



CATS^{*} Report UK • 2021

*Cats and Their Stats



Methodology

For the second year we have commissioned an external and independent agency, Basis Research, to conduct the research contained in this report. An online survey was used to collect information among a nationally representative audience of over 18s in the UK, allowing us to identify the proportion of cat owners in the UK. We also conducted a more detailed survey among cat owners. This was carried out between 8 March 2021 and 12 April 2021. 'In the last 12 months' within the report refers to the time period March 2020 to March 2021. Unless otherwise stated, comparative data in this survey uses data from CATS 2020.

The interviews consisted of a nationally representative sample of 3,585 and 6,352 cat owners. Cat owner regional boosts were also undertaken to total 1,269 in Scotland, 830 in Wales and 366 in Northern Ireland. Overall, 10,519 interviews were conducted*.

BASIS

* More information available upon request

Photo credit: all photos taken by Ciaran McCrickard unless otherwise stated.

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Welcome to the second annual Cats and Their Stats (CATS) UK[©] 2021

Welcome to CATS 2021 – the most comprehensive survey of cat owners undertaken in the UK.

This year's survey was conducted approximately one year after the start of the first lockdown, providing vital insight into how cats and their owners have fared, during this difficult period.

The popularity – and importance – of pets has been highlighted extensively this year, and CATS 2021 has found evidence for this, with an estimated 800,000 cats obtained as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and 88% of cat owners saying that their cat brings them joy.

It is fantastic that so many people are enjoying cat ownership; however, with over a million cats in the UK not yet registered with a vet, it also presents a number of welfare challenges that are explored within this report. This year, we have also taken an extensive look at the changing ways people are getting their cats and the sort of cats they are acquiring.

CATS 2021 provides an insight into cats' lives and wellbeing, and provides us a base to monitor whether the changes from COVID-19 represent a blip, or a wider change in our relationship with cats.

We want to make the world a better place for cats and having more data about them will allow us to help them and their owners more effectively.

Dr Maggie Roberts BVM&S MRCVS

Cats Protection Director of Veterinary Services





“CATS 2021 has found that 68% of cats and kittens purchased in the last year were found online. Online shopping has undoubtedly become a huge part of our lives – particularly during the pandemic.

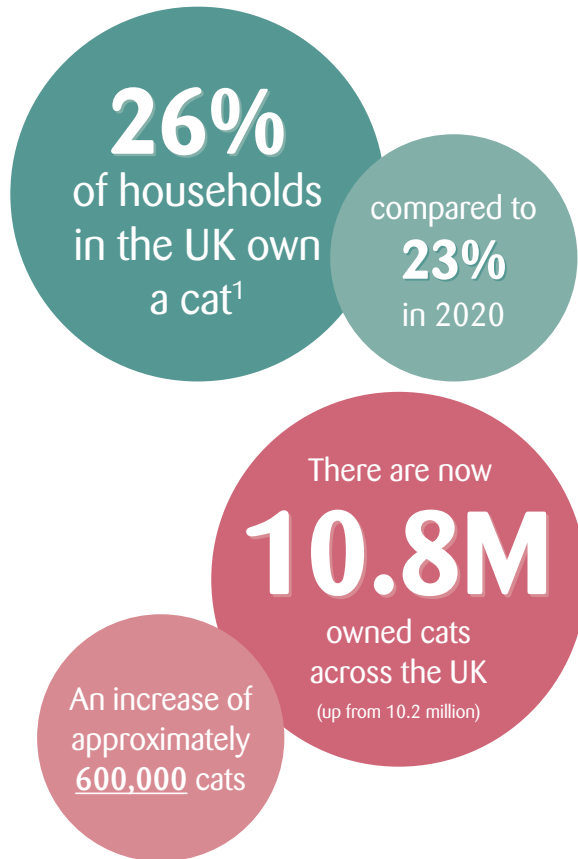
But when it comes to cats and kittens, buying online isn't without its risks. It is shocking how easy it is for unscrupulous sellers to operate online and put profit before kitten welfare. Consumers may sadly find themselves duped into purchasing kittens which are too young or sick, leaving them with high vet bills or, in some cases, a kitten which tragically dies. Cats Protection's work with government and extensive advice to consumers is vital to ensure potential cat owners get a healthy and happy pet and stamp out the mis-selling of pets.”

Deborah Meaden
Entrepreneur, TV personality and animal welfare campaigner



State of the nation

The number of households owning a cat in the UK has increased this year, particularly in England.



However, the average cats per household decreased from 1.6 to 1.5 cats in 2021 with 65% of cat-owning households having one cat and 35% owning two or more cats.

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

Base: Total UK market (n=3,585), Wales (n=181), England (n=3,009), Northern Ireland (n=108), Scotland (n=288).

Example calculation: 26% own a cat in the UK x 27.8m UK households** x 1.5 cats owned on average = 10.8m cats owned across the UK. **Source: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/datasets/familiesandhouseholds/familiesandhouseholds England regional breakdowns only. Sample size too small for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland regions.

Cat population and household cat ownership across the UK

Cat ownership levels vary across the UK ranging from 20% of households in Scotland owning one or more cat to 32% in Wales. England saw a significant increase year-on-year rising to 27% in 2021 from 23%.

	Owned cat population	
	In millions	% of cat-owning households
Total UK	10.8	26%
Scotland	0.7	20%
Wales	0.7	32%
Northern Ireland	0.2	22%
England	9.4	27%
East of England	1.1	27%
East Midlands	0.8	23%
Greater London	1.2	26%
North East England	0.4	25%
North West England	1.3	27%
South East England	1.7	28%
South West England	0.9	24%
West Midlands	1.0	27%
Yorkshire and the Humber	1.1	30%



Cat owners – families/households

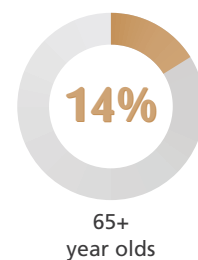
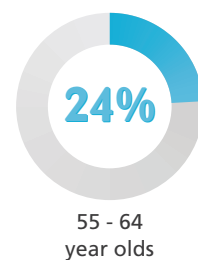
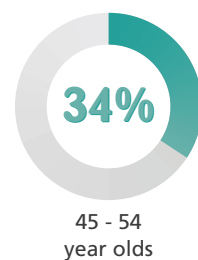
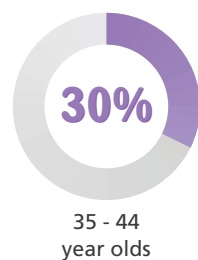
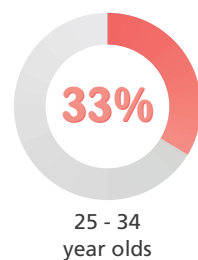
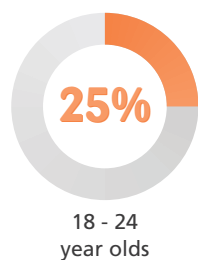
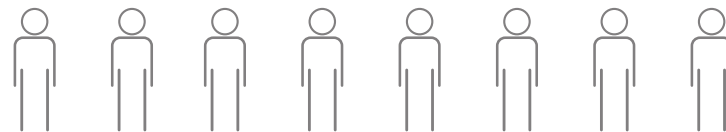
While we've seen increased cat ownership this year, the profile of owners remains broad – **there's no such thing as a typical owner.**

Profile of cat owners – gender, location, home status²

29%
of females in the UK
own a cat



24%
of males in the UK
own a cat



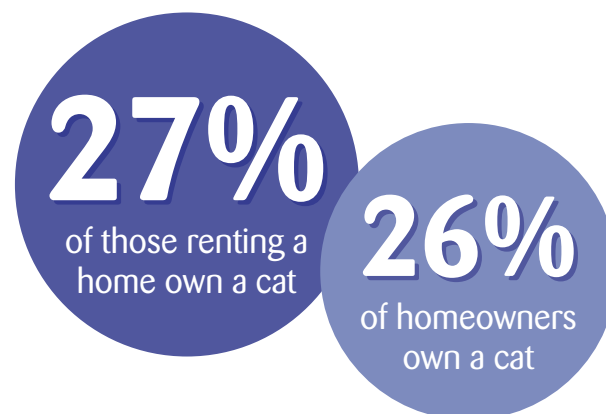
29% of residents in **rural** own a cat

28% of residents in **central urban** own a cat

26% of residents in **urban** own a cat

26% of residents in **suburban** own a cat

21% of residents in **semi-rural** own a cat



The pandemic has likely had a role to play in the increase in ownership, with a significant proportion of people getting a cat (or another cat) in the last 12 months. 15% of cat owners got at least one cat in the last year, 7% of owners acquired a cat directly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

² Question asked: Gender/age/region – 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?/When did you acquire your cat?/And now thinking about COVID-19 specifically in relation to your cat, which of the below, if any, apply to you?

Profile of cat owners

UK cat owners have a similar age profile to UK households overall, but are more likely to be younger. 89% of UK cat owners are under 65.

Those acquiring a cat in the last 12 months tend to be younger than the overall profile of cat owners with half (51%) aged 18-34 compared to one-third (33%) of all cat owners.

The age of cat owners compared to UK households³

	All cat owners	UK households	Those acquired in the last 12 months
18 - 24	12%	12%	20%
25 - 34	21%	17%	31%
35 - 44	20%	18%	21%
45 - 54	23%	17%	18%
55 - 64	13%	15%	6%
65+	11%	21%	4%

³ Question asked: Do you currently have a cat/s (that live with you)?/How many cats do you have in your household?



The cat market



COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns have had a significant impact on pet ownership, with increased demand and high prices being widely reported in the media.

CATS 2021 can now provide one of the most detailed looks at the cat market – where owners are getting their cats from; how they are finding their cats; the types of cats they are getting and where they are finding information about cats available.

Where are people getting cats from?⁴

Overall, the majority of cats are either adopted from a rescue/rehoming centre or animal shelter in the UK (25%) or taken on from a neighbour, friend or family (19%) or bought (28%).

This equates to a cat population where around

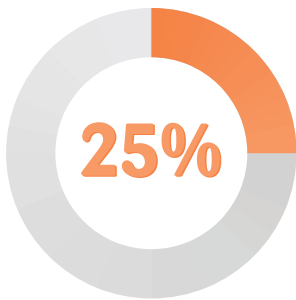
3.0M were purchased

2.8M were adopted

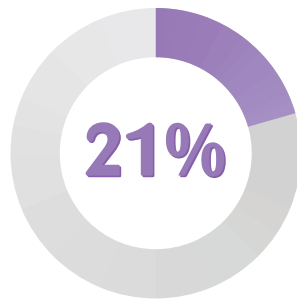
2.0M were taken on

(The additional 3m cats were acquired from other sources.)

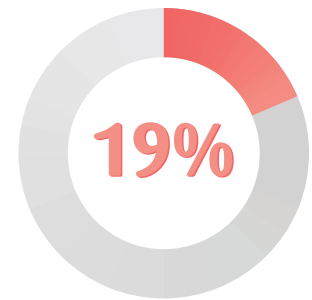
Where are people getting cats from?⁵



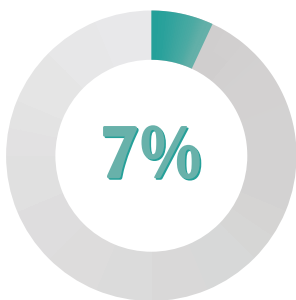
Adopted from a rescue/rehoming centre/animal shelter in the UK



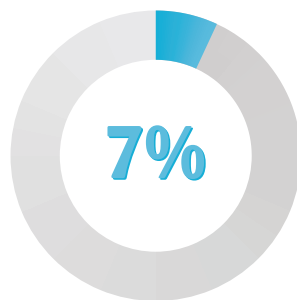
Bought (not a specialist breeder in the UK)*



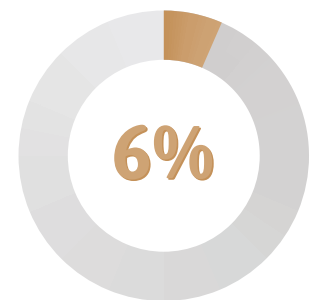
Taken on from a neighbour/friend/family



Bought from a specialist breeder in the UK



Found a stray and took them in



They were a kitten of a cat I already had

(The additional 15% of cats were acquired from other sources.)

⁴ Question asked: Where did you get/adopt your cat from?

⁵ ibid

* Bought (not a specialist breeder in the UK) = Bought from someone I didn't know (11%) + Bought from neighbour/family etc. (5%) + Bought from pet shop (4%) + Bought from specialist breeder overseas (1%).

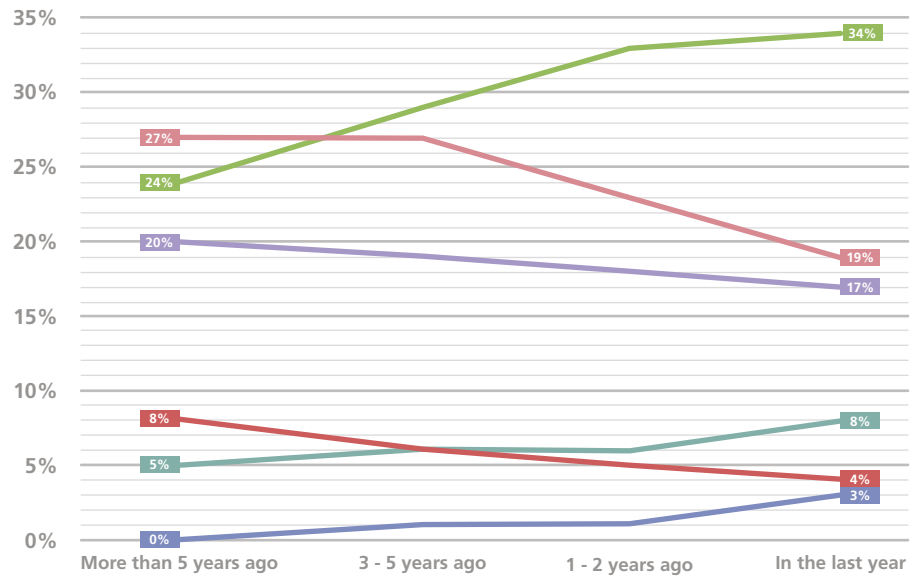


COVID-19 impact or changing trends?

Where are people getting cats from over time?⁶

(Main sources shown)

- Adopted from a rescue/ rehoming centre/animal shelter in the UK
- Bought
- Taken on from neighbour/friend/family
- Found as stray and took them in
- They were given to me as a gift
- Adopted from overseas charity



With many rescues, including Cats Protection, running at reduced capacity during lockdown, COVID-19 has had a major impact on where people are getting their cats from. Some of the most common sources of cat ownership have all fallen in percentage terms in the last year – with just 19% of cats being adopted from a rescue in the UK in the last 12 months compared to 27% of those that were obtained more than five years ago. The survey indicates that the percentage of cats being adopted is reducing while the percentage of those being bought seems to be on the rise – as it was prior to COVID-19. Whether this is a blip or a longer-term trend it will need to be monitored.

Over time a lower percentage of cats are being taken in as strays with a decrease from 8% of cats obtained more than five years ago to just 4% obtained in the last year.

We estimate from this data that, **in the last 12 months** 1.4 million cats were obtained.

500,000 purchased

300,000 adopted

200,000 taken on

(The additional 400,000 cats were acquired from other sources.)



We have also seen a rise in the number of cats coming from abroad. Of those cats obtained in the last year, this has increased significantly to 5% – which is equivalent to an estimated 70,000 cats that have been either adopted from overseas charities or bought from specialist breeders overseas.

