

CATS Report

Cats and Their Stats Wales 2024

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Methodology

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

An online survey was used to collect information among a nationally representative audience of adults over the age of 18 in Wales, allowing us to estimate the proportion of cat owners. We also conducted a more detailed survey among cat owners. This was carried out between 21 February 2024 and 12 April 2024. 'In the last 12 months' within the report refers to the time period March 2023 to March 2024 and unless otherwise stated, comparative data in this survey uses data from the CATS Report Wales 2023.

The research consisted of a UK nationally representative sample of 3,521 individuals and a boost of 7,001 cat owners, including regional boosts to ensure accurate representation in these areas. Overall, 10,522 people participated in the study, including 801 cat owners in Wales.

Data presentation

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

- nationally representative online survey panel to determine the percentage of UK households who own a cat (n=3,521)
- data from the survey of cat owners on the number of cats owned by each household
- data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the number of households

Percentages throughout the report are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding, there will be instances in the report where percentage calculations do not total 100%. Other figures, such as the estimated numbers of cats in the population, are rounded to two significant figures. When calculating cat estimates, we have taken the total estimated cat population figure and multiplied it by the whole percentage, for example 10% of all cats are not registered with a vet, equating to 1.1 million cats. Statistics and population calculations are estimates based on owner-reported responses to the online survey.

Significance testing is undertaken on the data at 99% and 95% confidence intervals. When a finding is referenced as significant within the report it has found to be significant at a 95% confidence interval.

Cat acquisition: Throughout this report we look at recency of cat acquisition, typically looking at all those cats acquired in the last 12 months compared to another time period, for example over a year ago. The data is sourced from the question 'When did you acquire your cat?' in the CATS 2024 Research Survey.

Nationally representative sample: The population of interest is the entire population of the UK. The nationally representative sample reflected its structure including gender, age, socio-economic groupings and regions.

More information available upon request from stats@cats.org.uk

Welcome to the fifth annual Cats and Their Stats (CATS) Wales[©] 2024

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

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

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

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

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

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



A message from Dr Richard Irvine, Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales

I would like to thank Cats Protection for their ongoing work, and for the comprehensive CATS Report Wales 2024, which shows that many people in Wales love and value cats as companions. This report provides vital insights into cat ownership in Wales. The report highlights areas of responsible cat ownership such as microchipping, neutering and responsibly sourcing your cat or kitten. Microchipping is encouraged and available in Wales, it is good practice for all responsible owners to microchip your cat and it's great to see these figures have increased compared to previous years.

Cats Protection provides valuable advice and support on many areas of cat ownership, not least neutering, which is recommended as part of responsible cat ownership and championed by Cats Protection. The report also highlights cat adoption remains a popular choice for cat ownership in Wales, and one for all potential cat owners to consider before purchasing.

The Welsh Government's Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer has been delighted to work with many animal welfare charities, including Cats Protection, to deliver important changes in Welsh legislation which will safeguard the welfare of cats in Wales, such as the banning of snares and the recent consultation on the Licensing of Animal Welfare Establishments, Activities and Exhibits. This is part of the first phase of developing a National Model for the regulation of animal welfare, reviewing current legislation and assessing where improvements can be made. The team will continue to work with Cats Protection, and I welcome their ongoing work to protect cats and kittens in Wales, and beyond.



Key findings

State of the nation

- There are around 480,000 owned cats in Wales, a decrease from 620,000 in 2023
- Welsh cat owners are more likely to be younger on average than the general Welsh population
- Welsh cat owners are more likely to be female than male

The cat market

- Unlike the UK as a whole, the proportion of the pet cat population that is 'bought' in Wales is similar to those that are adopted
- The overall relative proportion of moggies to pedigrees remains the same in Wales, compared to last year
- There is concern around the potential for breeds with extreme traits to become more popular

Veterinary care

- 61% of Welsh owners say that they do not visit the vet as often as they would like to
- 74% of Welsh cats are microchipped, but this still leaves around 125,000 Welsh cats potentially without a microchip
- Cost is a bigger barrier to neutering in Wales than the UK as a whole

Cat care, welfare and behaviour

- Fewer people in Wales are doing research before getting a cat
- The use of social media platforms as regular sources of information about cats continues to grow for Welsh owners
- For the first time, we have gained insight into the use of accessories such as leads/harnesses and backpack carriers, which indicates they are more widely used than thought. Many of these accessories are associated with increased stress for cats

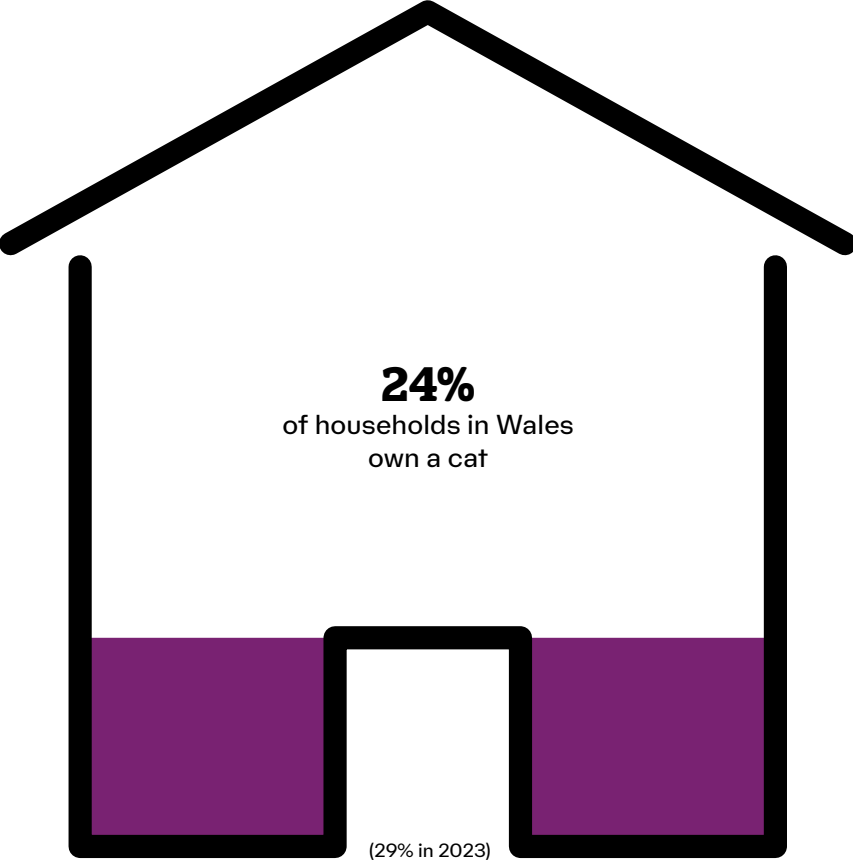
Companionship and challenges to ownership

- The wellbeing benefits of cat ownership are still a strong motivator for having a cat in Wales
- The majority of Welsh owners spend time with their cat at least once daily
- The cost of living continues to impact Welsh cat owners more than anywhere else in the UK

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Cat population¹



There are around **480,000 owned cats** in Wales.

(620,000 in 2023)

The average number of cats per cat-owning household in Wales is 1.7 cats (1.7 in 2023), with 57% of households having one cat, and 43% owning two or more cats.

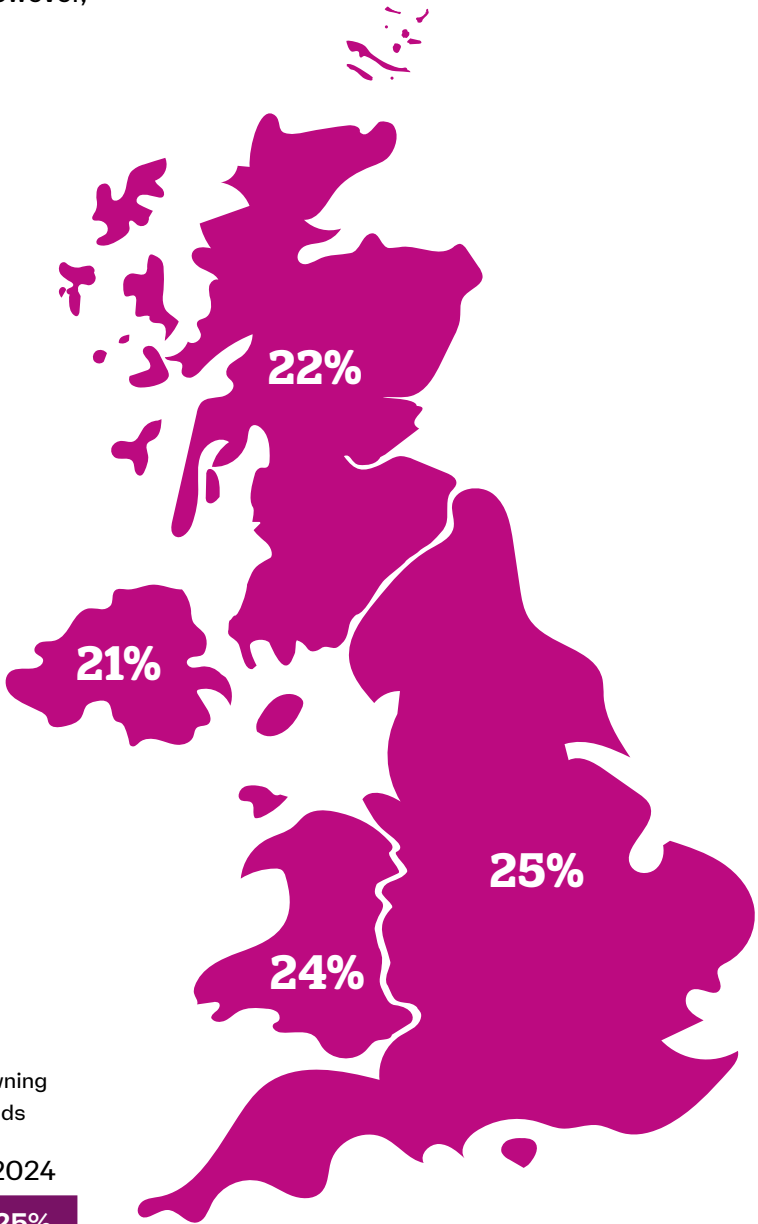
¹ Questions asked: Do you currently have a cat/s (that live with you)?/How many cats do you have in your household?

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

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

Household cat ownership across the UK¹

Across the UK as a whole there has been no statistically significant changes to last year's figures. Wales, however, has seen a decline in ownership levels.



The proportions of the owned cat population remain largely the same across the UK.

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

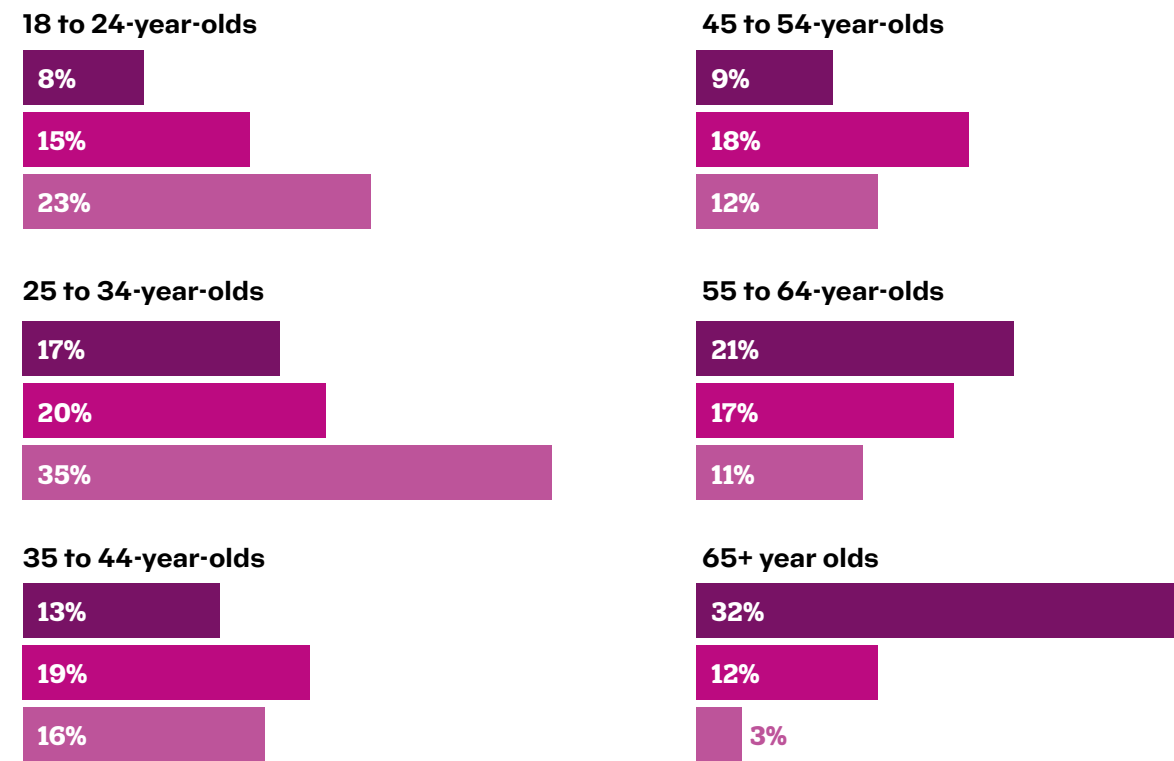
Profile of cat owners²

The age split of Welsh cat owners has remained largely in line with last year.



