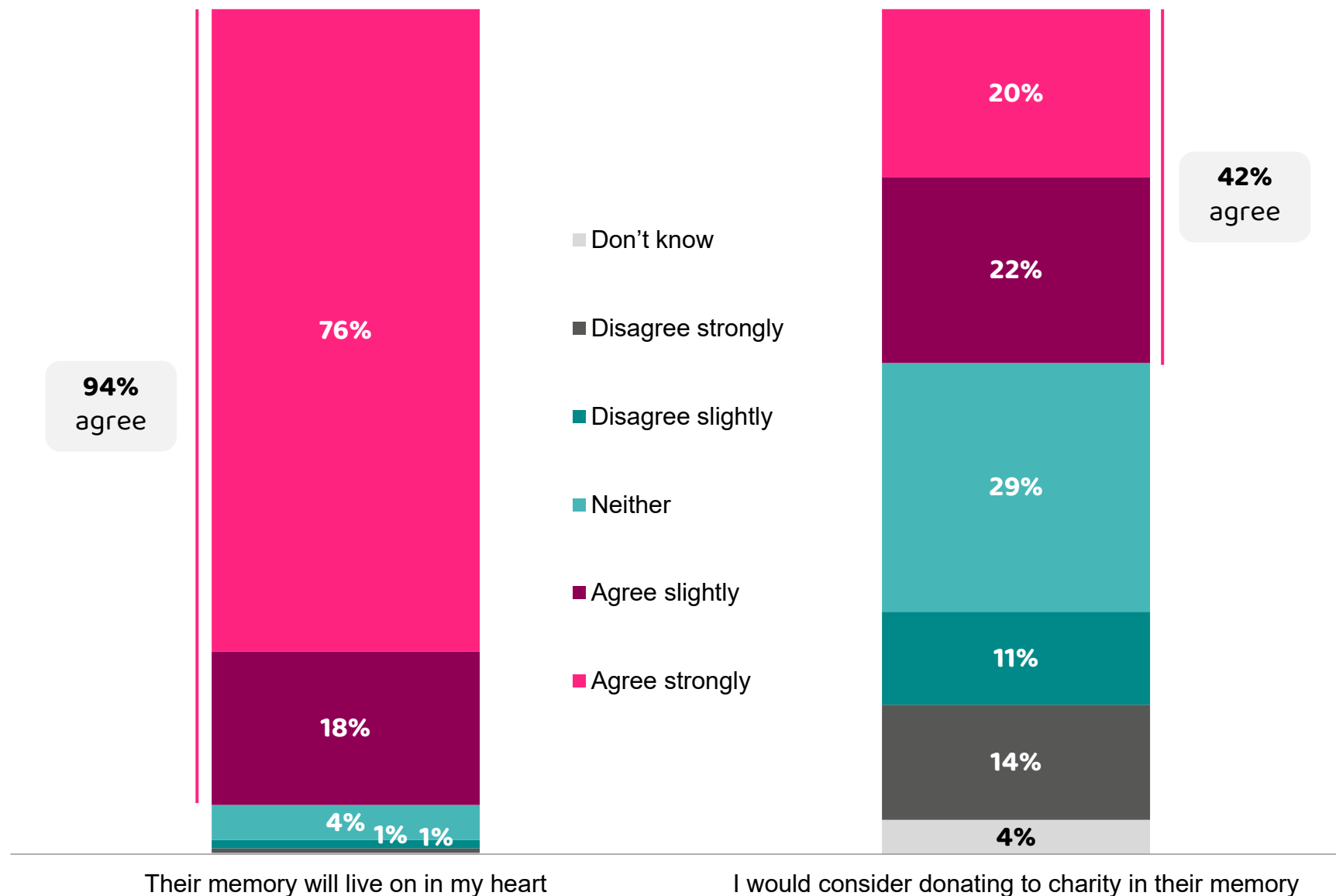
Dog and cat owners are more likely than rabbit owners to agree:

- Cat owners (**90%**)
- Dog owners (**90%**)
- Rabbit owners (**85%**)

While most agree that their pet's memory will live in their heart, a smaller proportion would donate to a charity in their memory.



### Agreement about statements



OT7\_N25. Have you experienced the loss of a pet?

Base: All pet owners (5387),.

OT8\_N25 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: All those who have lost a pet (4497)