⁶ Question asked: Where did you get/adopt your cat from?/When did you acquire (eg buy/adopt) your cat?

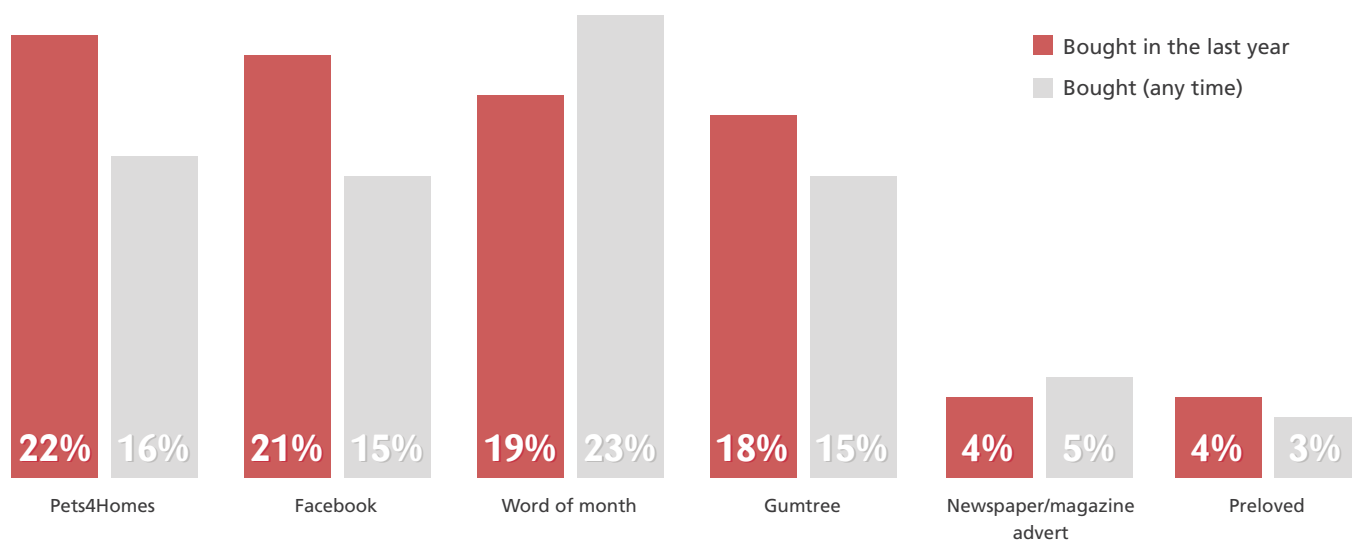
Photo credit: Gabriella Clare Marino.

How are people finding their cats to buy?

In the last year, possibly extended by the pandemic but also part of a wider trend, **the significance of word of mouth has fallen** and the top two options for finding a cat or kitten were online. In total – just **over half of all cats purchased (52%) were found online**, for those cats purchased in the last year this has increased to 68%⁷.

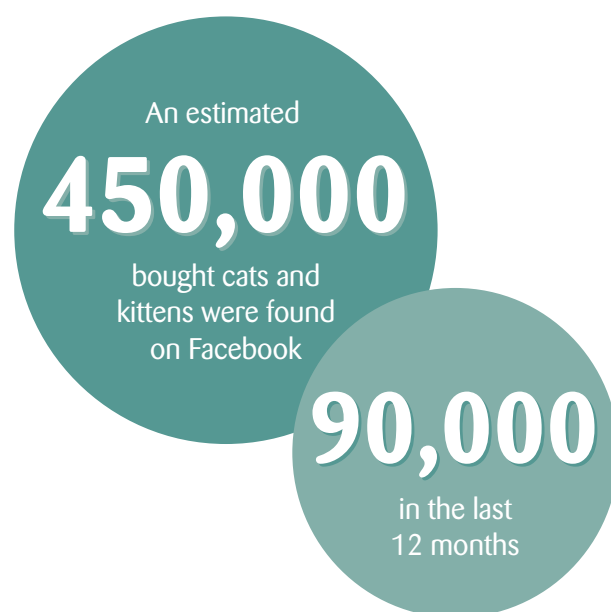
The Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) sets out minimum standards for the content of online adverts, for example banning the sale of pregnant or injured animals and the sale of kittens below eight weeks. Three of the sites specified below – Pets4Homes, Gumtree and Preloved – sign up to these minimum standards.

How did people find the cats they went on to buy?⁸



Facebook, which accounts for the source location of 15% of all purchased cats (equating to an estimated 450,000 cats) and over a fifth of the cats purchased between March 2020 and March 2021, is a social media network, not a classified advertising site. A statement from PAAG from September 2020 states: **'It is unlikely that Facebook could or would apply the PAAG minimum standards based on their current business model'**⁹.

Prior to this survey, it has been extremely difficult to quantify how many cats are actually being found on Facebook, but we now have valuable new data.



⁷ Question asked: And where did you find the cat or kitten you went on to buy/adopt?/When did you acquire (eg buy/adopt) your cat? Figure calculated through those selecting Pets4Homes, Facebook, Gumtree, Preloved and Other website.

⁸ Question asked: And where did you find the cat or kitten you went on to buy/adopt?/When did you acquire (eg buy/adopt) your cat? – filtered by bought cats.

⁹ www.paag.org.uk/news/position-statement-pets-advertised-on-facebook/

Facebook in focus

Between 2016 and 2017, Facebook took the decision to ban the sale of pets through its platform. Its current commerce policy states that 'listings may not promote the buying or selling of animals' and provides 'pets' and 'live animals' as an example of this policy¹⁰. Further, its community standards list 'live non-endangered animals, excluding livestock' as a regulated category – stating that 'content that attempts to buy, sell or trade live non-endangered animals between private individuals'¹¹ should not be posted.

However, Facebook does state that they 'allow businesses that sell other animals from a shop front or website'¹² – so being a business that sells pets is not a breach of the rules itself. In addition, Facebook does allow legitimate rescue charities like Cats Protection to promote the availability of cats through their platform.

Following Facebook's ban on pet sales, the percentage of purchased cats that were being found through the site did seem to drop – with 18% of cats purchased three to five years ago being found through the site compared to 16% of those obtained one to two years ago. However, according to cat owners, **a fifth of cats acquired in the last 12 months were found through Facebook**, equating to an estimated 90,000 cats and kittens¹³.

Even when accounting for those pets that may have been sold via businesses within Facebook's rules, or survey respondents that may have considered that clicking on a link to a classified website on Facebook was equivalent to 'finding their cat' through Facebook itself, the number of cats that owners tell us they found through Facebook is significant; this is a cause for concern. Our concern is that some people who use Facebook either to sell cats or signpost members of the public to sites through which cats are sold may put profit before welfare. Some unlicensed commercial sellers may be using Facebook, directly or indirectly, to sell sick or underage cats. In the UK those who sell cats on a commercial basis are required to have a licence to do so from local authorities. We are concerned that some of those who use Facebook, either directly or indirectly, to sell cats on a commercial basis may not be licensed to do so.

While cat and kitten adverts on some classified sites can be publicly viewed and scrutinised, the scale of Facebook and the ability for sellers to use closed groups and private messages allows little to no scrutiny of pets being offered for sale through the site.

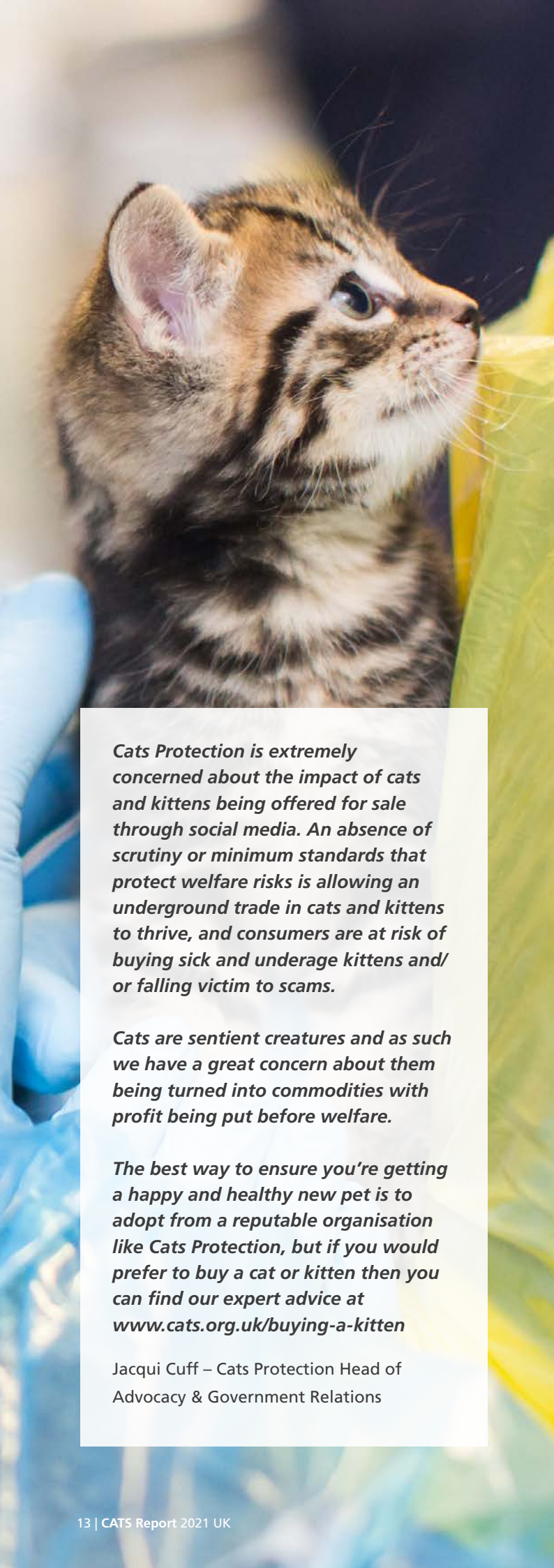
¹⁰ www.facebook.com/policies_center/commerce/animals

¹¹ www.facebook.com/communitystandards/regulated_goods

¹² Text displayed when reporting an ad on Facebook.

¹³ Question asked: And where did you find the cat or kitten you went on to buy/adopt?





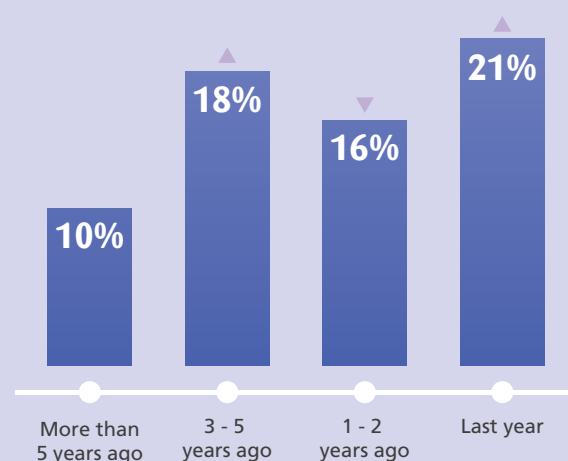
Cats Protection is extremely concerned about the impact of cats and kittens being offered for sale through social media. An absence of scrutiny or minimum standards that protect welfare risks is allowing an underground trade in cats and kittens to thrive, and consumers are at risk of buying sick and underage kittens and/ or falling victim to scams.

Cats are sentient creatures and as such we have a great concern about them being turned into commodities with profit being put before welfare.

The best way to ensure you're getting a happy and healthy new pet is to adopt from a reputable organisation like Cats Protection, but if you would prefer to buy a cat or kitten then you can find our expert advice at www.cats.org.uk/buying-a-kitten

Jacqui Cuff – Cats Protection Head of Advocacy & Government Relations

Percentage of purchased cats that were found on Facebook over time¹⁴



Where are people getting cats from on Facebook¹⁵

Just under half of cats purchased that were found on Facebook were from an individual unknown to them, but not a specialist breeder according to the owners¹⁶.

Worryingly, owners told us that a small percentage (4%) of purchased cats that were found on Facebook at any time were purchased from a 'specialist breeder overseas'. The practice of buying cats from overseas gives rise to concern and is an issue Cats Protection is monitoring.

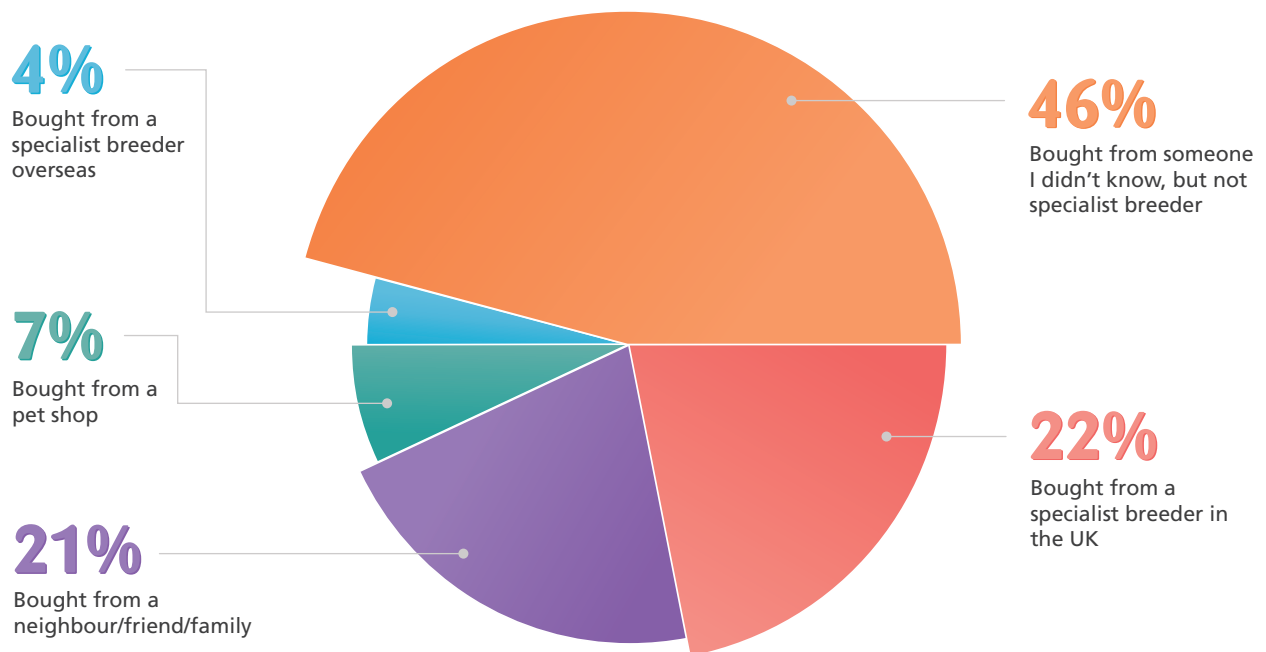
Little is known about the international cat trade, but posts on Facebook do exist offering 'worldwide shipping'. Cats Protection is concerned about this indication of an international trade in cats: cats don't travel long distances well, travelling is stressful to cats and there is a risk that kittens from abroad may be bred in a poor welfare environment if countries have low animal welfare standards.

¹⁴ Question asked: And where did you find the cat or kitten you went on to buy/adopt?/When did you acquire (eg buy/adopt) your cat? – filtered by bought cats.

¹⁵ Those surveyed answered 'Facebook' to 'And where did you find the cat or kitten you went on to buy/adopt?' and purchased the cat, by 'Where did you get/adopt your cat from?'

¹⁶ Please note – figures in this section are for all purchased cats found on Facebook, which includes data prior to the ban on pet sales being introduced.