Welsh cat owners tend to skew younger, compared to the general Welsh population.

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

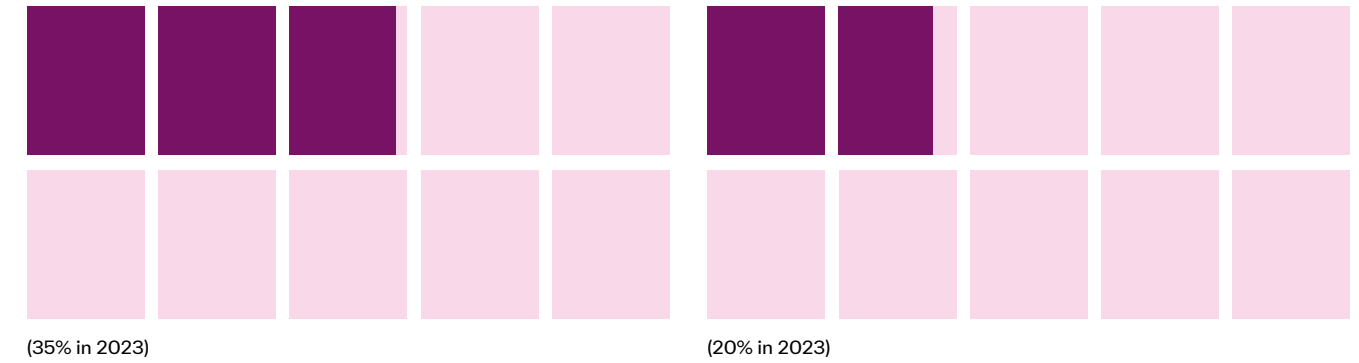


Those acquiring a cat in the last 12 months tend to be younger than the overall profile of Welsh cat owners.

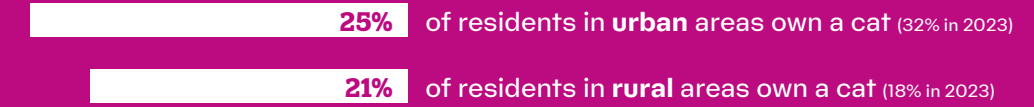
² Questions asked: Do you currently have a cat/s (that live with you)?/How many cats do you have in your household?/When did you acquire (for example, buy/adopt) your cat?

Cat owners in Wales are more likely to be female than male.

29% of females in Wales own a cat
 18% of males in Wales own a cat

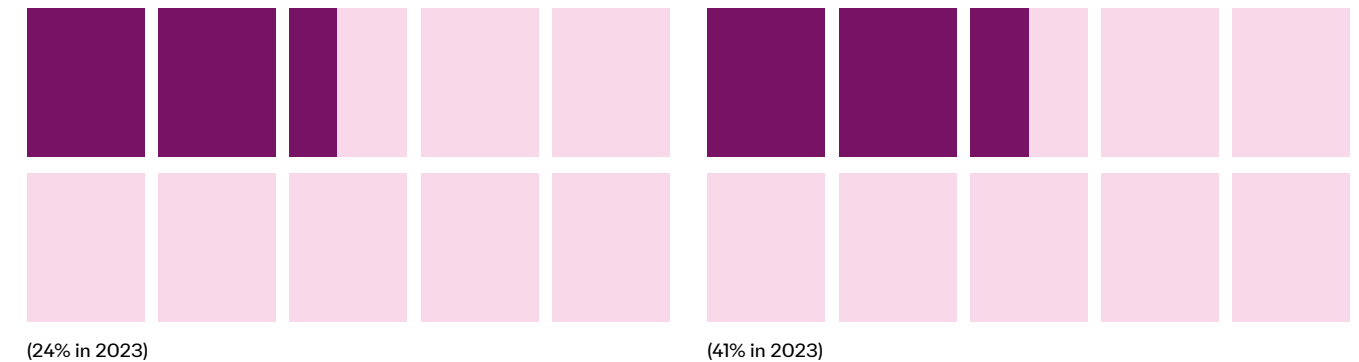


Where cats live in Wales remains consistent with last year³.



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

24% of those who **rent** a home own a cat
 25% of those who **own** a home own a cat



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

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The cat market

14% of the current Welsh cat population were acquired during the last 12 months, equating to over 60,000 cats⁴.

Unlike the UK as a whole, the proportion of the pet cat population that is 'bought' in Wales is similar to those that are adopted (data shown for all cats in current population)⁴. However, the gap between purchase and adoption is wider for cats acquired in the last 12 months.

■ Acquired any time ■ Acquired in the last 12 months

Bought*:



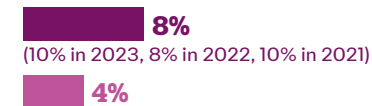
Adopted from a rescue/rehoming centre/animal shelter in UK



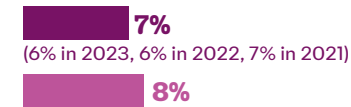
Taken on from a neighbour/friend/family**



Found as stray and taken in



Kitten of an already owned cat



⁴ Questions asked: Where did you get/adopt your cat from?/When did you acquire (for example, buy/adopt) your cat? Excluding those who say they bought their cat but didn't pay anything.

*Bought from a specialist breeder in the UK, bought from someone I know but not a specialist breeder, bought from a neighbour/friend/family, bought from a pet shop, bought from a specialist breeder overseas.

**Taken on from a neighbour/friend/family or found as a stray and taken in.

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

115,000 were bought

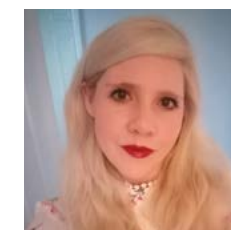
115,000 were adopted from UK rescue/rehoming centres/animal shelters

100,000 were taken on or taken in

"It's vital that potential cat owners can trust that rehoming organisations are legitimate and take animal welfare seriously. That's why Cats Protection is very pleased that the Welsh Government is consulting on introducing licensing and regulations for Animal Welfare Establishments (AWEs). This legislation should provide a benchmark for minimum welfare standards by which all AWEs should abide. This will safeguard the health and wellbeing of cats waiting to be rehomed, help distinguish between rescue centres and un reputable breeders, kitten farms and third-party sellers, and give potential owners the confidence to report AWEs that do not comply with the regulations.

"Introducing a standard licence for all AWEs will enable prospective pet adopters wishing to obtain an animal as a pet to check that they are sourcing them from a properly licensed charity or person, and not from an individual claiming to operate as a rehoming charity when they are, in fact, a dealer. Cats Protection looks forward to the progression of this legislation and the charity will help the Welsh Government in any way it can."

Vicki Small, Operations Manager Wales, Cats Protection



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Pedigree versus purebred

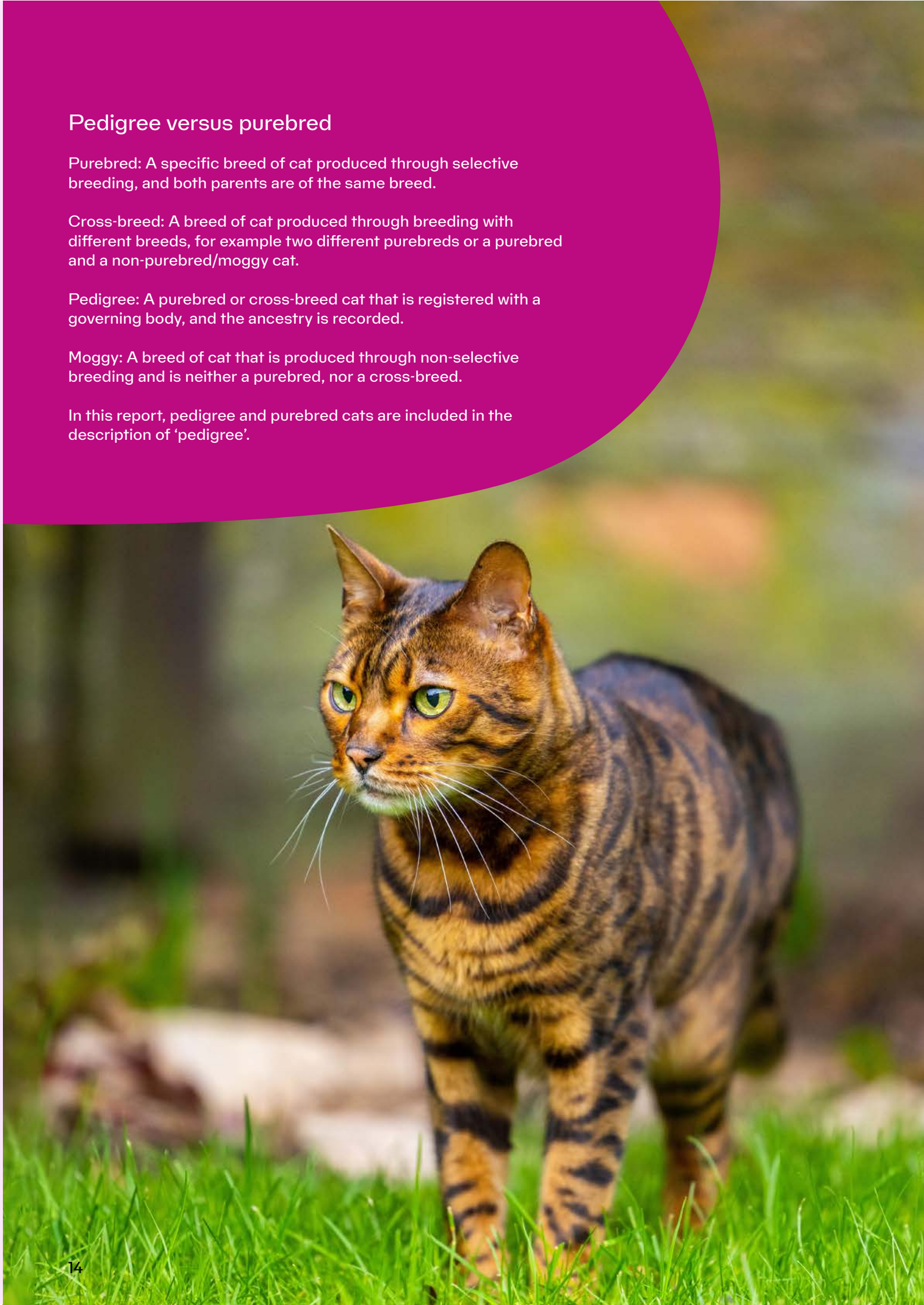
Purebred: A specific breed of cat produced through selective breeding, and both parents are of the same breed.