Where are purchased cats found on Facebook bought from? (at any time)



What types of cats do people have?

Moggy v pedigree

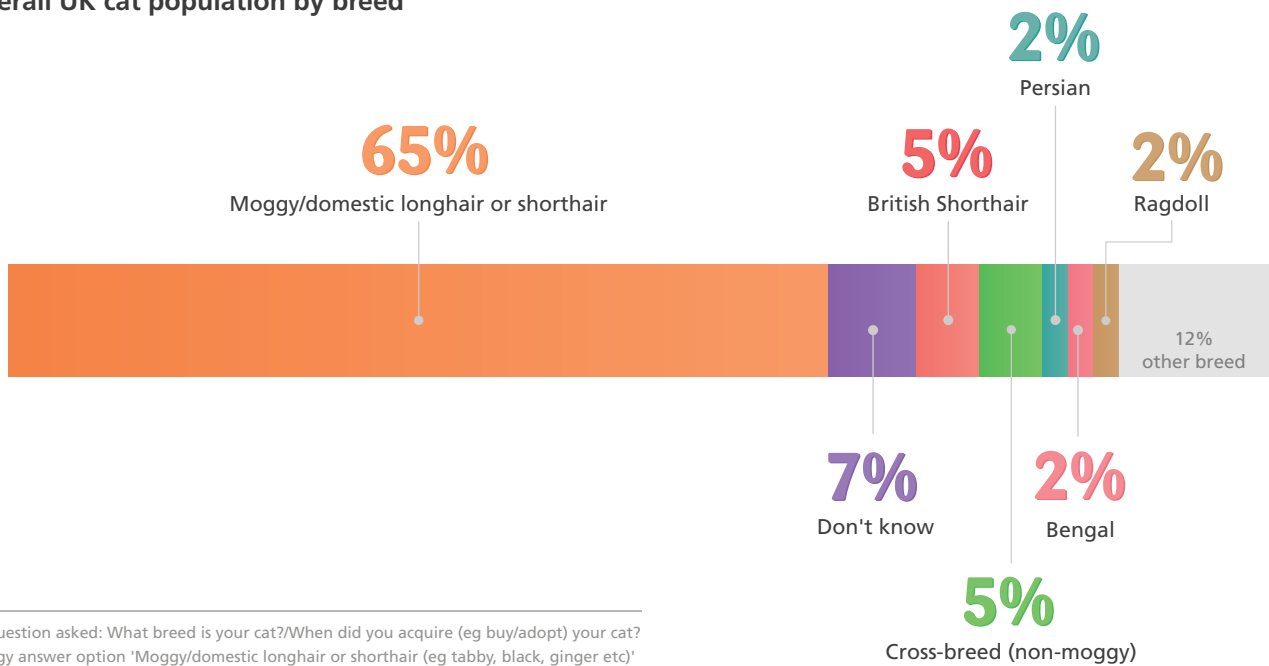
65% of owners in the UK identify their cats as moggies, 23% as pedigrees and 5% as cross-breeds.

There appears to be an increasing trend towards pedigree cats – of the cats obtained more than five years ago, 74% were moggies compared to just 51% in the last year.

Percentage of pedigrees, moggies and cross-breeds obtained over time

	Total pet cat population	Cats obtained in the last year	Cats obtained 1-2 years ago	Cats obtained 3-5 years ago	Cats obtained more than 5 years ago
Moggy/domestic longhair or shorthair	65%	51%	55%	65%	74%
Pedigree ¹⁸	23%	36%	31%	23%	16%
Pedigree with paperwork ¹⁹	13%	25%	19%	12%	6%
Pedigree without paperwork ²⁰	10%	12%	12%	11%	9%
Cross-breed (non-moggy)	5%	6%	6%	6%	5%
Don't know	7%	7%	8%	7%	6%

Overall UK cat population by breed



¹⁷ Question asked: What breed is your cat?/When did you acquire (eg buy/adopt) your cat? Moggy answer option 'Moggy/domestic longhair or shorthair (eg tabby, black, ginger etc)'

¹⁸ 'Pedigree' includes those selected from a list or, if none of these were suitable, an open text field was available – this has been filtered for any clear non-pedigree cats.

¹⁹ ibid

²⁰ ibid

Breed certification

Only those cats with official paperwork (certificate from breed association) can be truly classed as pedigree cats.

Paperwork, registered with a cat fancy or pedigree registration body guarantees the authenticity of the pedigree cat an owner has purchased. Where pedigrees have been registered, the cat's lineage as well as evidence of any genetic testing required to check for inheritable diseases from both parents, will be available. This ensures the cat has been bred from parents free from disease which otherwise could negatively affect both the health and welfare of the individual cat.


Definitions

A **pedigree** is a specific breed of cat produced through selective breeding, with both parents being of the same breed – the cat would be registered with a governing body and their ancestry recorded.

A **cross-breed** is produced through breeding with different breeds – for example two pedigrees or a pedigree and a moggy.

A **moggy** is produced through non-selective breeding and is neither a pedigree nor a cross-breed.





Selective breeding to maintain recognised breeds unfortunately often comes at a cost to the cat. Due to the repeated and constant selection of certain traits, the chances of undesirable and often harmful genetic abnormalities being expressed is increased. So, despite being many times more expensive than a moggy – pedigrees can face more health conditions, and in some cases have a significantly lower quality of life.

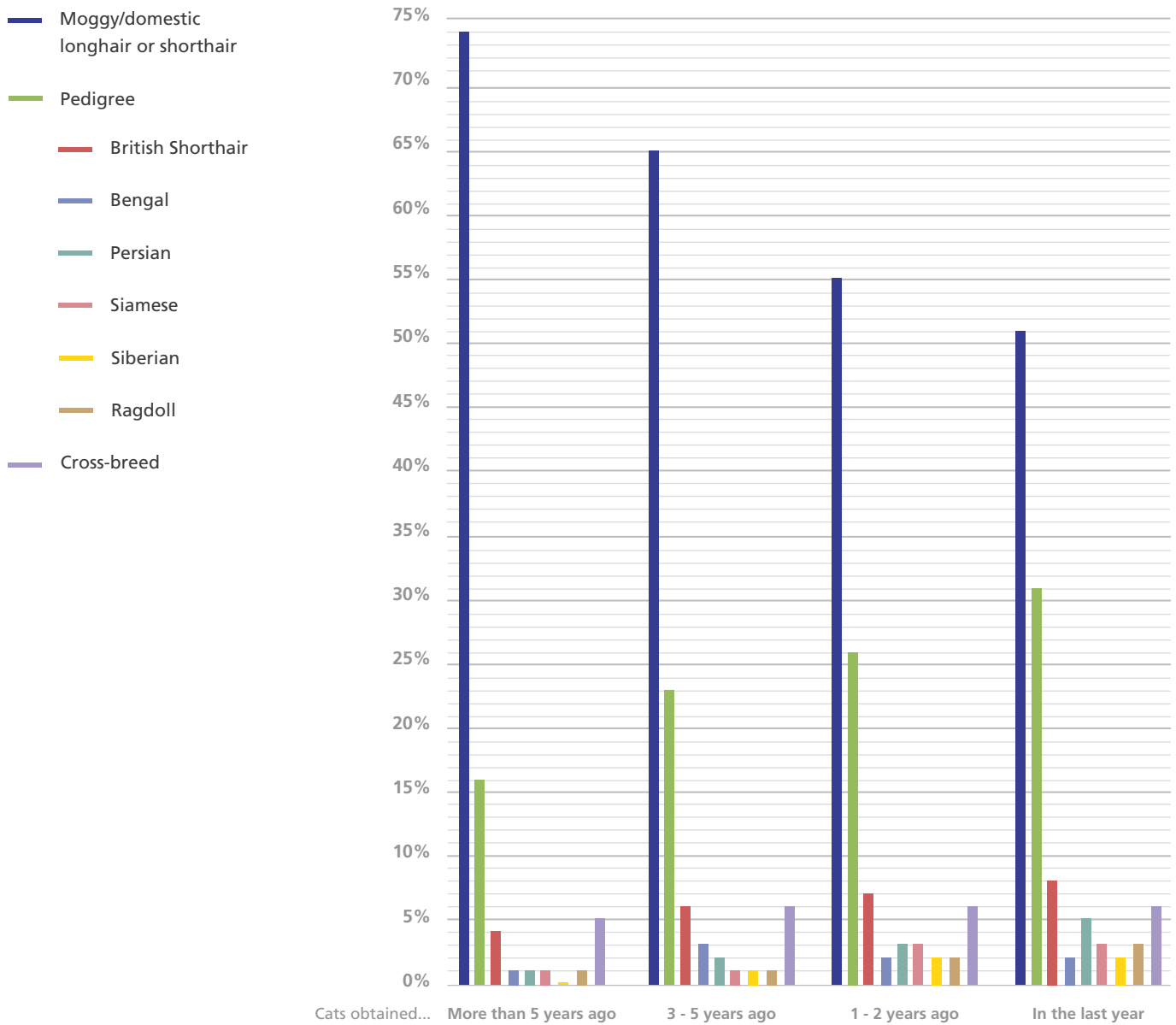
For example, both British Shorthairs and Persians are prone to health problems due to being brachycephalic or flat-faced. They can suffer not only from breathing difficulties due to their short muzzle and small nostrils, but also related eye problems, skin infections and can have difficulty eating. In addition, Persians have very long, fine coats which can mat easily, making it difficult for the cat to groom themselves.

It is important to ensure that consumers are aware of the potential health conditions of the – often very expensive – cats they are purchasing and that trends for a particular breed of cat don't come at the expense of cat welfare.

Sarah Elliott – Cats Protection Central
Veterinary Officer

Popular breeds in the UK

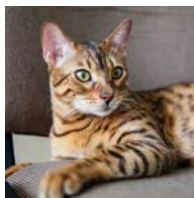
Top reported breeds (according to owners)



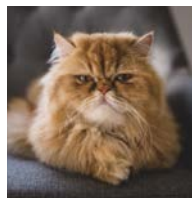
British Shorthair



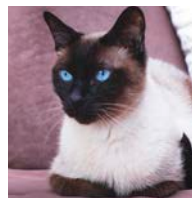
Bengal



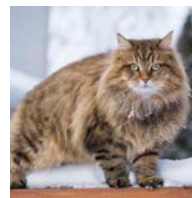
Persian



Siamese



Siberian



Ragdoll



The general shift towards pedigrees has continued – with two breeds in particular, **British Shorthairs** and **Persians**, increasing in popularity.

Photo credit (left to right): lisegagne, Alex Potemkin, FluxFactory, Xesai, marieclaudelémy and Julia Gomina.

Where are people finding information about available cats?

The top places where cat owners looked when they decided to get their cat were rescues and animal shelters (26%). There is some variation across the age ranges – with younger people much more likely to be looking online at sites such as Pets4Homes (25%) and Facebook (24%), compared to just 4% for both platforms for the older (55+) group²¹.

Why are people buying or adopting from the source they choose?

Cat owners were asked why they chose the source they did for obtaining their cat, including those that adopted and purchased their pet.

Falling in love with a photo or video of those cats is a top reason across these sources – more so for those cats found via Facebook or a classified website. Owners that went with a rescue or shelter website predominantly wanted to support the charity – but even here 19% simply fell in love with a photo or video of a cat.

Ease of getting a cat and the quickest way to get a cat also factor into the top reasons owners selected a specific pet, again with both of these reasons being particularly prevalent among those buying through a classified site or Facebook.

For those owners who ended up getting their cat via word of mouth, nearly a quarter (24%) were doing so to help out a friend and 17% did so because the cat was free.

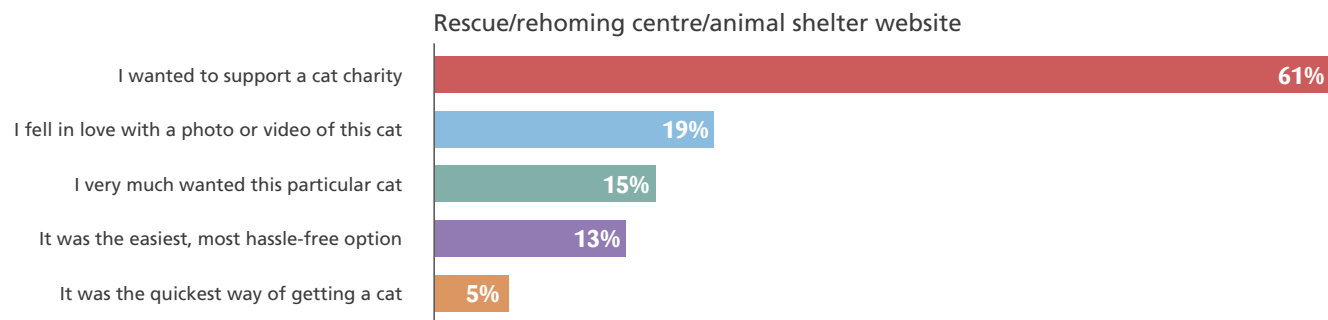
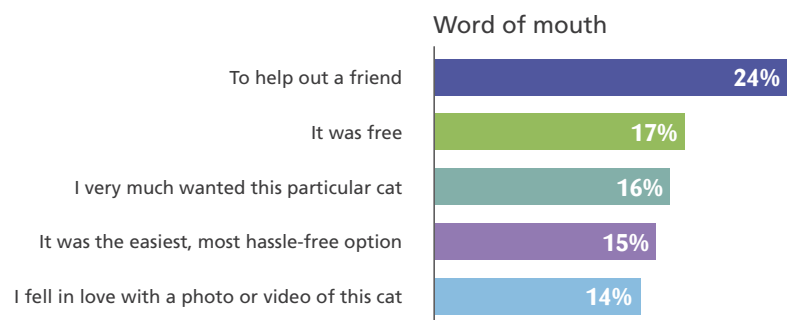
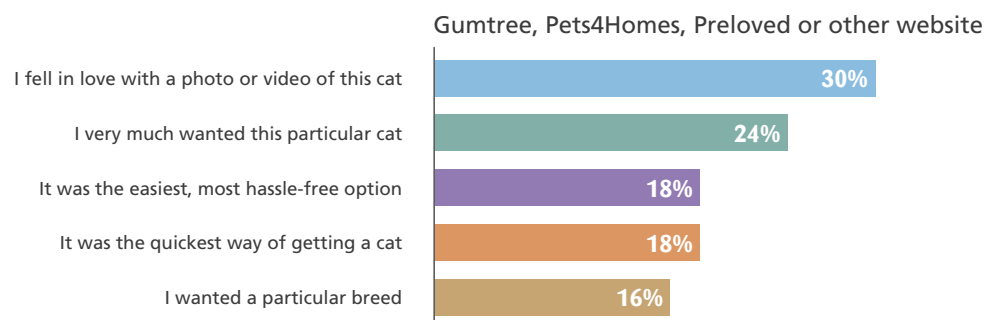
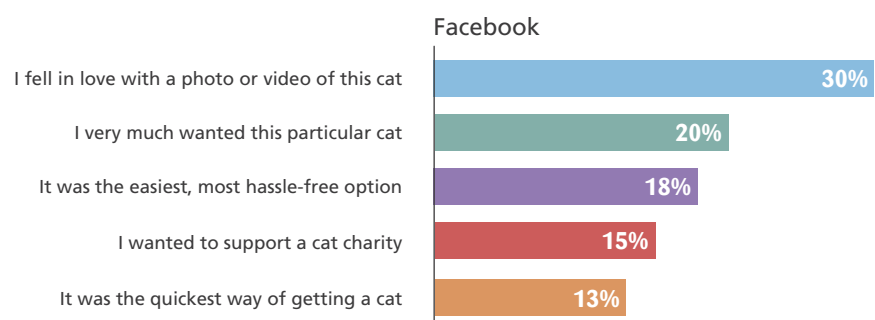


It is important to ensure owners are taking the prospect of getting a cat seriously – a number of cat owners are simply going for what they perceive to be the quickest option. While it is difficult to not simply fall in love with a certain cat, it is important to ensure you have done your research; particularly if an owner is looking at a specific breed that may have additional needs or long-term health complications.

Sue Dobbs – Cats Protection Bridgend Adoption Centre Manager

²¹ Question asked: Which of the following sources did you use to look for a cat before you bought/adopted them? by age group.

Top five reasons why owners ended up buying/adopting their cat/kitten from a particular source²²



²² Question asked: Why did you end up buying/adopting your cat/kitten from this source?

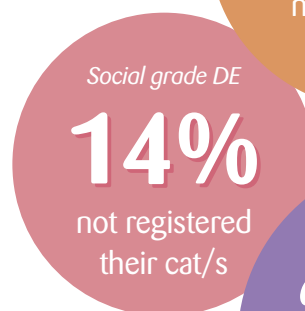
Veterinary care – how well are we caring for our cats?

Vet visits²³

There is no change this year on the number of cats registered with a vet, remaining at 89%. This means approximately **1.2 million cats are not registered** with a vet. Vet registration is lower for **male owners**, those in the **North West**, **social grade DE** and those **unemployed**. This is a multifactorial and complex issue that needs tackling.

Older owners (55+) are more likely to visit the vets routinely than younger owners. Social grade is also a factor with ABC1C2 significantly more likely to visit routinely than DE – those in lower social grades may therefore need more support around regular vet visits.

The cats that have routine vet visits are less likely to exhibit stressed behaviours.



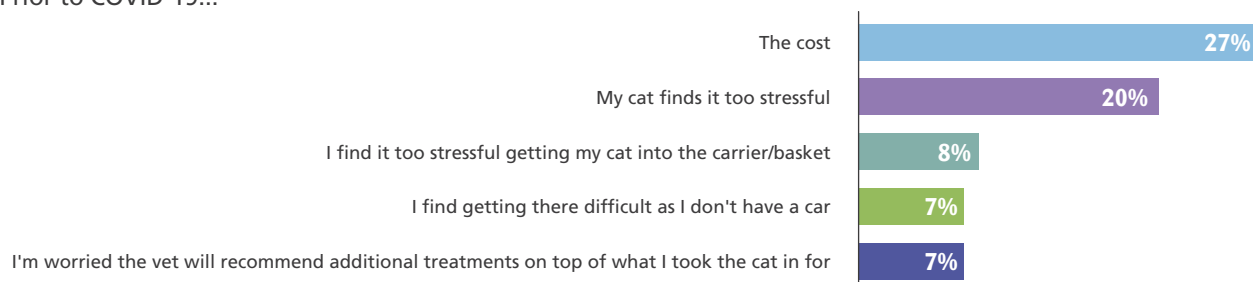
Approximated social grade is a socio-economic classification and has six categories A, B, C1, C2, D and E. It applies to every UK household and is based on determining the employment category of the main income earner in a household.

²³ Question asked: Is your cat registered with a vet?/Which of the following best describes how often you tend to go to the vet?

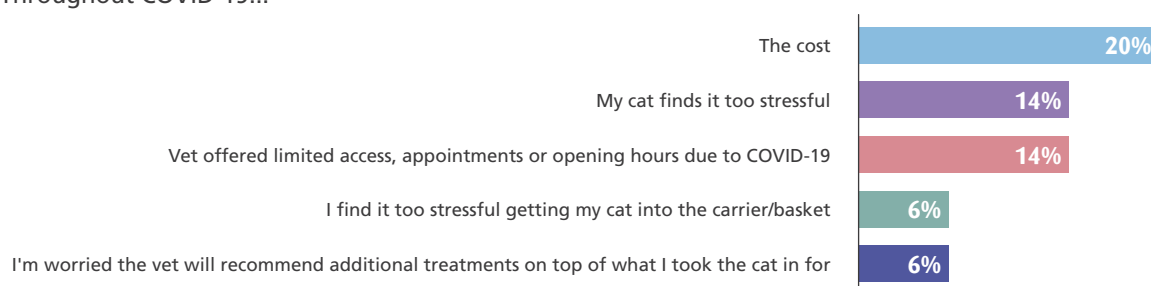
Top five reasons for not visiting vet before and during pandemic²⁴



Prior to COVID-19...



Throughout COVID-19...



The top five reasons for not visiting the vet in CATS 2020 had exactly the same percentages for all but the top reason: the cost. It seems the expense of vet visits is less of a concern this year compared to last year. Although it was still the top reason for owners not going to the vets as often as they'd like before COVID-19, this **dropped from 33% to 27% in 2021.**

A small percentage of **owners are worried that vets will sell them treatments they did not go in for** and this is a barrier for some (7%). This may be a common misconception or be true. In either case reassurance is needed from the veterinary profession to ensure this sector of cat owners are not risking their cats' welfare.

Owners also state that their cats find going to the vets too stressful (20%).

²⁴ Question asked: Which of the following, if any, prevents you from taking your cat to the vet as often as you might like to?/Again, thinking now just about the last year, which of the following, if any, prevented you from taking your cat to the vet as often as you might like to?



The COVID-19 effect on vet visits

While nearly all cat owners claim to visit the vet under normal circumstances, the pandemic has seen a fall in those going for their annual visit. Whereas 55% of owners say they usually go for a routine visit to the vet every year, this falls to 47% doing so during the past year of the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning approximately 5 million cats are not routinely visiting the vet.

Interestingly, the concern over costs reduced during the pandemic but **14% of all cat owners said they are not going to the vets as often as they would like, the reason they didn't go was due to limited vet access due to COVID-19.** The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) survey in March 2021 stated that only 16% of practices were providing business as usual²⁵.



Visiting the vets can be stressful for cats – their response to this stress can make examining and treating them challenging. Making the vet practice a cat-friendly environment can greatly improve a cat's overall experience and reduce their stress levels. Supporting owners to train their cat to be comfortable with the cat carrier, and by making simple changes such as the regular use of synthetic pheromones, gentle handling techniques and providing the cat with somewhere to hide while at the clinic, can all help to make a cat's visit a more positive, less stressful experience.

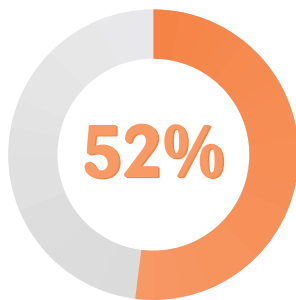
Daniel Cummings – Cats Protection Behaviour Officer

²⁵ www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/coronavirus-economic-impact-on-veterinary-practice-6/

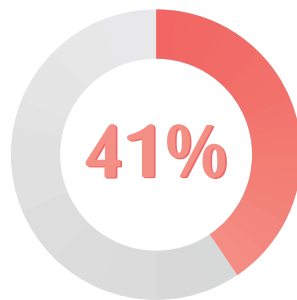
Insurance²⁶

The reducing concern over vet costs coincides with an increase in the proportion of owners who have pet insurance (43% up from 40%). This uplift in pet insurance is being driven by younger cat owners (age 18-34) with a significantly higher proportion (52%) insuring their cat compared to other age groups.

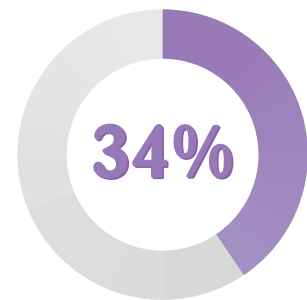
Cat owners taking out insurance



18 - 34



35 - 54



55+

Vaccinations

69%²⁷ (7.5 million) of owners say their cat is up to date with their vaccinations compared to last year (72%). This may be linked to the limited access to vets during COVID-19. 8% of owners say their cat (0.9 million cats) has not received vaccinations altogether with a further 16% (1.7 million cats) not having their cat's vaccinations up to date.

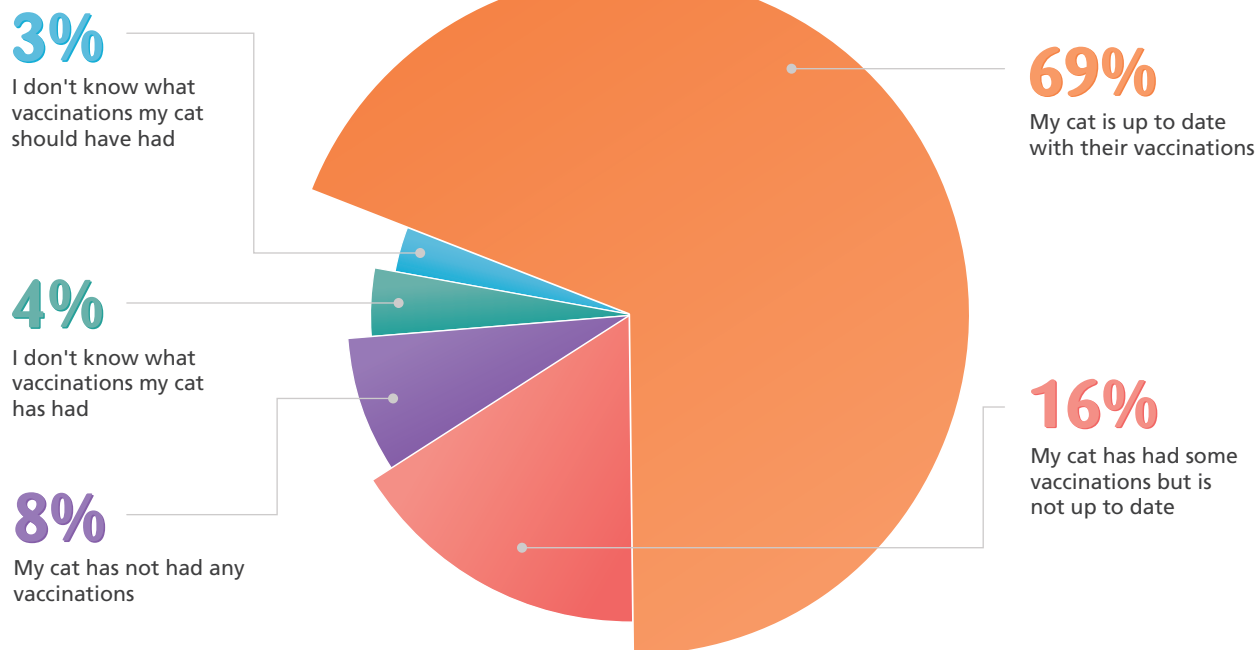
A further 7% of owners (0.7 million cats) say they either don't know what vaccinations their cat has had or don't know what vaccinations their cat should have had. This suggests up to 3.3 million cats are not benefiting from the protection routine vaccinations can offer.



²⁶ Question asked: Do you have pet insurance for your cat?

²⁷ Question asked: Is your cat up to date with their vaccinations (ie has had their booster vaccinations as relevant to their age)?/Is your cat neutered/spayed?

How owners reported their cat's vaccination status



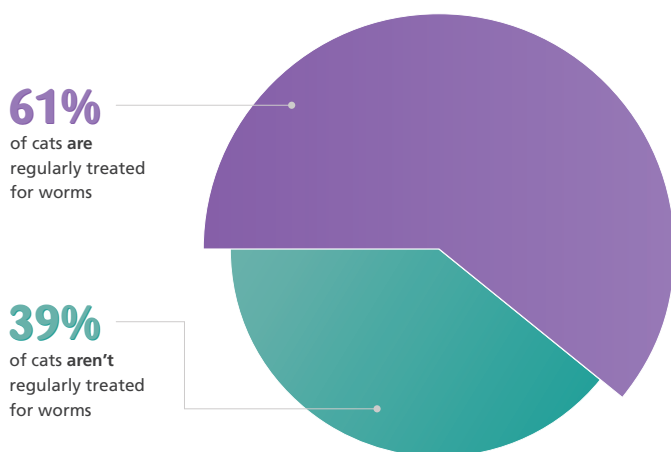
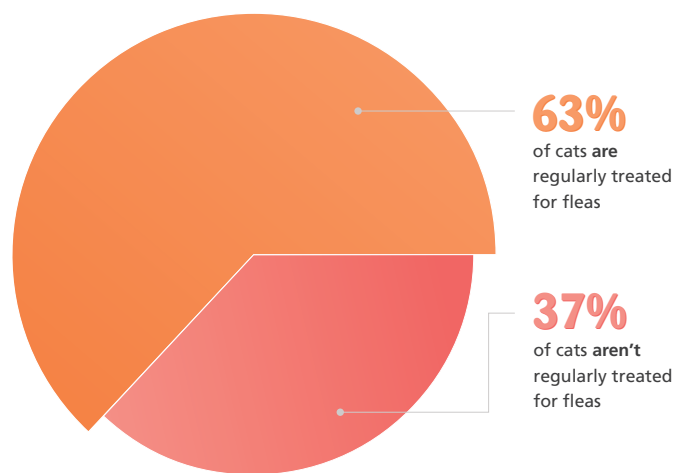
Those in the lower social group C2DE are less likely to have vaccinations up to date (35% not up to date compared to 28% of owners in ABC1).

Moggies are less likely to be up to date with their vaccines – 68% are up to date, compared to 75% of pedigree cats.

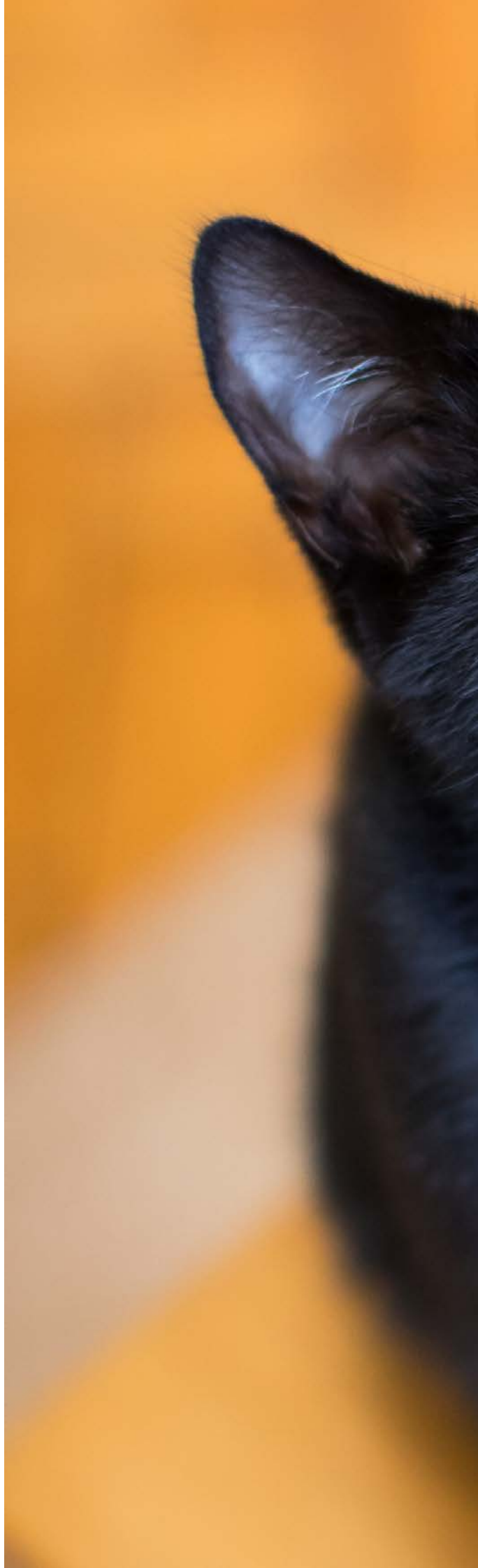
Preventative treatments²⁸

Despite the challenges of the past year, largely owners continue to say they are up to date with preventative veterinary treatments for their cat. Owners are continuing to use worming and flea treatments at similar levels to last year, with no significant differences as a result of COVID-19. Over a third of cats are not regularly treated for fleas and worms – 37% of owners are not regularly treating for fleas and 39% are not regularly treating for worms – but nearly half of owners that are not regularly treating for fleas and worms, do treat their cats when they see parasites present (16% for both fleas and worms).