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

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

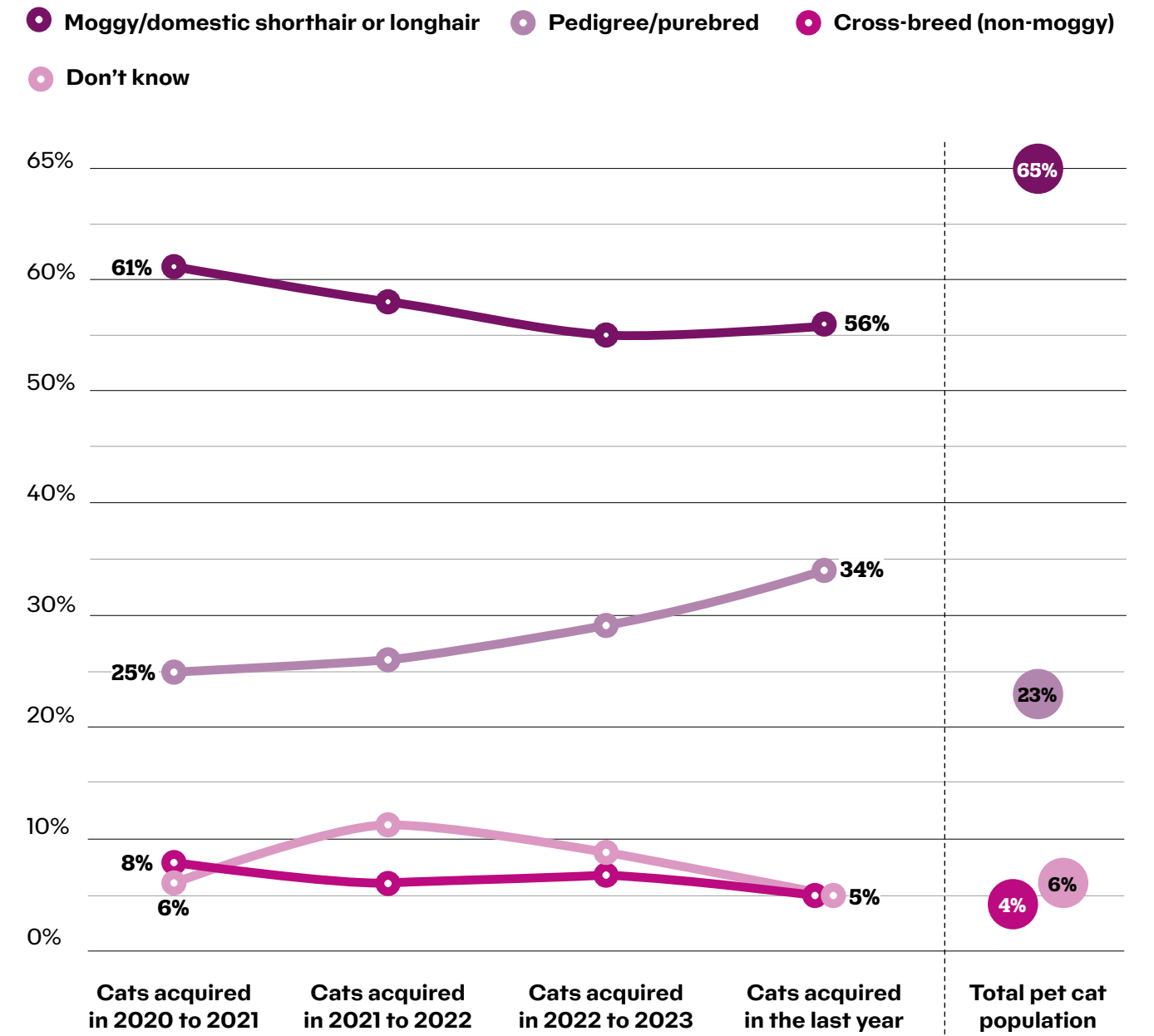
Moggy: A breed of cat that is produced through non-selective breeding and is neither a purebred, nor a cross-breed.

In this report, pedigree and purebred cats are included in the description of 'pedigree'.



What type of cats do people have?

The overall relative proportion of moggies to pedigrees remains the same in Wales, compared to last year⁵.



As with the rest of the UK, pedigree cats do appear to be increasing in popularity in Wales, with a higher proportion of pedigree cats acquired in the last 12 months, compared to the preceding 12 months (2023: 29%).

⁵ Questions asked: What breed is your cat?/When did you acquire (for example, buy/adopt) your cat?

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Scottish Folds in focus

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

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

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

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

“Within the UK, Scotland is the only nation to take steps towards addressing the problems associated with the breeding of Scottish Folds, specifying in guidance for licensing authorities that breeding these animals is likely a breach of conditions for licensed cat breeders.

“Cats Protection encourages Wales to also take this step, as well as address the lack of regulations around cat breeding in general. Currently, unlike for dogs, there is no regulation on cat breeding in Wales, meaning that cats may be victims of overbreeding, being bred while too young or too old and all manner of exploitative breeding practices which may put cats’ lives at risk. The introduction of cat breeding regulation is becoming an increasingly important priority, as buying cats from breeders becomes the more popular method of acquiring cats in Wales.”

Daryl Gordon, Advocacy & Government Relations Officer for Wales, Cats Protection



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

Dr Sarah Elliott MRCVS, Central Veterinary Officer, Cats Protection



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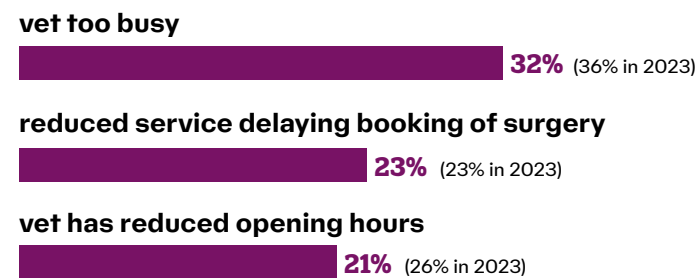
Veterinary care

Veterinary capacity⁶

27% of Welsh owners state that they have experienced difficulty accessing a vet.

(27% in 2023, 42% in 2022)

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



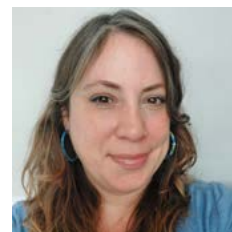
⁶ Questions asked: Still thinking about the vet, have you experienced any of the following over the last 12 months in relation to your cat?/Which of the following best describes how often you tend to go to the vet?



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

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

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



The Cats Protection Vet Capacity Report UK, published in 2023, found that⁷:

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

• Issues reported as a result of reduced capacity:

long waiting lists for routine appointments

45% of respondents

difficulty fitting in urgent or emergency work

45% of respondents

long waiting lists for elective surgeries

42% of respondents

difficulties registering new clients

42% of respondents

Vet registration⁸

10% of Welsh cats are not registered with a vet.

Higher for:

uninsured cats

17%

outdoor-only cats

32%

Some cats and their owners will be at a greater likelihood of requiring veterinary advice. For example, those with less experience or knowledge, or the cat’s lifestyle putting them at greater risk of injury (outdoor cats, for example). Every effort must be made to support access to veterinary care for these groups.

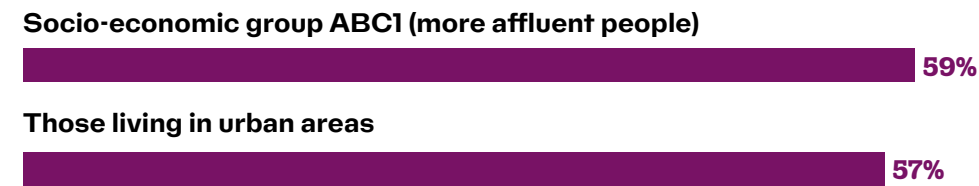
⁷ Cats Protection Vet Capacity Survey Fieldwork: Nov 2022 to Jan 2023. Sample: 236 UK vet professionals including veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses asking about their experiences in the prior 12 months.

⁸ Question asked: Is your cat registered with a vet?

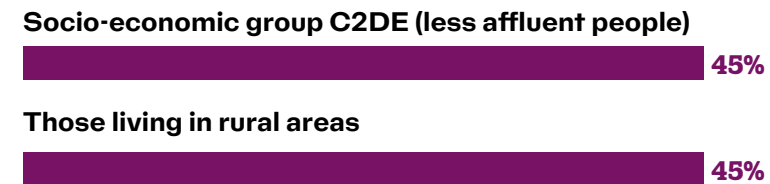
Vet visits⁹

Welsh cat owners are less likely to routinely take their cat to the vet each year (53%), compared to the UK as a whole (62%).

Higher than average



Lower than average



It is concerning that Welsh owners are less likely to take their cat to the vet routinely each year, and especially as this figure has also dropped from last year (55%). Regular vet visits are important to allow early recognition of disease and therefore early intervention. This risks not only affecting welfare, but also pushing up the cost of veterinary care when cats present with advanced disease or long-established health problems that could have been caught sooner.

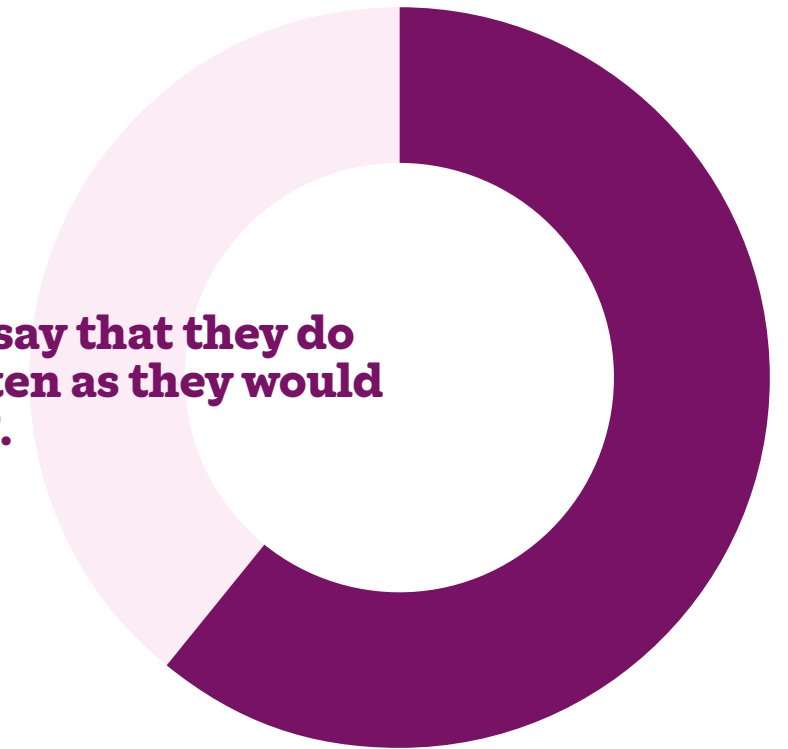
“Given recent high inflation and pressure on household incomes, it’s understandable that costs, including vet care, are a concern. However, deferring regular, preventative health check-ups with the vet could be storing up bigger health issues, which could cost more in the long run. We encourage all pet owners to speak to their vet if they have any concerns around cost. Vets will always prioritise the wellbeing of the pets in their care and find tailored treatment solutions that are right for both the animal and their owner.”

**Dr Anna Judson MRCVS,
 British Veterinary Association President**

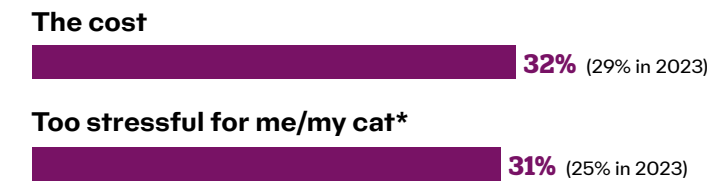


⁹ Question asked: Which of the following best describes how often you tend to go to the vet?

61% of Welsh owners say that they do not visit the vet as often as they would like to (55% in 2023)¹⁰.



Cost remains the top reason for Welsh owners not visiting the vet as much as the owner would like¹⁰.



It seems that people in Wales may be feeling the pinch of the cost-of-living crisis more than most, with a higher proportion expressing concern about paying bills compared to the UK as a whole, and cost increasingly being a reason that they don’t take their cat to the vet regularly. Stress, for both cat and owner, is also a main barrier to owners visiting the vet with their cat too, so tackling this must remain a focus for veterinary practices and welfare organisations.