Cats not regularly treated for fleas or worms



²⁸ Question asked: How often do you tend to protect your cat from fleas?/How often do you tend to protect your cat from worms?



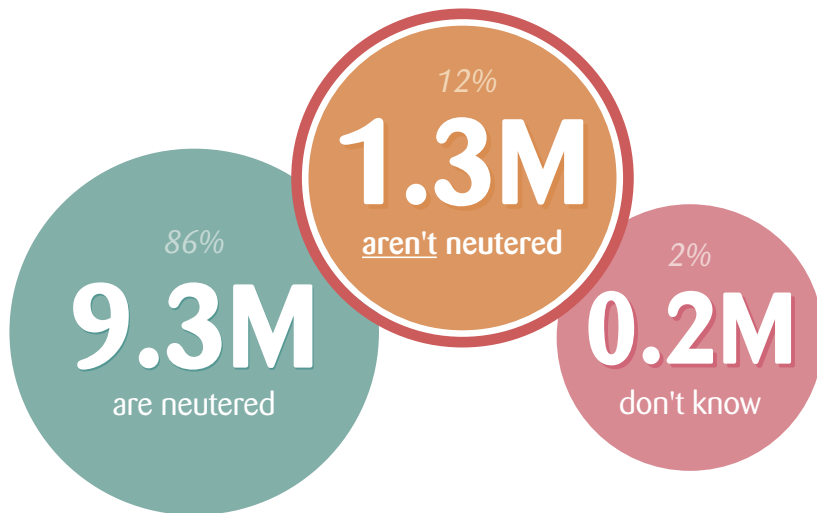


Treatment for fleas and worms should be tailored to an individual cat based on their exposure to fleas and worms and the subsequent risk. Cats Protection therefore recommends preventative treatment in accordance with the European Scientific Counsel for Companion Animal Parasites (ESCCAP) guidelines for all cats.

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

Neutering²⁹

Limited access to vets during COVID-19 may also account for the small reduction in cats being neutered (86% down from 88%). The proportion of cats that are neutered is lower among cats acquired in the past year compared to all cats owned – 63% are neutered and 32% aren't (5% don't know).



The cats less likely to have been neutered

Younger cat owners are significantly less likely to have neutered their cat. 18% of 18-34 year olds have not neutered their cat, compared to 11% of 35-54 year olds and 3% of those aged 55+.

Indoor-only cats are less likely to be neutered (vs cats who have access to both indoors and outside).

Geographically in the UK, those living in the North West (16%), Greater London (15%), East Midlands (14%) and North East (14%) are less likely to neuter. Those living within urban areas are also less likely to have a cat that is neutered.

Of concern are the 1.3 million unneutered cats. We know from the owners we surveyed that only 2% or 0.2 million cats were under six months of age at the time of the survey, indicating a substantial number of cats are remaining unneutered after they have reached puberty. All unneutered female cats over four months of age are at risk of accidental pregnancies and unwanted litters of kittens³⁰. There is some positive news as despite the pandemic and limited access to vets, the number of cats neutered under four months of age has increased from 22% to 24%, a welcomed increase in uptake of pre-pubertal neutering by the veterinary profession.

²⁹ Question asked: Is your cat neutered/spayed?

³⁰ Survey of the characteristics of cats owned by households in the UK and factors affecting their neutered status. JK Murray, MA Roberts, A Whitmarsh and TJ Gruffydd-Jones. Veterinary Record (2009) 164, 137-141.



Alongside providing subsidised neutering vouchers to owners in need, Cats Protection is a founding member of CatKIND, a collaboration of welfare organisations promoting pre-pubertal neutering of cats at four months of age. CatKIND is calling for all vets to take up pre-pubertal neutering to help reduce the number of accidental and unwanted litters of kittens born each year. Vets can help by joining the Kitten Neutering Database.

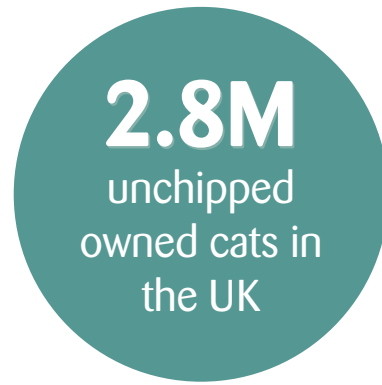
Jane Clements – Cats Protection
Head of Neutering

www.kind.cats.org.uk

Microchipping

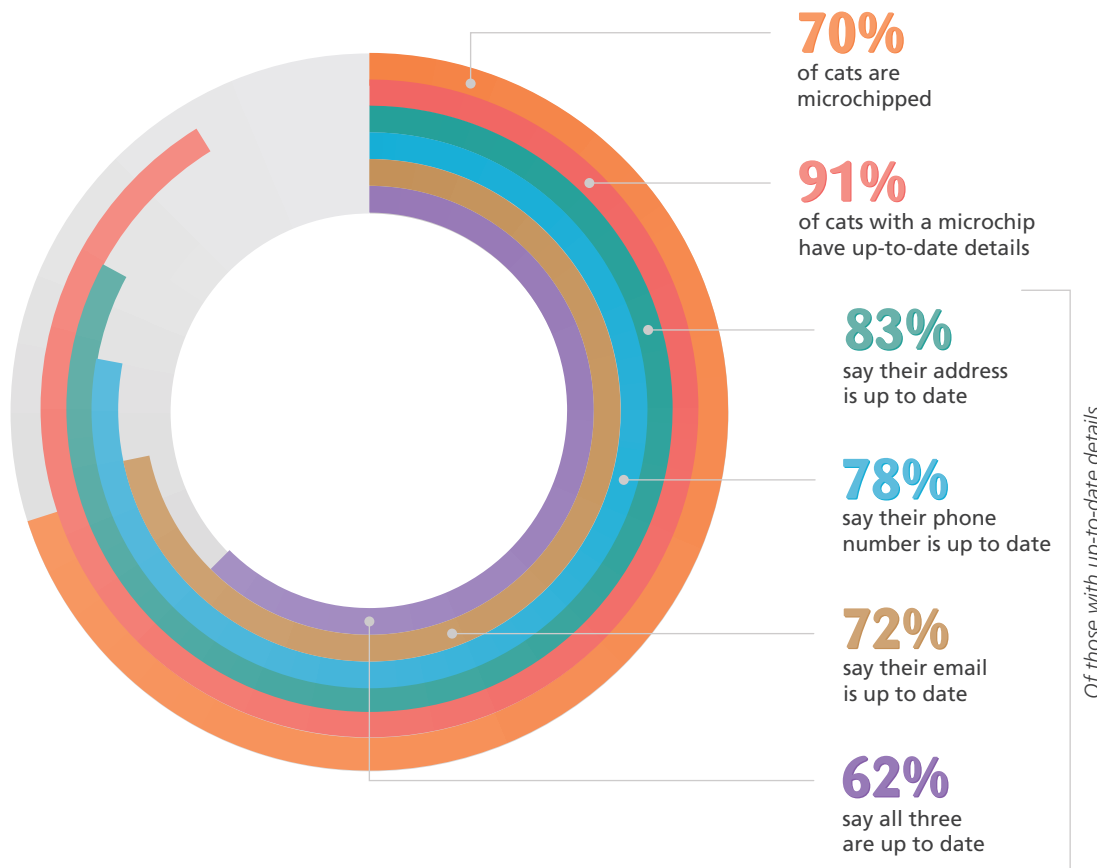
Overall, the proportion of cats who are microchipped is similar to last year – 7.6 million cats (70%) are microchipped and 2.8 million cats (26%) are not microchipped and 4% stated they didn't know if their cat was microchipped³¹. For the cats acquired during the pandemic the proportion microchipped drops to 60%.

Reassuringly, a high number of owners tell us their cat's microchip has up-to-date contact details (91% or 6.9 million cats³²). This means in most circumstances a lost or injured cat's owner will be contactable. However, only 62% of owners say all three of their address, telephone and email address are up to date.



The younger 18-34 age group are more likely to not have their cat microchipped (32% vs 26% of those aged 55+), or fail to keep the microchip details up to date (12% vs 6% of those aged 55+). The social group C2DE are less likely to have their cat microchipped (65% vs 74% of ABC1s) and might therefore need some support with microchipping.

Microchips – and keeping details up to date



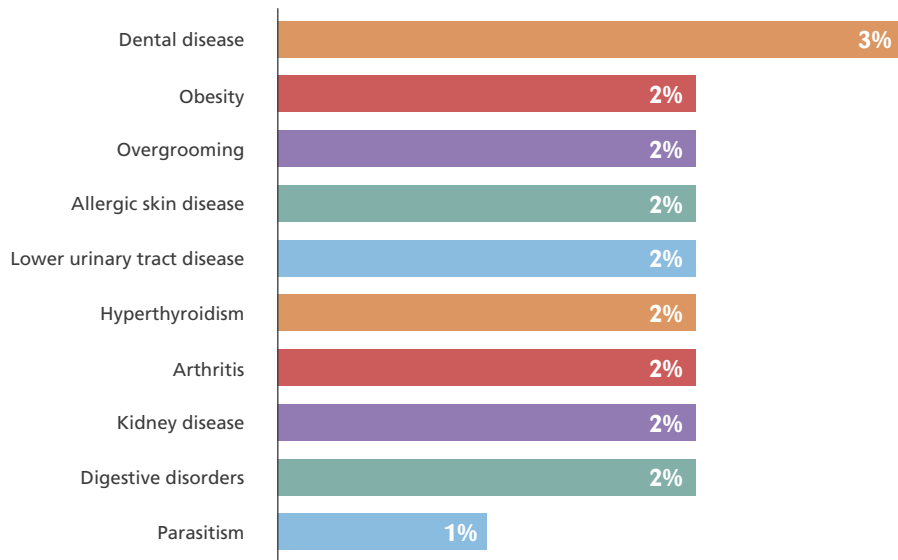
³¹ Question asked: Is your cat microchipped?

³² Question asked: Are your cat's registered microchip details up to date?/Which of the following microchip details are up to date?/Which of the following microchip details are not up to date?

Health and diet

The nation's cats remain healthy with the number of diagnosed health conditions remaining level with last year. The majority of owners (79%) say their cat has no health conditions³³. Of the 18% of owners that said their cat does have a health condition, dental disease ranks the highest at 3%.

Top 10 health conditions

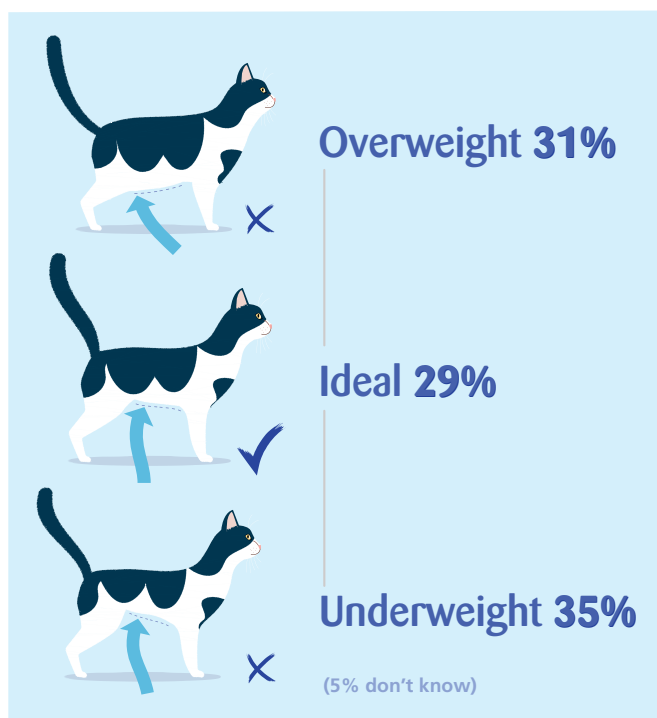


³³ Does your cat have any of the following diagnosed health issues/conditions?



Owners are no more likely to think their cat is overweight³⁴ than last year – 31% say they think their cat is overweight, with 29% saying they are an ideal weight and 35% saying they are underweight. Although a third of owners consider their cats to be heavier than ideal, there is still a small proportion of owners who don't know the body condition of their cat (5%) – vets think 44% of cats are overweight or obese³⁵, so there currently appears to be some disparity between owners' perceptions and data collected from vets³⁶.

A cat's body condition³⁷



The older age group of owners (55+) are more likely to say their cat is overweight. Interestingly, despite health concerns which may come with ageing cats, elderly cats (aged 11+) are more likely to be overweight (34%). However, the 55+ age group are more likely to have elderly cats which may go some way to explaining why more elderly cats are considered overweight by their owners.



17% of owners said they gave more treats due to the COVID-19 situation, particularly younger owners.

The age and body condition of cats

	Underweight	Ideal	Overweight
Kitten (0-6 months)	54%	26%	12%
Juvenile (7-11 months)	50%	27%	19%
Adult (1 yr to 10 yrs 11 months)	35%	30%	31%
Elderly (11+ yrs)	33%	27%	34%

The proportion of cats their owners consider to be overweight is higher among those that don't go to the vet regularly (33%). One reason for this could be due to the lack of regular weighing and feeding advice which takes place as part of regular visits to a vet.

It seems spending more time at home with their cats has not only seen owners playing with their cats more but also spoiling them more. 67% of owners say they spoil their cat which is up from 64% last year.



For the first time we asked owners whether they sought out support from a charity or a food bank to help them care for their cats – 3% did during the pandemic³⁸.

34 Owners self-selected their cat's body condition having seen picture prompts and descriptions based on the Purina body condition tool.

35 In Chapter 4, Basic requirements for good behavioural health and welfare in cats by I Rochlitz, p36 in BSAVA Manual of Canine and Feline Behavioural Medicine, DF Horwitz and DS Mills. 2nd Ed, p36 Published by BSAVA, Woodrow House, Gloucester.

36 Ref: PFMA Obesity Report 2019. www.pfma.org.uk/_assets/docs/White%20Papers/PFMA-Obesity-Report-2019.pdf

37 Question asked: Which of the following descriptions and images would you say best reflects your cat in relation to their size?/To what extent do you agree with the following statements about having cat/s?/ And now thinking about COVID-19 specifically in relation to your cat, which of the below, if any, apply to you?

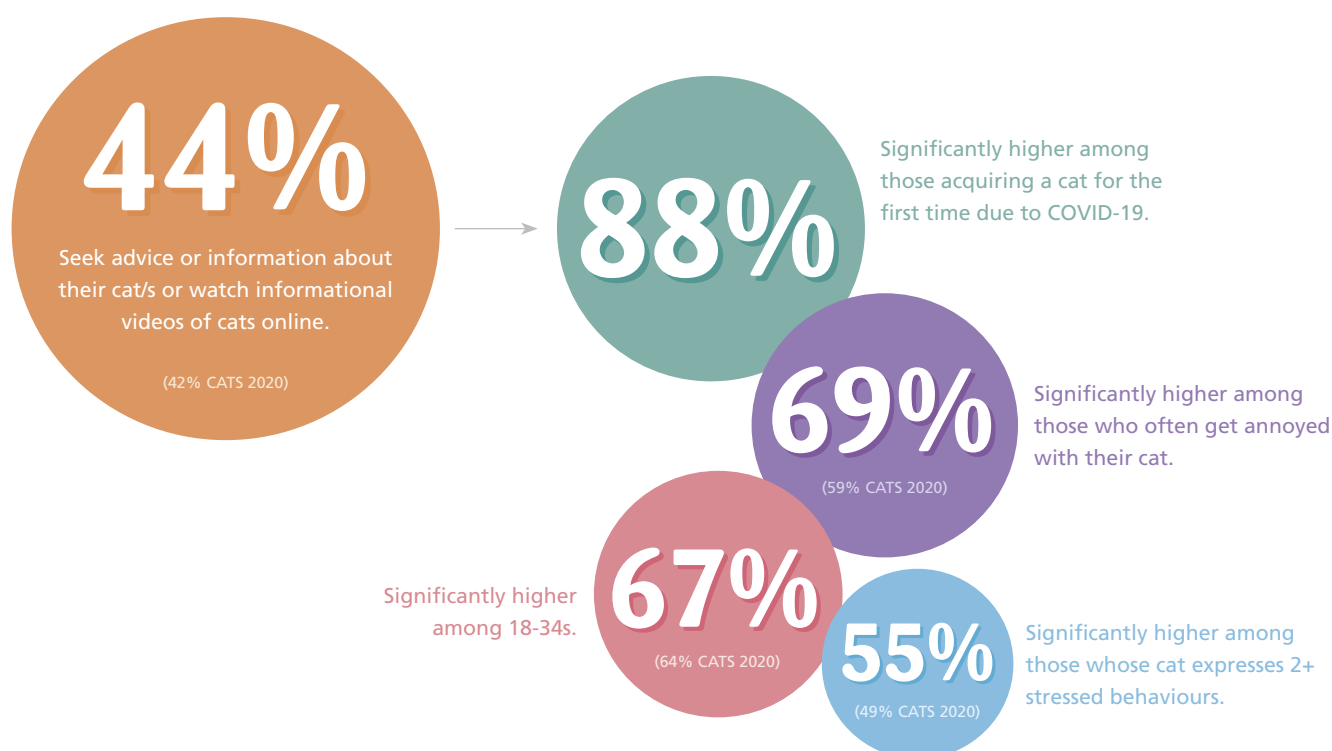
38 Question asked: And now thinking about COVID-19 specifically in relation to your cat, which of the below, if any, apply to you? I have received support from a charity or a food bank to help me care for my cat.

Cat behaviour and welfare

Sources of cat care information

Although it is increasing, only 25%³⁹ (up from 18%) of owners agree that they tend to do lots of research on how best to look after their cat. This year we found more owners are seeking advice or information about their cats at least monthly (44% up from 42%).

More people are seeking information or advice about their cats



The sources of information are different between 2021 and 2020, but are not necessarily better. The percentage of owners contacting their vet for information and advice about their cat has decreased from 63% to 59%⁴⁰ over the last 12 months. This may in part be due to vets being less accessible during the pandemic, but is concerning as owners are increasingly speaking to friends and family (34% up from 32%) and using social media (16% up from 14%) for advice as well as the ever-popular internet search (53% – no change).

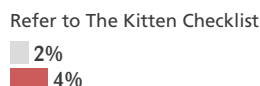
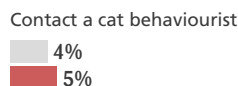
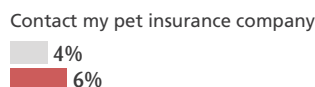
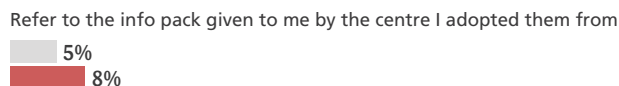
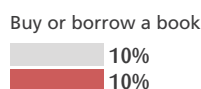
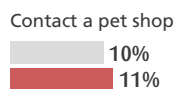
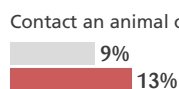
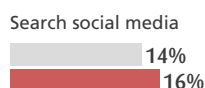
There is also a welcome upward trend in contacting animal charities (13% up from 9%) or the centre from which the cat was adopted (9% up from 5%) for advice. Animal welfare organisations have a vitally important and ongoing role to play in not only providing good cat welfare information and advice, but also in supporting and signposting owners to the veterinary profession.

³⁹ 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.

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

Who are people seeking cat advice from?

2020 2021



41 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?

Social media is becoming more important for obtaining information and advice about cats, particularly among younger owners (18-34 year olds).

When asked specifically about social media platforms used, 64%⁴¹ (up from 59%) of the cat owners surveyed say they use social media for cat information or advice on a regular basis. There has been an increase in usage of almost all social media platforms (with the exception of Facebook and Twitter). This is particularly the case for TikTok, which sees an increase from 3% to 9% of owners using it on a regular basis for information about cats.

The younger cat owners (18-34 year olds) have seen the biggest increase in using TikTok with a jump from 7% to 19% when comparing 2020 and 2021 reports. These results show that social media is a significant source for providing owners with cat welfare information. Ensuring that good cat welfare content from animal welfare organisations is accessible on a wide variety of social media platforms will mean that different audiences are reached.



Throughout the pandemic Cats Protection has continued to provide support to cat owners through its Contact Centre, local branches and centres. By providing cat welfare information and advice, the charity helped owners to make the best decisions for their cat's wellbeing, whether this was by suggesting simple changes in the home, offering behaviour advice or helping with the rehoming of their cat.

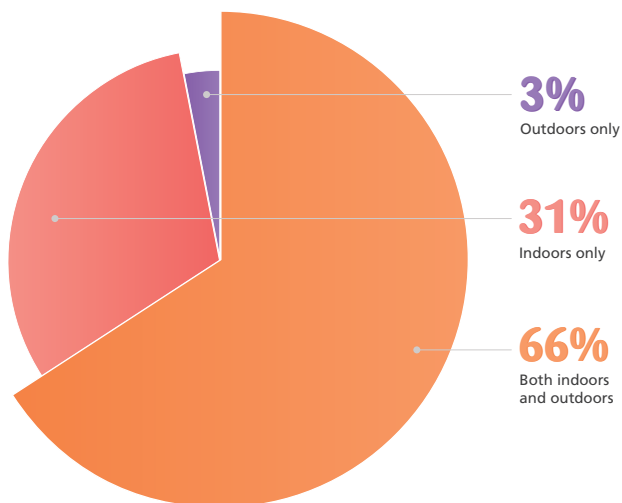
Nick de Bruxelles – Cats Protection Head of Customer Experience

A cat's environment

Indoor vs outdoors⁴²

The majority of cats enjoy both outdoor and indoor life (66%), coming and going more or less as they please. But 31% live exclusively indoors. This is more common where owners live in densely populated urban environments (42%) and in particular Scotland (38%), North East England (37%) and Greater London (37%). There has been a significant increase in Greater London (37% up from 32%) and East Midlands (30% up from 24%).

The majority of cats continue to have access to outdoor space



Like last year, of those cats that have access to outside, most are let out by their owners (57%).

⁴² Question asked: Which of the following best applies to your cat?

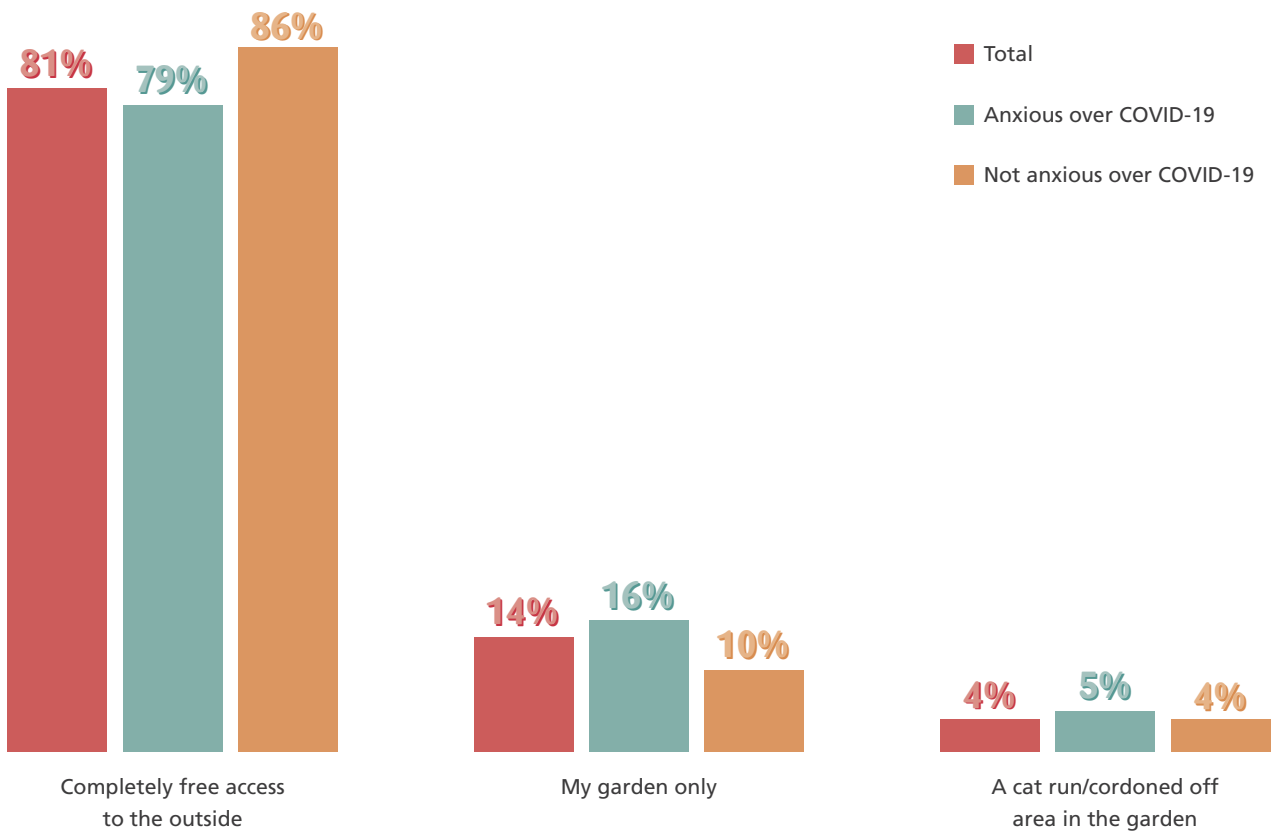


Some of the cats that Cats Protection rehomes need to live indoors for their own safety, due to medical conditions such as feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), or having a disability such as poor eyesight or hearing. It's important that cats leading an indoor lifestyle are provided with the resources they need to be mentally and physically stimulated to lead a happy, contented life.

Danielle Draper – Cats Protection
National Cat Adoption Centre Manager

www.cats.org.uk/indoor-cats

Cats and outdoor access



The impact of COVID-19

Of the owners surveyed, 68% of those working from home let their cat outdoors, compared to 63% of those that were working in the office/actual work place.

This may be due to owner confidence being at home and knowing more about their cat's whereabouts, being able to help them if needed and the owner being at home to let them out. There are health and welfare benefits for a cat having their owner nearby and having more on-demand access to outdoors, including the reduction in stress-related behaviours (see page 38).

Of those cats that go outdoors slightly fewer are allowed to roam freely compared to last year – 81% down from 83%. With those owners more anxious about the pandemic less likely to allow their cats to roam freely, and instead more likely to allow them access just to the garden or an enclosed area.

The reduction in cats being able to roam freely may reflect advice to restrict cats' access during the pandemic to reduce likelihood of cats coming into contact with or transferring COVID-19 to people or because they remained unneutered due to limited vet access, and/or the increase in the cost of the cats being purchased.

Cats at night

Of those cats that are given outside access, 46% are able to come and go freely during the night⁴³. Dawn and dusk are when they are at their most active, a prime time for them to hunt rodents and other small prey.

Cats Protection always recommends that cats are kept in at night. Not only does it reduce predation of wildlife but it also keeps your cat safe. Cats are at increased risk from road traffic injuries and fatalities at night. Road traffic accidents were stated as a cause of injury for 4%⁴⁴ of cats. They are also more inclined to fight, venturing into other cats' territories, and can come to harm by other animals or even humans.

⁴³ Question asked: Does your cat have access to the outside overnight?

⁴⁴ Question asked: Since having your cat, has your cat ever been injured?

Photo credit: Eduard Skorov.



Resources for cats







This year more owners agree that they are very confident they know what's best for their cat⁴⁵ (58% up from 56%). However, although some owners may know what's best, there are **certainly areas for improvement** when it comes to the resources they provide for their cats.

Cat owners were asked about the resources they provide for their cats. It seems that food bowls and hiding places are plentiful even in multi-cat households, with on average at least one per cat plus one extra for each of these resources⁴⁶. There are an average of 3.1 hiding places and 3.2 food bowls for households with two cats, **however additional litter trays are less common**. Of the owners that have at least two cats, 15% don't provide a litter tray and 31% only provide one litter tray. It is widely recognised that cats should be provided with one of each resource per cat plus one⁴⁷. Where cats are kept indoors or have restricted access to the outdoors it is essential that enough litter trays are provided to prevent unnecessary stress.

Of concern is **almost one in five (18%) of owners don't provide their cat/s with a scratching post** and **almost one in five (18%) don't provide a cat bed**. For those owners that do not provide a scratching post, unwanted scratching of furniture and carpets is more likely to occur.

The availability of resources

Average number of resources per cat

		 	   +
Food bowls	2.4	3.2	4.9
Water bowls	2	2.4	3
Litter trays	1.5	1.9	2.6
Scratching posts	1.7	2.2	2.6
Cat beds	1.9	2.5	3.5
Hiding places	2.4	3.1	4.1

⁴⁵ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about having a cat/s? I'm very confident I know what's best for my cat/s.

⁴⁶ Question asked: How many of each of the following, if any, do you have in your home and are currently available for your cat/s to use at any one time?

⁴⁷ BSAVA Manual of Canine and Feline Behavioural Medicine p36.

Behaviour and stress⁴⁸

The element of play is important to both cats and owners. More owners are spending time playing with their cats at least twice a day (64% up from 61%). Indoor cats seem to be benefiting most as they are the cats most likely to be played with. However, there are some cats which are not even being played with daily. This includes 52% of elderly cats aged 11+ and 26% of indoor cats.

Greater interaction has led to increased owner anxiety about their cat⁴⁹

	Overall total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
I think about my cat a lot when I'm not with them	39%	33%	44%	45%	39%	33%
I often worry about if my cat/s is happy	35%	30%	39%	43%	34%	26%



It's great to find more owners are spending time playing with their cats. When owners play with their cat it's a good way to bond and is important for the cat's wellbeing. Play helps elicit a cat's hunting behaviour which causes them to release endorphins or 'happy hormones'. It's very important for cats of all ages to play – it's a great way for a cat to expend energy, keep fit and healthy and keep their brain alert and active. The best games encourage cats to stalk, pounce, chase and bat objects with a paw in a safe way.