42% of Welsh owners say that they only visit the vet when their cat is injured or unwell, which relies on owners recognising signs of illness and pain. This can be notoriously difficult in cats¹¹, who are also often perceived as being self-sufficient¹². These factors combined may mean that some cats who require veterinary care do not receive it and is the reason why Cats Protection is working hard to provide resources and support to owners, to help them to see the world through their cat’s eyes.

¹⁰ Question asked: Which of the following, if any, prevents you from taking your cat to the vet as often as you might like to?

¹¹ Gowan R, Iff I. Chronic pain and behaviour. In: Heath S (ed.) Feline behavioural health and welfare. St Louis: Elsevier, 2016, pp 184–212.

¹² 2021 AAHA/AAFP Feline Life Stage Guidelines - Jessica Quimby, Shannon Gowland, Hazel C Carney, Theresa DePorter, Paula Plummer, Jodi Westropp, 2021 (sagepub.com).

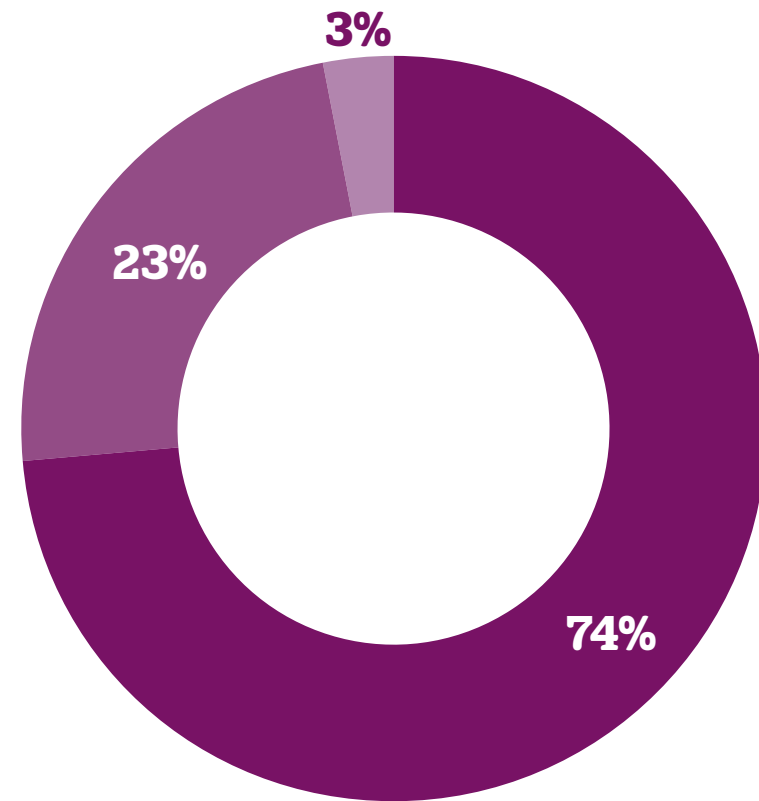
*Net of responses related to these themes.

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Microchipping¹³

Microchipping numbers are up in Wales.

- Microchipped: 74%** (71% in 2023)
- Not microchipped: 23%**
- Owners are unsure if their cat is microchipped or not: 3%**

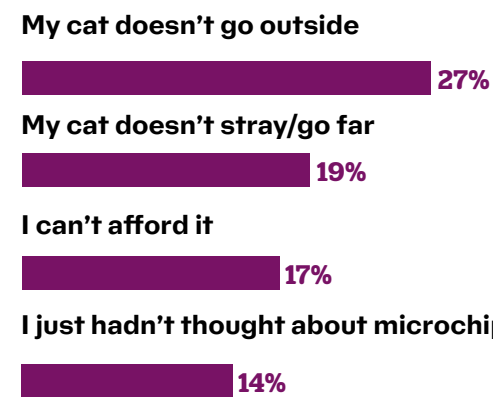


New regulations regarding compulsory microchipping of cats have come into force in England in June 2024. Microchipping numbers for dogs rose from 75% to 92% in the first four years following similar legislative changes and signs are positive that we will see the same result for cats¹⁴. This will hopefully help encourage the devolved nations to adopt similar legislation, something that Cats Protection continues to campaign for.

The cats less likely to be microchipped

Up to almost 125,000 Welsh cats are still potentially without a microchip, reducing their chances of being reunited with their owners, should they get lost or stolen.

The top reason for not microchipping is that the cat doesn't go outside, followed by owners believing that their cat doesn't go far from home¹⁵.



¹³ Question asked: Is your cat microchipped?
¹⁴ Microchipping your pet is the best New Year's resolution you could make - GOV.UK (gov.uk).
¹⁵ Question asked: Which of the below best describes the reasons why your cat is not microchipped?



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

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

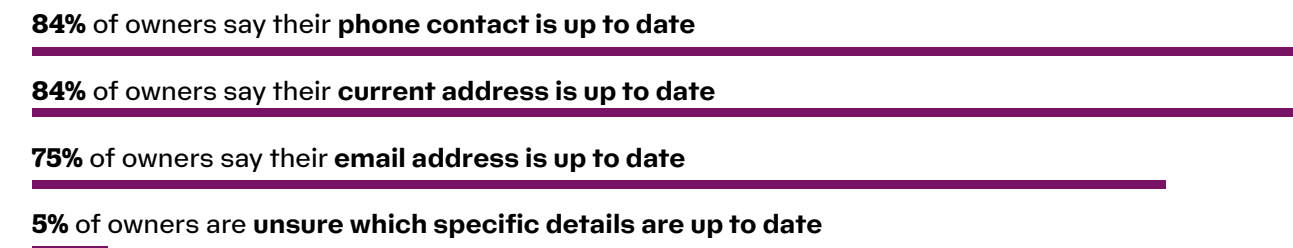
Madison Rogers, Head of Advocacy, Campaigns & Government Relations, Cats Protection



Microchips and keeping details up to date¹⁶

93% of cats in Wales with a microchip have up-to-date details (91% in 2023).

Of these



Of the owners that have had their cat microchipped, approximately the same proportion as last year say that their details are up to date. However, this leaves many Welsh cats who are microchipped with details that are out of date, potentially rendering their microchip useless, should they become separated from their family.

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

¹⁶ Questions asked: Are your cat's registered microchip details up to date?/Which of the following microchip details are up to date?

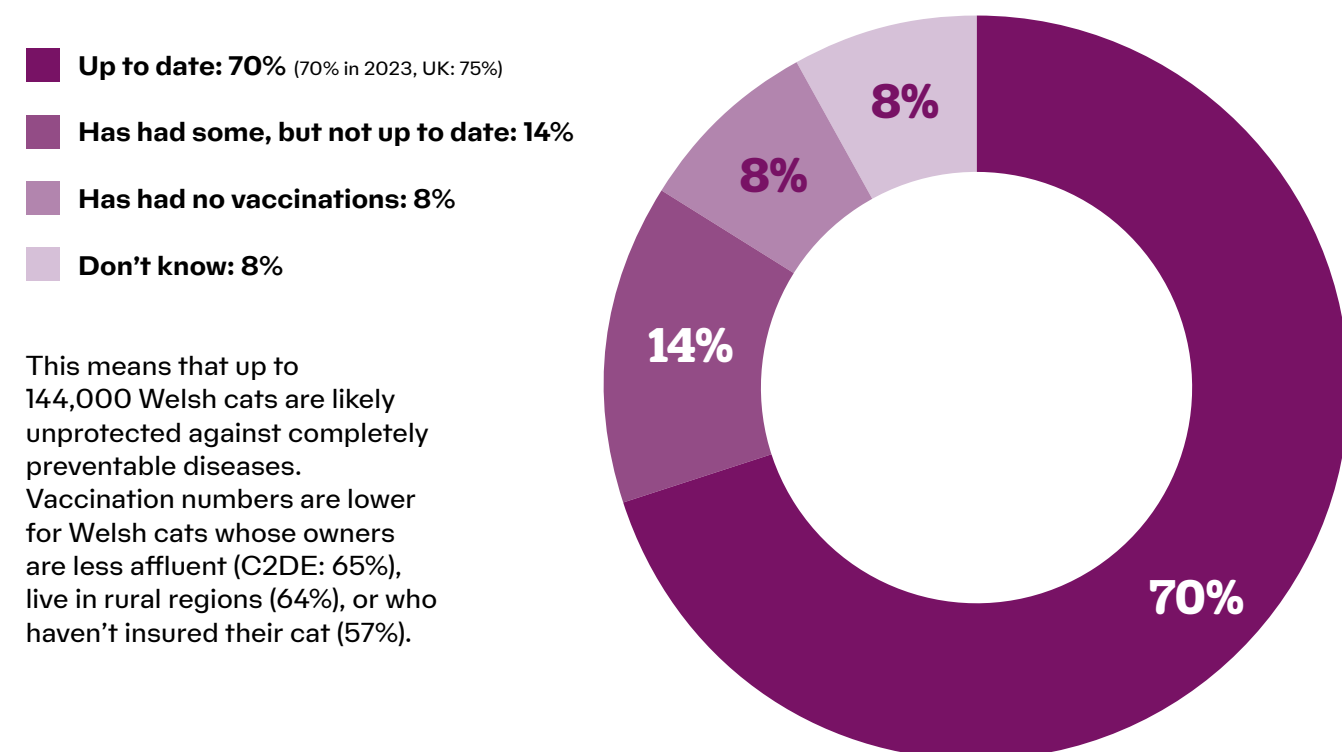
Insurance¹⁷

Insurance rates have remained in line with last year for Welsh cats (42%).

The likelihood of a Welsh cat being insured drops as owner age increases (18 to 34: 47%, 35 to 54: 42%, 55+: 37%) and with socio-economic group (ABC1, more affluent: 49%. C2DE, less affluent: 33%). Even among many of the Welsh demographics with the highest insurance rates, figures are still lower than the UK as a whole, which this year, for the first time, reached 50% of the total cat population being insured.

Vaccinations¹⁸

Vaccination numbers in Wales lag behind the UK as a whole.

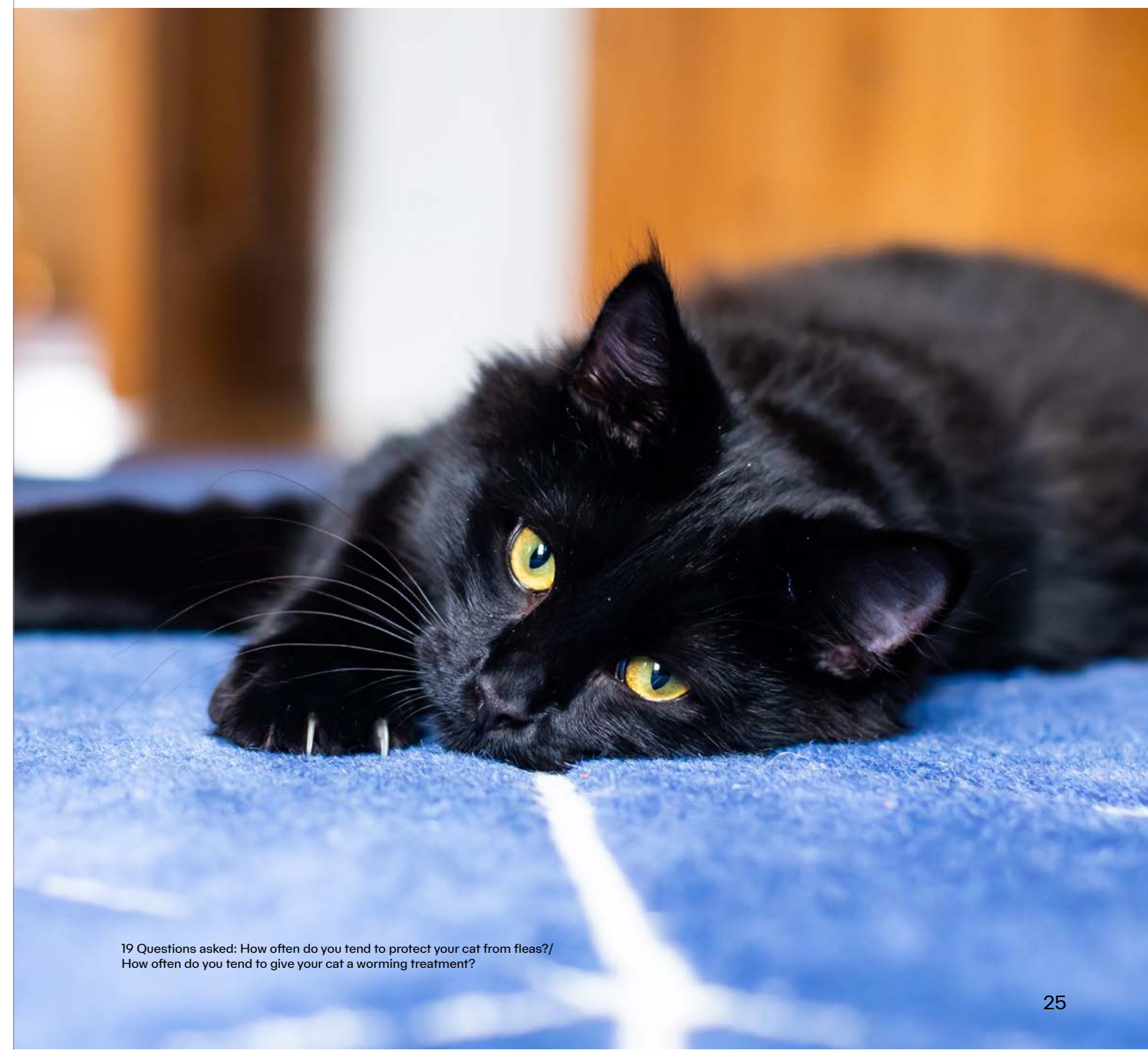


¹⁷ Question asked: Do you have pet insurance for your cat?
¹⁸ Question asked: Is your cat up to date with their vaccinations (for example, has had their booster vaccinations as relevant to their age)?

Parasite treatments¹⁹

As was the case last year, Welsh owners are among the best at protecting their cats against parasites, with 68% protecting against fleas and 63% protecting against worms throughout the year as advised (UK: 64% and 62%).

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



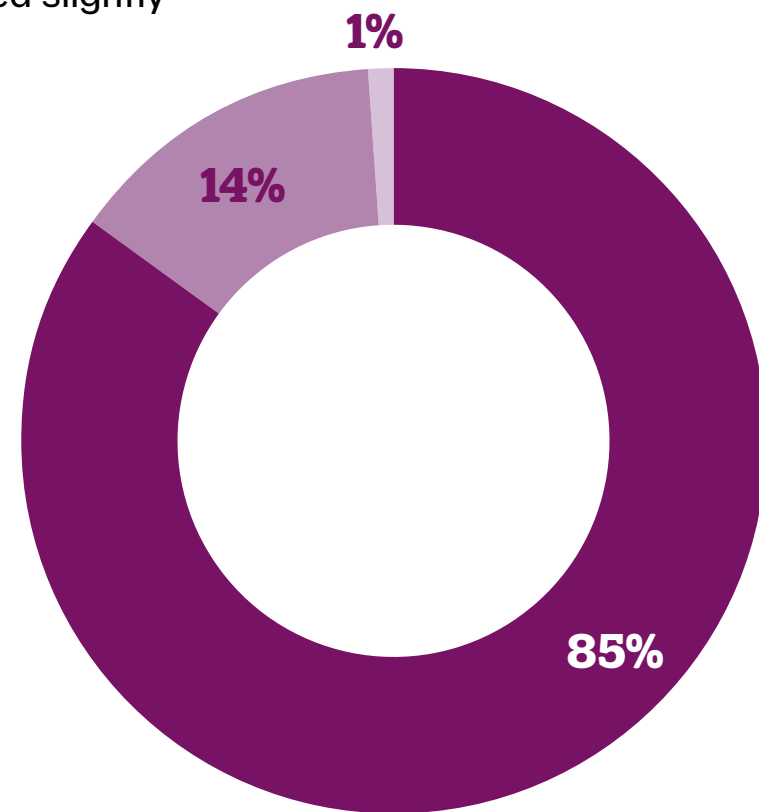
¹⁹ Questions asked: How often do you tend to protect your cat from fleas?/
 How often do you tend to give your cat a worming treatment?

Neutering and breeding²⁰

Neutering numbers have dropped slightly in Wales since last year.

- 85% are neutered** (87% in 2023)
- 14% are not neutered**
- 1%; the owner does not know**

These figures are in line with the UK average, however.



²⁰ Question asked: Is your cat neutered/spayed?



The Welsh cats less likely to have been neutered

Younger cat owners aged 18 to 34 are less likely to have neutered their cat, 74%, compared to 89% of 35 to 54-year-olds and 94% of those aged over 55. Owners living in rented accommodation are also less likely to have their cat neutered, 76%.

Cost is a significant barrier to neutering in Wales²¹.

I can't afford it

21% (18% in 2023)

My cat doesn't go outside

21% (15% in 2023)

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

17% (16% in 2023)

Once again, cost is increasingly a significantly higher barrier to neutering in Wales compared to the UK as a whole (UK: 13%).

There has also been a rise in those who are not neutering because their cat is kept indoors. The rise in owners proactively wanting their cat to have kittens seen in the UK-wide data is not seen in Wales.

“Cats Protection is still seeing large numbers of cats on waiting lists for rehoming services up and down the country and significant numbers of unowned cats living on the streets in localised areas. We must consider how best to direct resources to help and reduce the number of unwanted cats, aiming for a ‘balanced’ cat population.

“As part of this, it is important for Cats Protection to understand variation across communities in terms of cat health and welfare priorities, the people they live alongside and the wider environment. That way, resources can be directed towards interventions that are bespoke and targeted, to generate the most benefit for cats. In doing so we will also be in a better position to explore a neutering offer that reaches those cats that are most in need.”

Dr Jenni McDonald, Feline Epidemiologist, Cats Protection

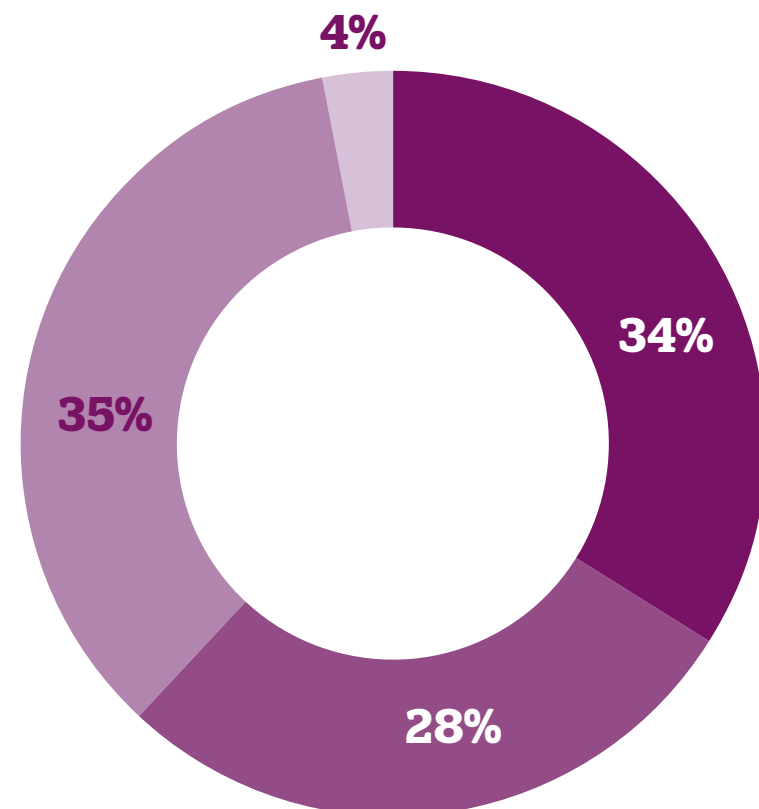


²¹ Question asked: What are the reasons your cat is not neutered? Filtered by owners of cats that are not neutered. Only responses over 10% shown.

Diet and body weight²²

Welsh owner perception of their cat's weight.

- Overweight: 34%**
- Ideal weight: 28%**
- Underweight: 35%**
- Don't know: 4%**



4% of Welsh owners feel their cat is very overweight, placing their cat in the very highest body condition scores (8/9 and 9/9).

Veterinary professionals generally believe that the prevalence of obesity in the pet population has increased over the last five years, predicting as many as 44% of cats in the UK are overweight or obese²³. What is clear is that support for all groups to understand how to accurately assess the body condition of the nation's cats, as well as evidence-based advice on how to best manage a cat's weight, would be beneficial.

For example, the two factors found to be independently associated with an increased risk of cat obesity (at around one year of age) were cats with restricted/no outdoor access, and cats fed dry food as the only or major (greater than 50%) type of food in their diet²⁴.

²² Question asked: Which of the following descriptions and images would you say best reflects your cat in relation to their size?

²³ www.ukpetfood.org/resource/pet-obesity-report-2019.html

²⁴ Rowe E, Browne W, Casey R, Gruffydd-Jones T, Murray J. Risk factors identified for owner-reported feline obesity at around one year of age: Dry diet and indoor lifestyle. Preventive veterinary medicine. 2015 Oct 1;121(3-4):273-81.

Health conditions and injury²⁵

80% of Welsh cat owners state that their cat has no diagnosed health conditions, similar to last year (79%).

Top four most common health conditions in Welsh cats.

- Overgrooming**
 3%
- Dental disease**
 2%
- Arthritis**
 2%
- Obesity**
 2%

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

"It can be difficult to recognise poor health in cats, as the signs can be subtle. We're keen to support Welsh cat owners in interpreting indicators of pain or stress in their cat, and to help them understand how to assess their cat's body condition. We often see how providing support in these areas for owners can help prevent cat relinquishment, and obviously, that's a huge win all-around."

Dr Isobel McCarroll MRCVS, Field Veterinary Officer, Wales, West Midlands and South West England, Cats Protection



²⁵ Question asked: Does your cat have any of the following diagnosed health issues/conditions?

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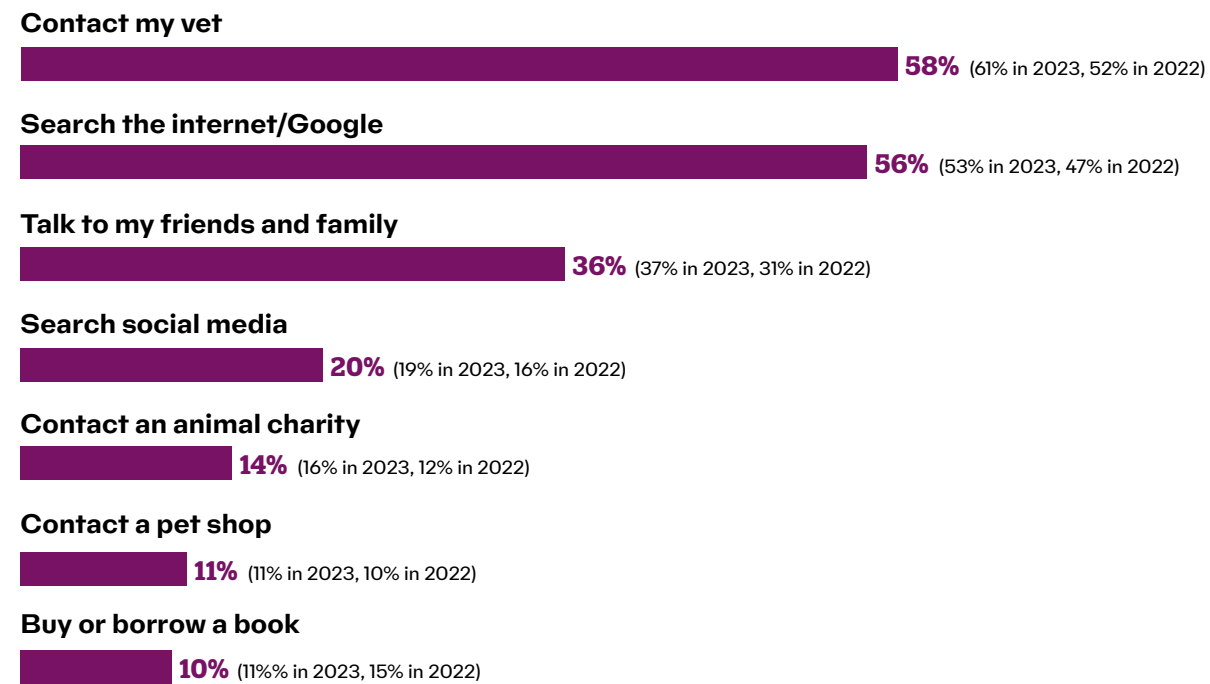
Cat care, welfare and behaviour