Nicky Trevorrow – Cats Protection Behaviour Manager

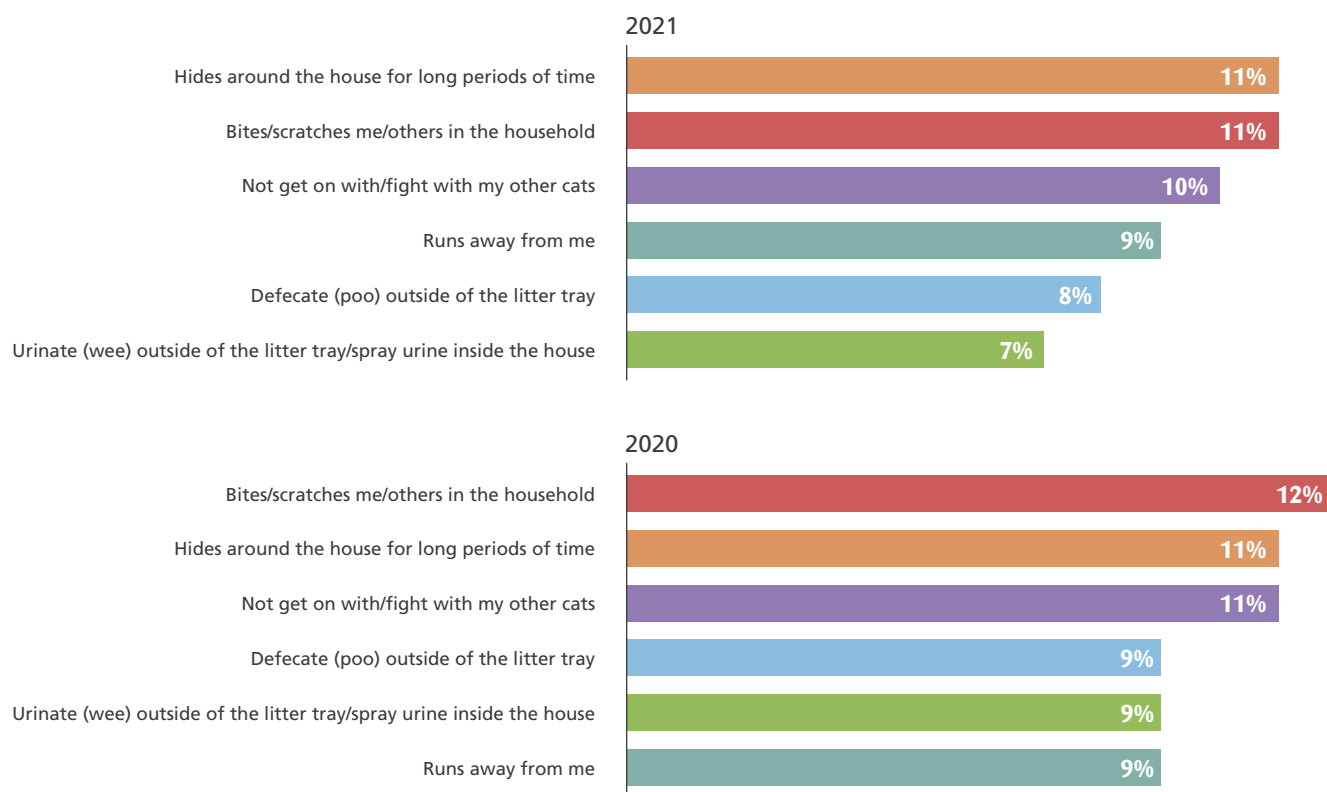
www.cats.org.uk/cats-and-play

⁴⁸ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about having a cat/s?/In an average week, how often do you do each of the following with your cat?

⁴⁹ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about having cat/s?

The increased time owners have spent with their cats over the last 12 months appears to have had a positive impact on cat behaviour, with slightly fewer cats demonstrating the types of unwanted behaviours which are often seen due to stress, eg urinating outside of the litter tray or hiding around the house for long periods of time (42% of cats exhibiting at least one stress behaviour, down from 45%). Despite this, cats are still showing signs of stress.

The top six stress behaviours 2021 v 2020⁵⁰



Other cats in the household may be a source of stress and our findings indicate that although cats in the same household appear to be getting along with each other a little better than last year, 10% of owners are still reporting their cats are not getting along or are fighting.

Indoor cats are significantly more likely to exhibit stress behaviours (46%) than those that have access to indoor and outdoor environments (40%).



Although overall slightly fewer cats were exhibiting at least one stress behaviour over the last 12 months, there was a noticeable difference between cats whose owners had been furloughed during the pandemic compared to those who hadn't. Where owners were furloughed an increase in stress indicators were observed with 48% of owners saying their cat exhibited at least one behaviour related to stress compared to 41% of those that were not furloughed.

There was also a difference seen in stress behaviours among those who were more anxious about the pandemic. Of the cats whose owners were anxious about the pandemic, 43% were exhibiting at least one stress behaviour, compared to 37% of cats whose owners were not anxious.

⁵⁰ Question asked: Thinking about the past 12 months, which of the following does your cat tend to do, at least some of the time?

Preventing cats from harm⁵¹

1.9% of owners reported their cat had been poisoned, and a further 1.8% that their cat had been shot by an air gun.

We also asked about injuries or accidents sustained by cats. Thankfully the majority of cats (73%) have never been injured. We found that over one in four cats (27%) have sustained significant injuries or accidents. 11% of these were fights with other cats (not from the same household) and 7% from other animals.



Cats Protection provides plant advice and extensive lists of outdoor, indoor and cut-flower plants that are toxic or safe for cats.

www.cats.org.uk/dangerous-plants

Flower toxicity to cats⁵²

For the first time this year we also asked cat owners about their awareness of flower toxicity – Cats Protection found that just 47% of cat owners are aware that lilies are toxic to cats. There were significant differences between those that are registered with a vet (50%) compared to those not registered (29%).

Lilies are particularly toxic to cats. Although a cat may appear disinterested in eating them, there is always a risk that they may come into contact with the flower's pollen by rubbing up against it and absent-mindedly licking their fur. All parts of the lily plant are toxic to cats if ingested, and consuming small amounts can result in severe poisoning.

⁵¹ Question asked: Since having your cat, has your cat ever been injured?

⁵² Question asked: Which of the following popular cut flowers, if any, are you aware of being toxic to cats?

Cats and their experience of fireworks⁵³

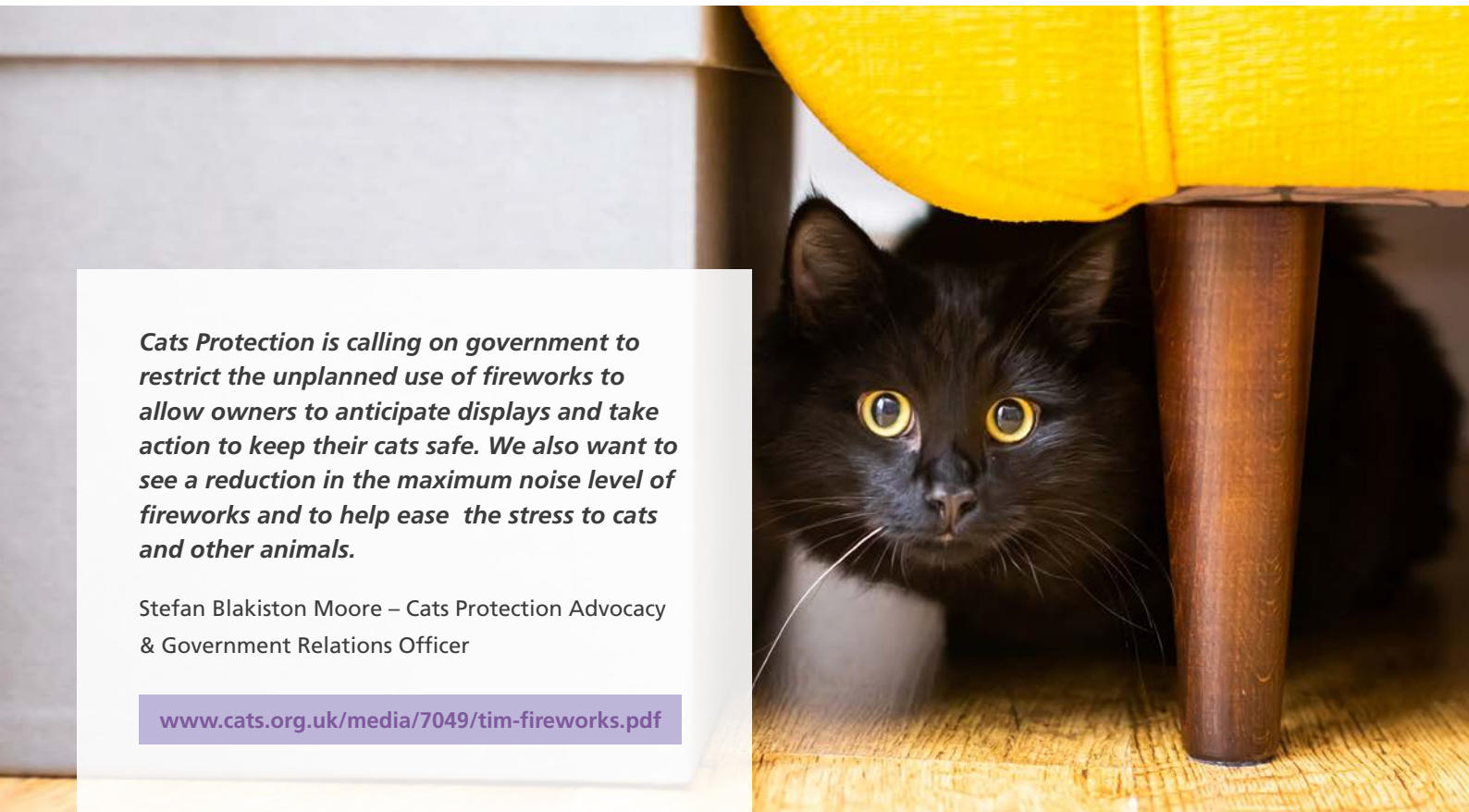
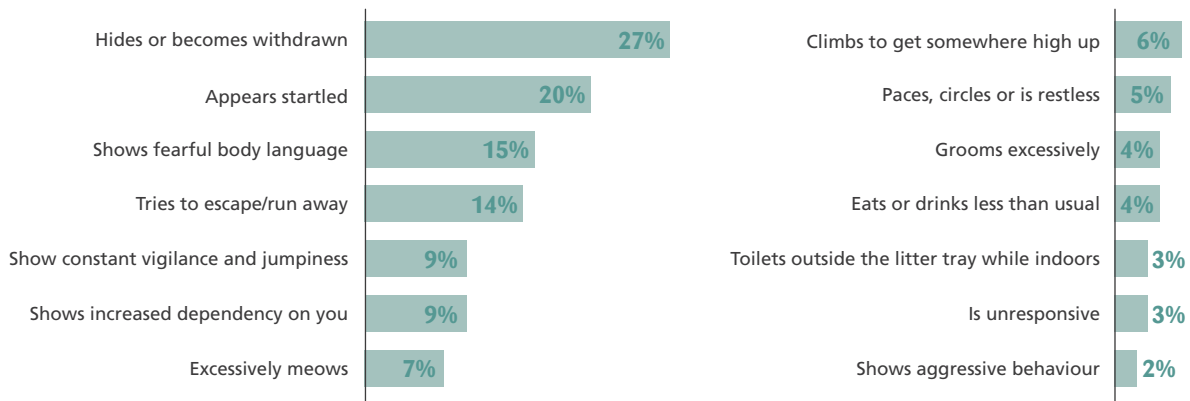
For the first time this year we asked questions about fireworks as this is an issue of concern due to the stress many cats experience when fireworks are set off.

Of those who have seen their cats experience fireworks, nearly two thirds (63%) state that their cat was affected by them.

Owners most commonly said their cat hides or becomes withdrawn when they hear fireworks (27%).

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

The impact of fireworks on cats



Cats Protection is calling on government to restrict the unplanned use of fireworks to allow owners to anticipate displays and take action to keep their cats safe. We also want to see a reduction in the maximum noise level of fireworks and to help ease the stress to cats and other animals.

Stefan Blakiston Moore – Cats Protection Advocacy & Government Relations Officer

www.cats.org.uk/media/7049/tim-fireworks.pdf

⁵³ Question asked: Does your cat tend to show any of the following signs of stress as a result of hearing fireworks?

Cat companionship and challenges to ownership

What are the reasons people have cats?

The top reason given for owning a cat remains: for companionship and to reduce stress and feelings of loneliness (51%). This is higher among younger cat owners aged 18-34 years, with 55% saying this is their main reason⁵⁴.

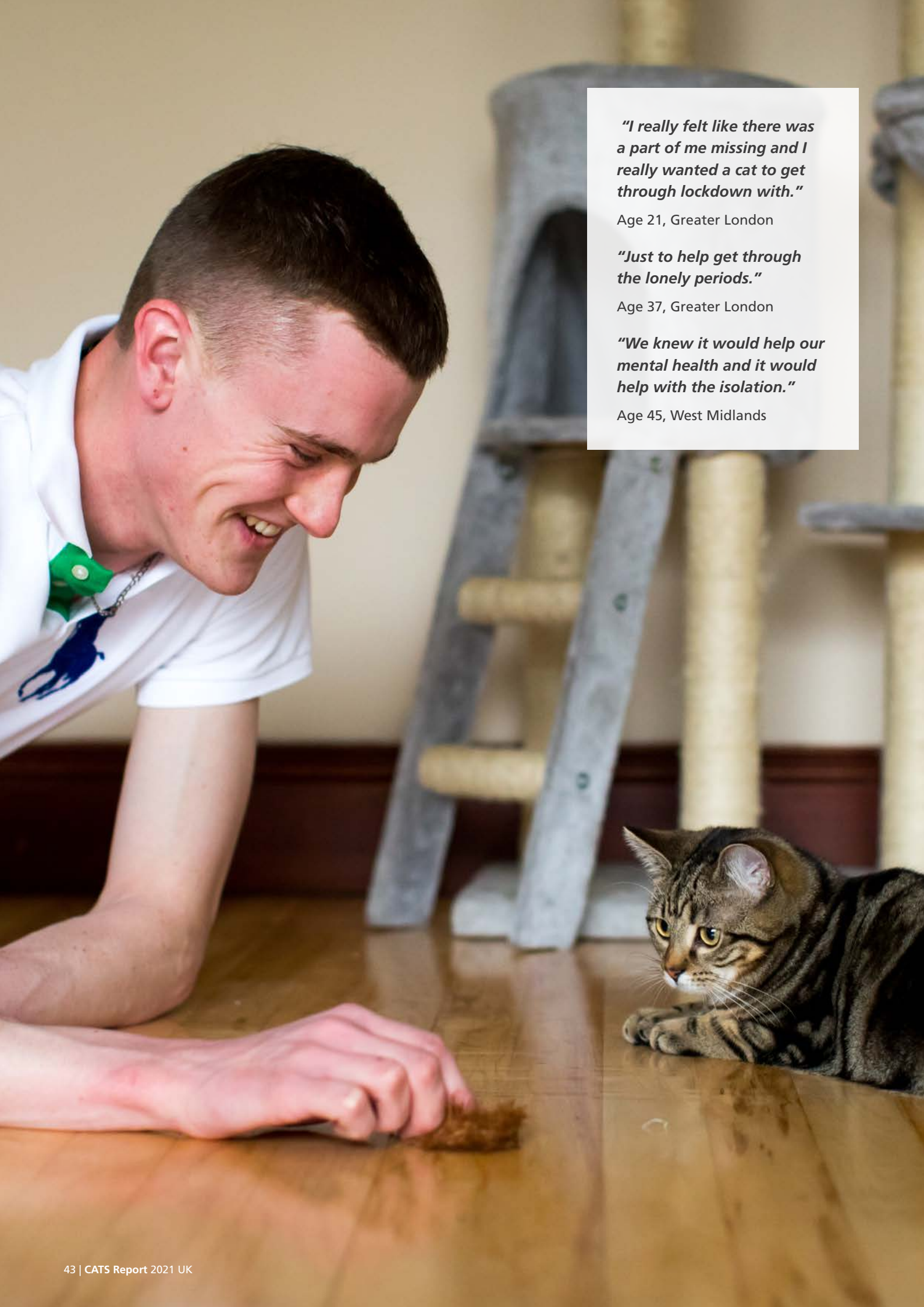
The percentage of owners giving this reason is even higher among those who acquired a cat for the first time during the pandemic (59%).