Sources of cat care information

Fewer people in Wales are doing research before getting a cat²⁶



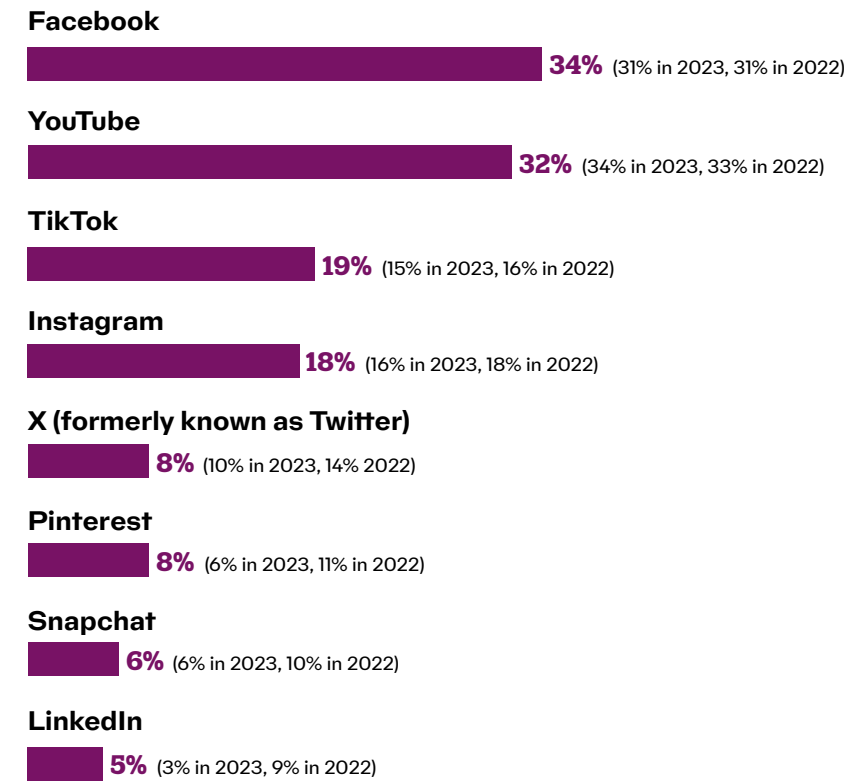
Overall, Welsh owners still turn to their vet first as a primary source of information about cats but people are Googling more and more²⁷.



²⁶ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with the following statement (I did lots of research before getting my cats)?

²⁷ Question asked: Which of the following would you do if you were seeking information or advice about your cat/s?

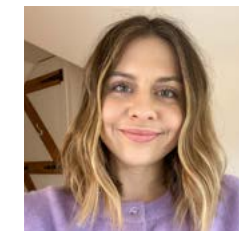
The use of social media platforms as regular sources of information about cats for Welsh owners continues to grow²⁸.



Online resources are becoming increasingly common as the first place that Welsh owners turn to for advice, with younger people showing a stronger preference for social media (18 to 34: 25%). Welsh cat owners aged 35 to 54 would rather use search engines to seek information about their cat (63%), than contact their vet (55%).

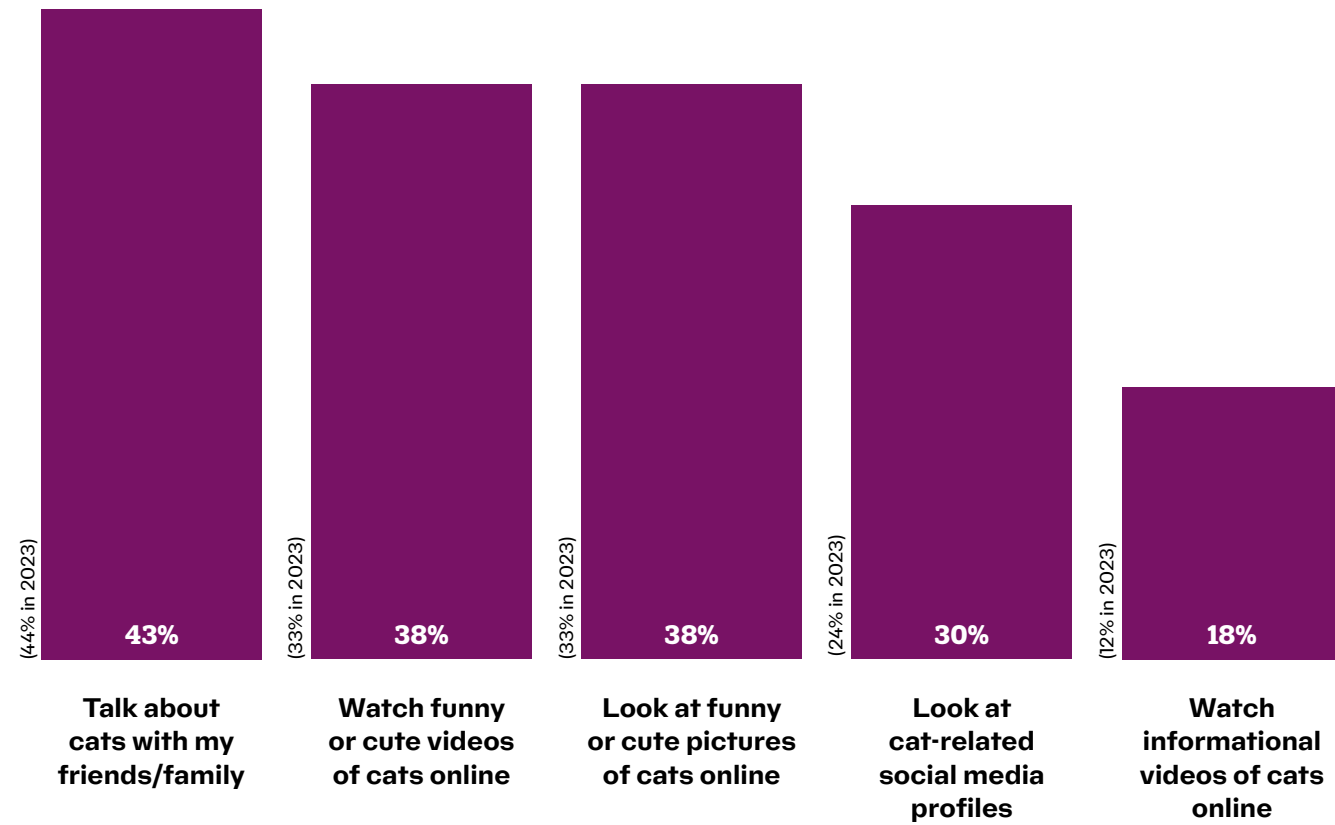
“Ensuring good quality and accessible content for younger owners is essential, and Cats Protection is dedicated to continually growing its presence online, particularly on TikTok. This includes a continued focus on ensuring appropriate representation of cats online and keeping a careful eye on the welfare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

Faye Shellard, Social Media Manager, Cats Protection



²⁸ Question asked: Which of the following, if any, do you use/visit on a regular basis when looking for the following content related to cats (information/advice)?

Top five cat-related activities that Welsh owners engage in several times a week or more²⁹



Cats continue to increasingly be enjoyed by cat owners online, particularly cute or funny content. Over three quarters (77%) of Welsh owners say that they look at funny or cute pictures or videos of cats online at least once a month³⁰.

Overall, Facebook and YouTube remain popular sources of 'fun' cat-related content (Facebook: 42%, YouTube: 37%). TikTok has seen a huge rise in popularity for this kind of content (35%, 28% in 2023), and is the most popular source of fun cat content for Welsh owners aged 18 to 24 (73%)²⁷.

²⁹ Question asked: How often do you tend to do each of the following? Top two response boxes included (at least once a day, several times a week).
³⁰ Question asked: How often do you tend to do each of the following?

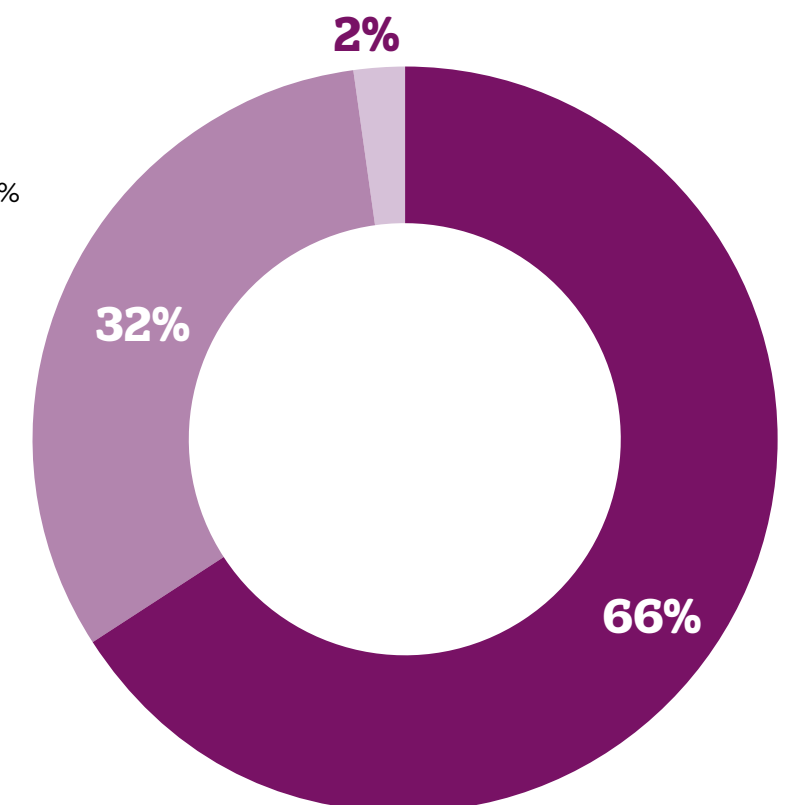


A cat's environment

Indoor versus outdoor cats

Most Welsh cats have outdoor access³¹.

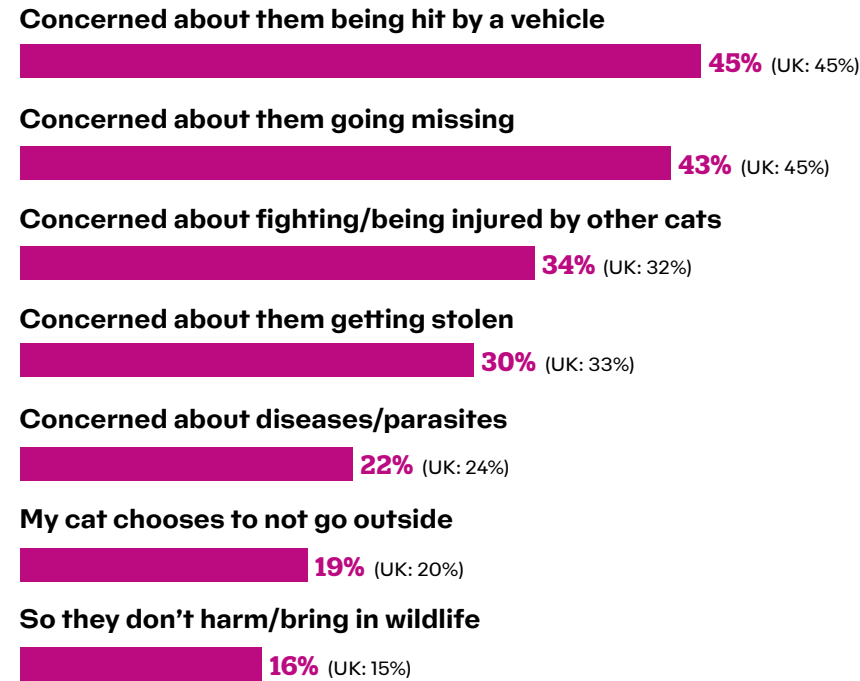
- They go both indoors and outdoors: 66% (67% in 2023)
- They always stay indoors: 32% (31% in 2023)
- 36% for the UK as a whole
- They always stay outdoors: 2% (2% in 2023)



³¹ Question asked: Which of the following best applies to your cat?