Companionship remains a key driver of cat ownership



⁵⁴ Question asked: What are the main reasons you have a cat/s?





"I really felt like there was a part of me missing and I really wanted a cat to get through lockdown with."

Age 21, Greater London

"Just to help get through the lonely periods."

Age 37, Greater London

"We knew it would help our mental health and it would help with the isolation."

Age 45, West Midlands

Cats really did come to our aid during the pandemic

20% of cat owners say that the main reason for having a cat in their life is to help them feel less stressed or anxious. During the pandemic finding ways to alleviate stress has been vital for wellbeing.

The proportion of owners saying that **their cat helps them feel less stressed** is even higher for single person households (23%), younger owners aged 18-24 (28%), people who are unemployed (27%), and among those who acquired a cat in the last 12 months (26%).

Cats are the perfect antidote to stress: 90% of cat owners say they spend time stroking their cat or sitting together every day and **evidence shows that human-animal interactions provide mental and physical benefits⁵⁵**.

55 Beetz et al, 2012 Psychosocial and psychophysiological effects of human-animal interactions: the possible role of oxytocin.




Of those that acquired a cat specifically due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a third (36%) say it was to help them feel less stressed or anxious.

"I have felt very stressed during this period and the cat has helped me get by the situation a lot quicker."

Age 25, North West England

"Lockdown pressures bring about a need for calm and focus on family unity which is strengthened by the introduction of a new household pet."

Age 33, South East England

A close-up photograph of a person's hand petting a black and white cat. The cat has its eyes closed and a content expression. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery.

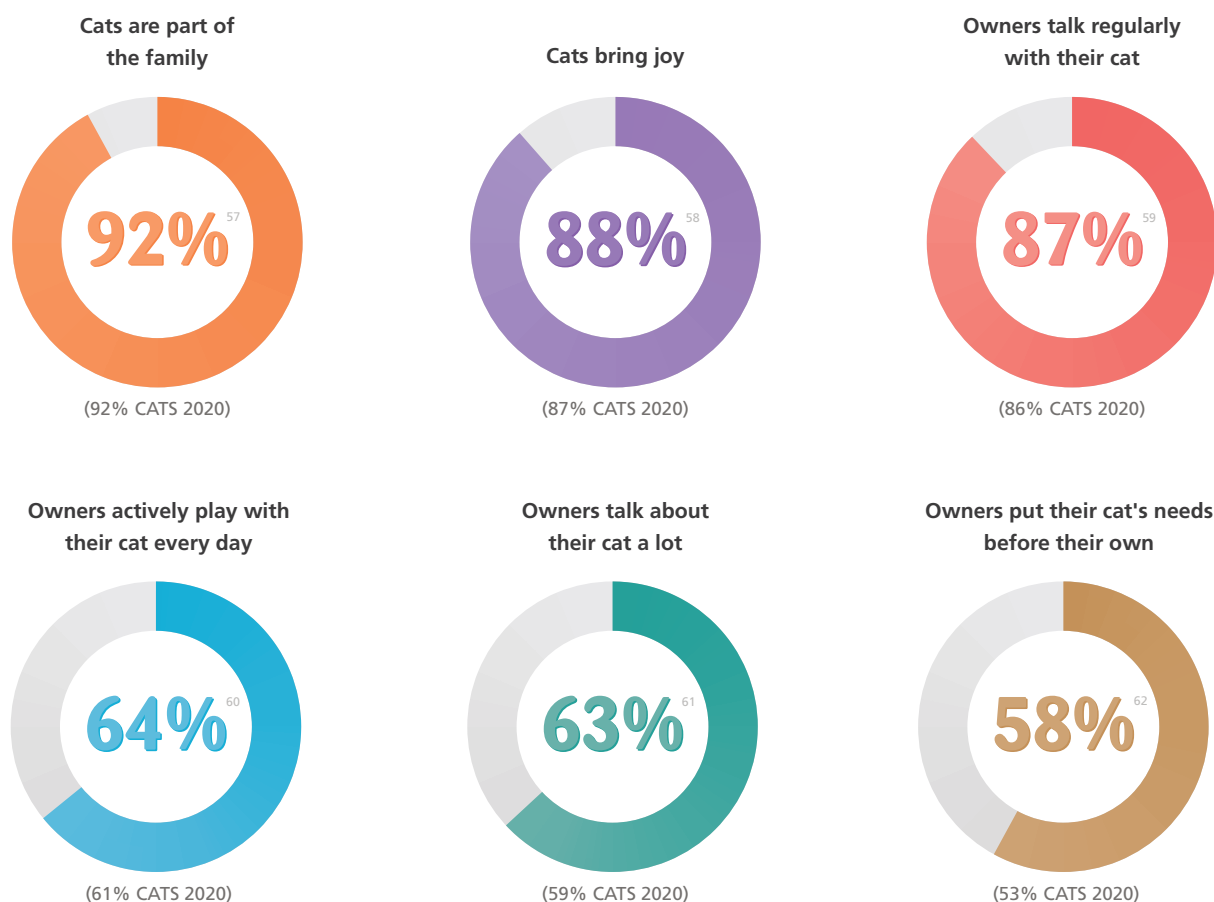
As the UK's leading cat rehoming charity, we help create many lifelong companion animal bonds between cats and people. We know that for many people, pets are an integral part of the family and a source of delight. The pandemic has shone a light on the ways in which cats enrich their owners' lives and how they help see us through the darkest of times.

Mike Elliott – Cats Protection Director of Field Operations

Cats are part of the family and important in our everyday lives

Even more owners report that their cat gives them something to get up for in the morning⁵⁶ (62% up from 58%).

Younger owners and those that acquired a cat due to the COVID-19 pandemic find their cats a real benefit. 71% of 18-34 year olds and 75% of those who had acquired a cat due to COVID-19 agreed that their cats give them a reason to get up in the morning.



56 Question asked: To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about having a cat/s? It gives me something to get up for in the morning.

57 ...My cat/s are part of my family.

58 ...Having a cat/s brings joy to my life.

59 ...I often talk to my cat.

60 Question asked: In an average week, how often do you do each of the following with your cat? Actively play together (eg with toys, balls, treat balls, fishing rod toy etc).

61 Question asked: To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about having a cat/s? I talk about my cat/s a lot.

62 Question asked: To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about having a cat/s? I put my cat's needs before my own.

Cats Protection provides many services to cat owners including cat care and welfare advice; subsidised neutering and microchipping; curriculum-linked school and community talks; grief support; pet fostering for owners fleeing domestic abuse and rehoming of cats after their owner's death.

For further details please see page 51 of this report.

Sadly, for some people, cat ownership is not possible

With so many positive benefits to be enjoyed from owning a cat, it is disappointing that a significant number of people feel unable or are prevented from having a cat in their lives.

Age as a barrier to cat ownership

12% of all non-owners who used to have a cat, but don't any more, cite **age as a reason to not having a cat⁶³**. For respondents aged 75+, that proportion rises to 31%. Our Cat Guardians service provides reassurance to prospective owners that their cats will be well looked after when they pass away, making cat ownership possible for many more people, particularly in later life:

www.cats.org.uk/catguardians

Renting – pets not allowed

It is estimated that 1 million households who would like to own a cat cannot because they **live in rented accommodation that doesn't allow pets (5.2% of non-owners⁶⁴)**. Cats Protection is campaigning to change this, so that everyone can enjoy the companionship of a cat. 1.6 million more cats could be rehomed if ALL landlords allow pets.

⁶³ Question asked of all non-owners, who used to have a cat but don't anymore: Which of the following reasons for not having a cat currently apply to you? I'm older now and worry about what would happen to my cats after I'm gone.

⁶⁴ ...I live in rented accommodation and am not allowed to have a cat.

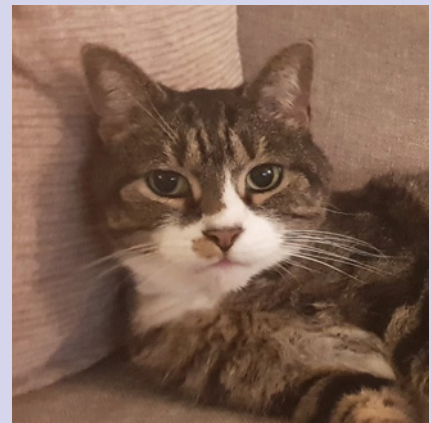




Purrfect Landlords – Sian's story

Sian was not allowed to have a pet in her rented property but she was desperate to adopt a cat.

She heard about the Purrfect Landlords campaign and used the advice to write to her landlord asking them to consider allowing her to keep a cat. Sian was delighted when her landlord agreed and it wasn't long before she adopted Captain from Cats Protection's National Cat Adoption Centre. For Sian, having a cat in her house makes it a home.



Sian's essential Captain

"Finding rented accommodation that allows cats was really difficult. It would be a case of searching every day, looking at what was available and then looking into the fine print, did they allow pets? A lot of the time it was just a no, straight away⁶⁵."

Laura, private renter from Wrexham

Cats Protection provides resources for landlords considering allowing cats and tenants wishing to rent with a cat at www.cats.org.uk/purrfectlandlords

⁶⁵ p10 Purrfect Landlords report.

Where do we go from here?

What is clear from our report is that our national passion for cats remains as strong as ever – with many of us becoming even more reliant on our pets for emotional support. We have seen a significant group obtain a cat for the first time through the pandemic, who have had more time to interact with their new companion and experience the joy that cat ownership can bring.

A wave of new cat owners presents significant challenges. There are 1.2 million cats not registered with a vet and the pandemic has seen a fall in the number of owners visiting the vet for routine treatment. While this is in part due to the pandemic and a lack of vet capacity, concerns such as cost still play a significant role.

The changes seen in how people are acquiring their cats is also of concern, with the general shift to buying pets online. The online market can provide unscrupulous sellers with the opportunity to exploit both pets and people in the pursuit of profit. With owners saying a higher percentage of cats obtained are 'pedigree', the potential for this problem is exacerbated.

CATS 2021 sets a baseline at an extraordinary time; as we enter the new normal, we must recognise the impact major societal shifts have not just on people, but also cats. While some of the findings of CATS 2021 may be COVID-19 linked aberrations; others may be the continuation or start of a trend.

Cats Protection and the wider animal welfare sector have a duty to respond proactively, supporting the vet profession who are struggling with serious capacity issues and ensuring good quality information reaches cat owners and potential cat owners, who may inadvertently end up funding a trade in cats bred for a quick profit.



Summary of statistics

Cat population

- There are around 10.8 million owned cats in the UK in 2021, which is an increase of 600,000 from 2020
- The pandemic contributed to this increase in ownership with 7% of owners saying they got a cat for a reason directly linked to the pandemic such as being furloughed or generally spending more time at home, which equates to approximately 0.8m cats
- 5.6 million owned cats are female and 5.2 million owned cats are male
- According to owners, 65% of cats are moggies, 23% are pedigrees, 5% are cross-breeds. For the remaining 7%, the owners were not sure of their cat's breed
 - Over time, the percentage of cats that owners are obtaining and believe to be pedigrees has increased:
 - 16% of cats obtained more than five years ago being considered pedigrees compared to 36% of cats obtained in the last 12 months
 - 74% of cats obtained more than five years ago were moggies, compared to 51% in the last 12 months
- Just over one in four UK households (26%) own a cat
- Each cat-owning household has an average of 1.5 cats

The cat market

- Owned cats are generally bought (28%), adopted from a UK rescue (25%) or have been taken on from a neighbour, family member or friend (19%)
 - Of cats obtained in the last 12 months, 34% of cats were bought and 19% adopted from UK rescues – for cats obtained over five years ago, just 24% were bought and 27% adopted from UK rescues

- An estimated 70,000 pet cats have been brought to the UK from overseas in the last 12 months (either through adoption from an overseas charity or from a specialist breeder overseas)
 - This represents 5% of all cats obtained in the last 12 months – for those cats obtained over a year ago, just 1% came from overseas
- Just over half of all purchased cats were found online (52%), but this seems to be increasing – for those purchased in the last 12 months 68% were found online
 - For cats purchased in the last year, 21% were found on Facebook – equating to an estimated 90,000 cats and kittens

Neutering and microchipping

- 86% of all owned cats (around 9.3 million) are neutered
- We estimate that 12% of all owned cats (around 1.3 million) are not neutered. The remaining 2% answered 'don't know'
- Cats Protection recommends that cats should be neutered from four months of age, which is when they reach puberty
- Encouragingly, the number of cats neutered under four months of age rose from 22% in 2020 to 24% in 2021, a welcome increase in the uptake of pre-pubertal neutering by the veterinary profession
- An estimated 7.6 million owned cats are microchipped (70%) and 2.8 million cats are not microchipped (26%). Owners of the remaining 400,000 (4%) cats were unsure if their cat was microchipped
- 91% of owners of microchipped cats told us the contact details registered to the chip were up to date

Health and diet

- 79% of owners say their cats don't have any specific diagnosed conditions. 18% of owners say their cat has at least one health condition. Dental disease is the most prominent condition (3%) followed by a number of conditions including obesity, arthritis and hyperthyroidism (2% each)
- 89% of owned cats are registered with a vet. Whereas 55% of owners say they go for a routine visit to the vet every year, this fell to 47% during the pandemic, meaning approximately 5 million cats are not routinely visiting the vet
- 43% of cat owners have taken out pet insurance, compared to 40% in 2020. The rise has been driven by many more cat owners in the 18-34 age group taking out insurance
- 69% of owners say their cat is up to date with their vaccinations compared to 72% in 2020, which may be linked to the limited access to veterinary practices during the pandemic
- 31% of owners think their cats are overweight, while vets think that around 44% of cats are overweight

The role that cats play in our lives

- The top reasons people gave for adopting cats were to provide companionship, to reduce stress and to reduce loneliness (51%). These reasons were especially popular in the 18-34 age group (55%)
- 62% of owners say their cat gives them something to get up for in the morning
- 87% of owners regularly talk to their cat
- 64% of owners play games with their cat each day
- 58% of owners say they put their cats' needs before their own

Threats to the safety of cats

- Just 47% of cat owners are aware that lilies are toxic to cats
- Over one in four cats (27%) have sustained significant injuries or accidents. 11% of these were fights with other cats not part of the household and 7% from other animals. Road traffic accidents were stated as cause of injury for 4%
- 63% of owners say their cat is adversely affected by fireworks in some way, including hiding, running away or increased jumpiness

Rental issues

- It is estimated that 1 million households across the UK would like to have a cat, but can't because they are in a rental property
- Based on the average number of cats per household, this means there are 1.6 million cats that could be given homes if all landlords allowed pets

Cats Protection services

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

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

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

www.cats.org.uk/what-we-do/grief/paws-to-listen or 0800 024 94 94

Paws Protect – a free, completely confidential pet-fostering service for families fleeing domestic abuse.

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

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

www.cats.org.uk/education

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

www.cats.org.uk/neutering

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

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



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

Reg Charity 203644 (England and Wales) and
SC037711 (Scotland)