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

Owner concern over harm/disappearance keeps Welsh cats indoors³².



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

For owners that do choose to keep their cat indoors, it is essential that they go to extra efforts to provide what their cat needs. This includes the right diet and enough physical exercise to prevent obesity and its related health conditions, and including toys and puzzle feeders into their daily routine to satisfy their instinctive behavioural needs.

As a charity, we are passionate about providing owners of indoor cats with information and support to ensure their cats' needs are met.

³² Question asked: What are the reasons that your cat always stays indoors?
 Base: All Cat Owners, whose cat stays indoors. Only responses over 15% shown.

Preventing harm to cats

26% of Welsh cats have been injured since being in their owner's care³³.

Cat fights remain the most common cause of injury: 13%³³

Were involved in a fight with another animal



Were involved in a road accident



The high number of cat fight injuries indicates that owner education is needed on how cats interact and how to help avoid conflict. This is especially the case for the 3% of Welsh cats that were injured by a cat that they live with. Cats Protection is keen to build on current support for owners in tackling this issue.



Awareness of lily toxicity among Welsh cat owners has improved but 46% are still not aware of the risks³⁴.

Lily toxicity occurs when a cat eats any part of the lily plant, including pollen that ends up on their coat and the cat licks off while grooming. The toxins can cause kidney failure and, in some cases, prove fatal. Ideally owners should totally restrict their cat's access to lilies but if lily toxicity should occur, prompt veterinary care should be sought, as rapid treatment can prevent renal failure. To help increase awareness about the risks of these popular flowers, Cats Protection met with over 40 retailers of cut flowers through the British Retail Consortium to ask them to improve their labelling of lilies.

³³ Question asked: Since having your cat, has your cat ever been injured?

³⁴ Question asked: Which of the following popular cut flowers, if any, are you aware of being toxic to cats?

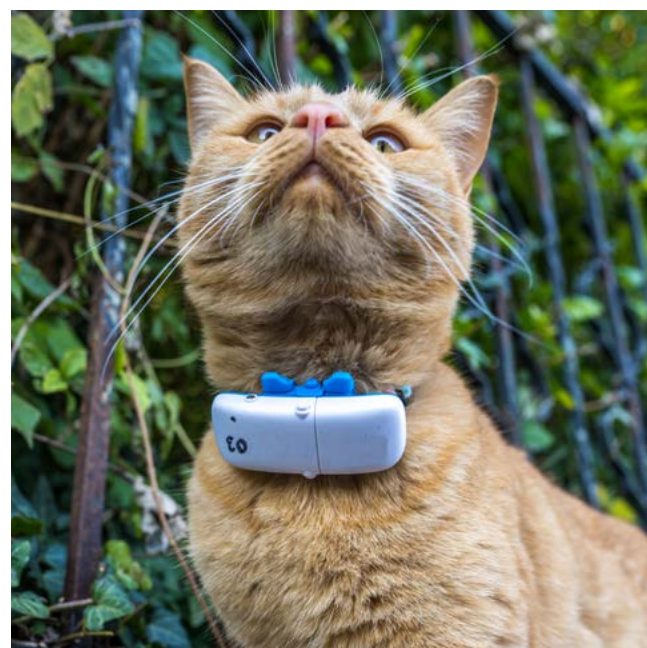
Accessories for cats³⁵

Some cat accessories seem to be gaining in popularity, although less so in Wales than other UK regions. Many of these accessories can be associated with stress for cats, so for the first time, we asked about the use of these items to help identify where there may be need for education.

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

Tracking devices: 6% (UK: 11%)

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



A cat harness: 8% (UK: 10%)

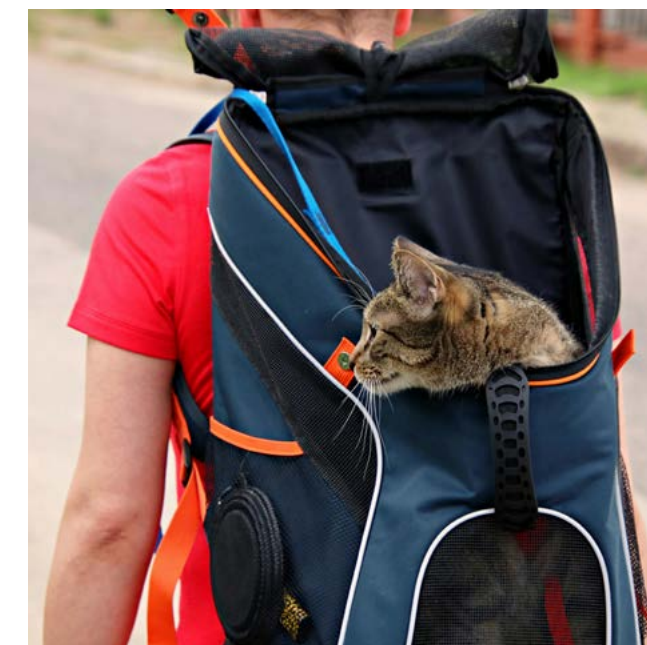
If not well fitted, harnesses can be uncomfortable for cats or allow escape. Most importantly, they prevent the flight response and feeling trapped can significantly escalate stress in cats, which in turn can lead to other behavioural problems including, but not limited to, aggression towards people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



³⁵ Question asked: Does your cat wear/get carried using any of the following?

A cat backpack: 5% (UK: 8%)

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



6% of Welsh owners say that they have taken their cat out for walks using a harness or lead³⁶.

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

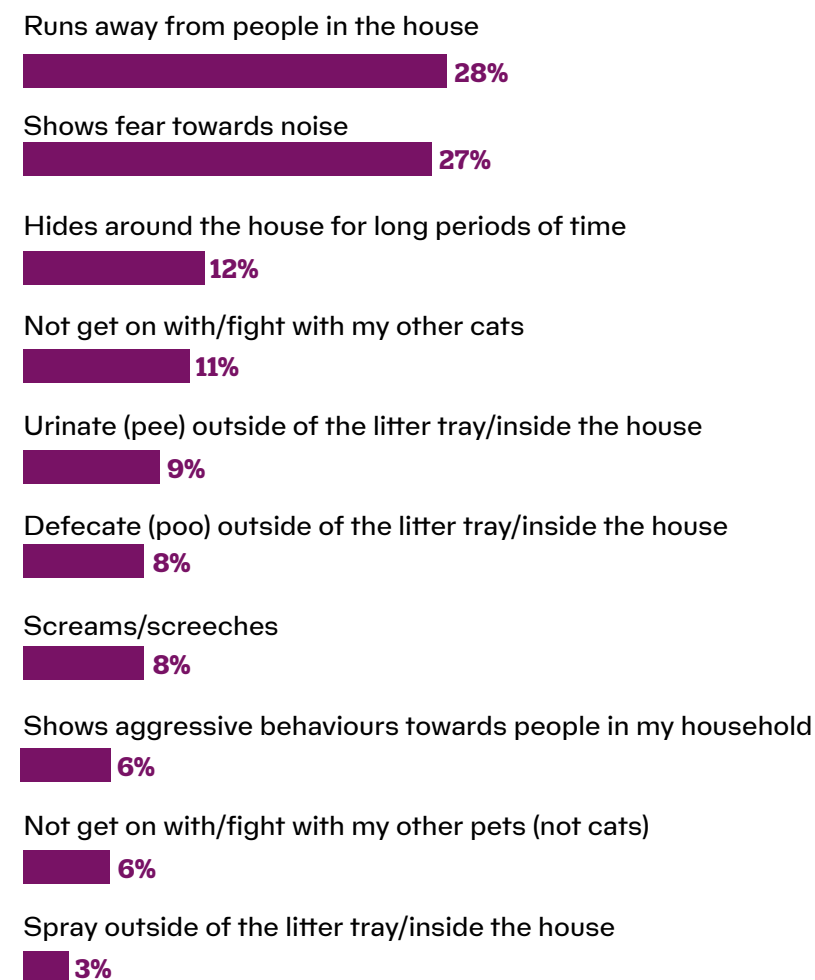


Daniel Warren-Cummings, Central Behaviour Officer, Cats Protection

³⁶ Question asked: In what ways does your cat have access to going outside/coming inside?

Behaviour and stress³⁷

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



61% of Welsh cats have displayed at least one potential stress behaviour in the last 12 months (UK: 64%).

Behaviour can be a complicated thing to analyse in cats, with a large degree of crossover between signs of some medical conditions, 'normal' behaviours, and those that indicate that a cat is stressed. Aggression and overt fear responses are more easily recognised, but typically only seen when cats are very stressed, with more subtle signs missed or dismissed by owners. Sometimes, 'normal' cat behaviours are deemed problematic by their owners. This risks owners focusing on the wrong behaviours as concerning, which has knock-on effects for that cat's welfare.

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

³⁷ Questions asked: Thinking about the past 12 months, which of the following does your cat tend to do, at least some of the time?/Which of the following do you consider problem behaviours that you would like to change?



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

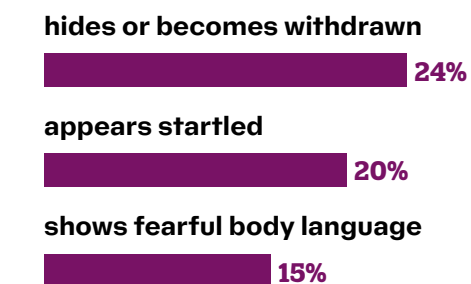
Nicky Trevorrow, Behaviour Manager, Cats Protection



Fireworks³⁸

Fireworks can be really distressing for all animals, including cats. 62% of Welsh cat owners that have witnessed their cat during fireworks say that their cat has been affected by them.

Fireworks continue to negatively impact cats. Top three behaviours:

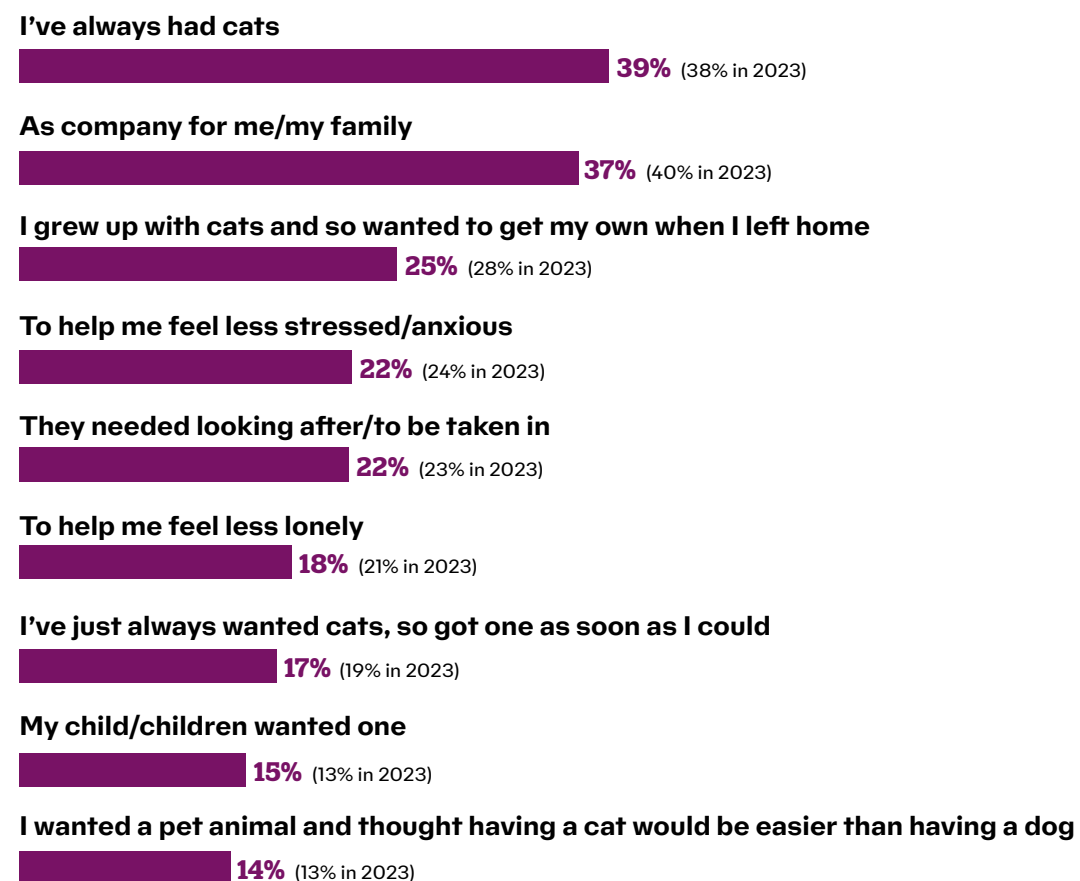


³⁸ Question asked: Does your cat tend to show any of the following signs of stress as a result of hearing fireworks? Filtered for owners that have seen their cat experience fireworks.

Companionship and challenges to ownership

Why we have cats

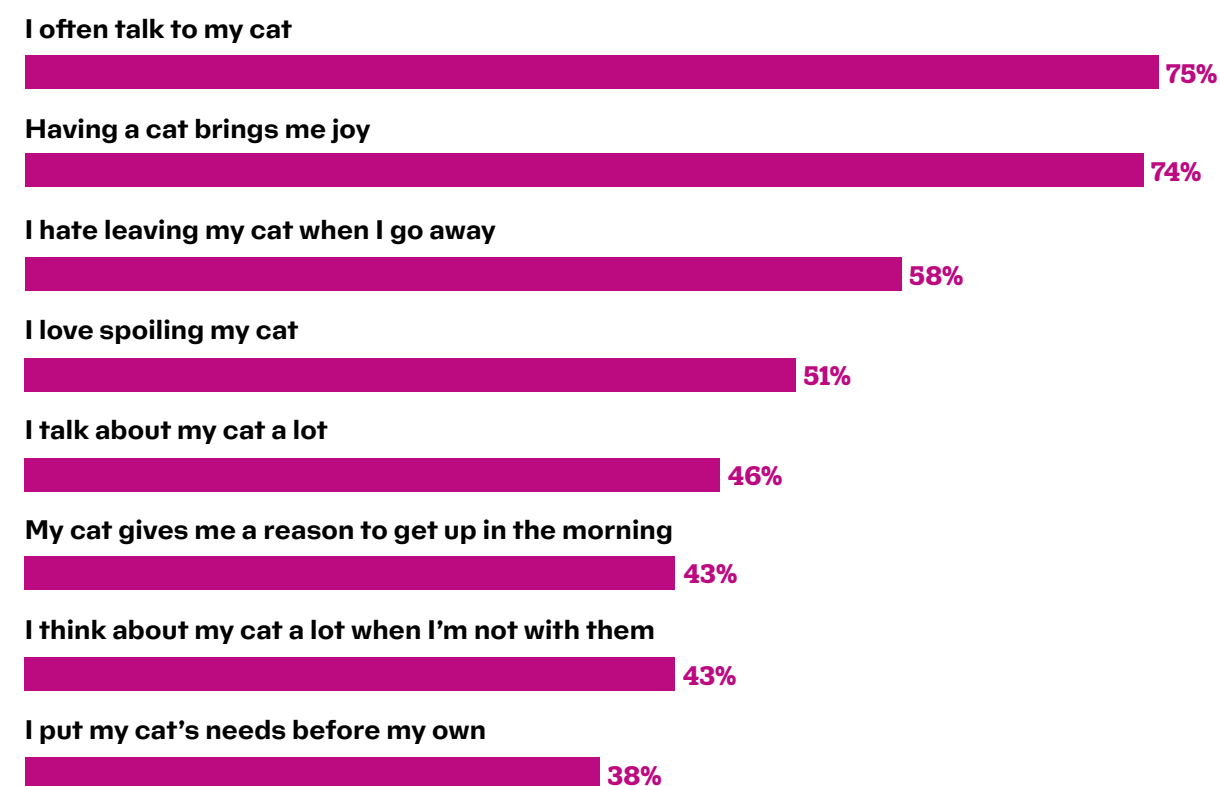
The wellbeing benefits of cat ownership are still a strong motivator for having a cat³⁹.



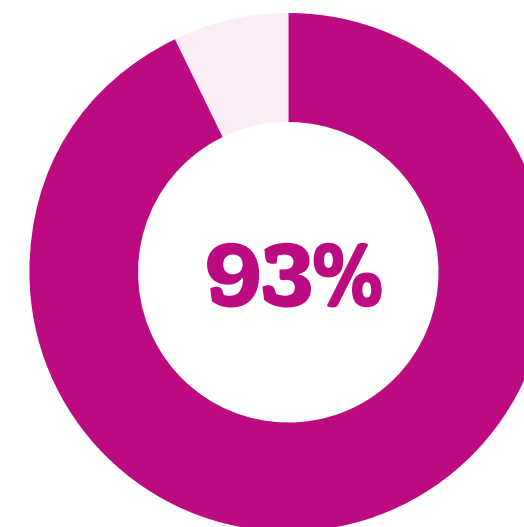
Once again, companionship, reducing loneliness and reducing stress are collectively the top reasons that Welsh people choose to own a cat (52%, 56% in 2023). However, people in Wales are more likely to have a cat because they thought the cat needed a home (22%), compared to the UK as a whole (18%).

³⁹ Question asked: What are the main reasons you have a cat/s? Multiple answers allowed.

Welsh owners form deep connections with their cat⁴⁰.



93% of Welsh cat owners agreed that they consider their cat part of the family, which clearly demonstrates the important position that cats hold within their households⁴⁰.



The majority of Welsh owners spend time with their cat at least once daily⁴¹.



⁴⁰ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about having a cat/s?
⁴¹ Question asked: In an average week, how often do you do each of the following with your cat?

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41% of Welsh cat owners also have children living in the household, with the majority of these children being under 10 years old⁴².

The benefits of cat ownership are well documented in children, particularly young children, including increased confidence and improved social-emotional development⁴³.

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

Male, 55 to 64, Wales



Lifeline. Supporting cat owners fleeing domestic abuse

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

One example is the pioneering Lifeline, a specialist cat fostering service for people experiencing domestic abuse, which was extended into Wales in 2024. Ensuring that their cat will be taken care of until they can be safely reunited, Lifeline offers peace of mind about one concern at a very challenging time.

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

Contact the National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247 or nationaldahelpline.org.uk

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

Amy Hyde, National Lifeline Manager, Cats Protection



⁴² Questions asked: Do you have any children?/How old are your children?
⁴³ Christian H, Mitrou F, Cunneen R, Zubrick SR. Pets are associated with fewer peer problems and emotional symptoms, and better prosocial behavior: Findings from the longitudinal study of Australian children. The Journal of Pediatrics. 2020 May 1;220:200-6.

Paws to Listen: Where grief finds understanding

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

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

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

Catherine Joyce, Paws to Listen Team Leader, Cats Protection



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The impact of cost of living on cat owners

The impact of cost-of-living increases has not eased, with 39% of Welsh owners saying that they have been significantly and negatively impacted by the rise in living costs⁴⁴. This figure is higher than the UK as a whole (34%), suggesting Welsh cat owners are feeling the pinch more. 23% of Welsh cat owners are very concerned about being able to pay bills and other living costs over the next 12 months (UK: 20%).

This concern translates across to care for cats too, with 13% of Welsh owners seriously worried about how they will meet their cat's needs in the future⁴⁵. 7% say that they have already had to reduce their spending on necessities such as cat food and litter and 4% have had to rely on food banks to feed their cat⁴⁶. Over a quarter of Welsh owners (28%) have doubts about how they would pay vet bills if their cat became sick or injured⁴⁵.

In 2023, across the UK, 1,700 cats were given up to Cats Protection for financial reasons, representing 6% of all cats given up.

Cost concerns are also preventing many cats from entering loving homes in the first place. Across the UK, 16% of people who would like to share their lives with a cat say they can't right now because of affordability⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ Question asked: To what extent have your household finances been negatively impacted by the rising cost of living since January 2022?

⁴⁵ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

⁴⁶ Question asked: And thinking about the last 12 months, which of the below, if any, apply to you?

⁴⁷ Question asked: You said that you were planning to buy/adopt a cat soon; why have you not done so before?

Cats in summary

State of the nation

- Cat ownership:

	In millions		% of cat-owning households	
	2023	2024	2023	2024
Total UK	11	10.6	26%	25%
England	9.2	9.0	26%	25%
Wales	0.6	0.5	29%	24%
Scotland	0.8	0.8	22%	22%
Northern Ireland	0.2	0.2	21%	21%

- 24% of households in Wales own a cat (29% in 2023)
- There are around 480,000 owned cats in Wales (620,000 in 2023)
- The average number of cats per cat-owning household in Wales is 1.7 cats, with 57% of households having one cat, and 43% owning two or more cats

The cat market

- Unlike the UK as a whole, the proportion of the pet cat population that is 'bought' in Wales is similar to those that are adopted (data shown for all cats in current population)

	Cat was acquired...			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Bought	21%	23%	25%	24%
Adopted	26%	26%	21%	24%

- The overall relative proportion of moggies to pedigrees remains the same in Wales, compared to last year
- As with the rest of the UK, pedigree cats do appear to be increasing in popularity in Wales though, with a higher proportion of pedigree cats acquired in the last 12 months, compared to the preceding 12 months (2023: 30%)

	Cats acquired in...				Total pet cat population
	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	the last year	
Moggy/ domestic shorthair or longhair	61%	58%	55%	56%	65%
Pedigree/ purebred	25%	26%	29%	34%	23%

Veterinary care

- 27% of Welsh owners state that they have experienced difficulty accessing a vet
- 10% of cats (48,000) are not registered with a vet
- Welsh cat owners are less likely to routinely take their cat to the vet each year, compared to the UK as a whole (53% versus 62%)
- 61% of Welsh owners say that they do not visit the vet as often as they would like to (55% in 2023)
- Cost remains the top reason for Welsh owners not visiting the vet as much as owner would like (32%, 29% in 2023)
- Microchipping numbers are increasing in cats, following the introduction of compulsory pet cat microchipping in England. 74% are microchipped, 23% are not microchipped
- Insurance numbers have remained in line with last year for Welsh cats: 42%
- Vaccination numbers in Wales lag behind the UK as a whole. Up to date: 70%
- Neutering numbers have dropped slightly in Wales:
 - 85% are neutered (87% in 2023)
 - 14% are not neutered
 - 1%; the owner does not know

Cat care, welfare and behaviour

- Most cats have outdoor access; 66% go both indoors and outdoors, 32% always stay indoors
- 61% of cats have displayed at least one potential stress behaviour in the last 12 months

Companionship and challenges to ownership

- The wellbeing benefits of cat ownership are still the main driving force behind having a cat:
 - companionship, reducing loneliness and reducing stress are collectively the top reasons that people choose to own a cat (52%)
 - people in Wales are more likely to have a cat because they thought the cat needed a home (22%), compared to the UK as a whole (18%)
- 93% of Welsh cat owners agreed that they consider their cat part of the family, which clearly demonstrates the important position that cats hold within their households

Cost of living

- The impact of cost-of-living increases has not eased, with 39% of Welsh owners saying that they have been significantly and negatively impacted by the rise in living costs. This figure is higher than the UK as a whole (34%), suggesting Welsh cat owners are feeling the pinch more
- Over a quarter of owners (28%) have doubts about how they would pay vet bills if their cat became sick or injured
- 13% of owners seriously worried about how they will meet their cat's needs in the future

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Where do we go from here?

A message from John May, Chief Executive, Cats Protection

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

It is clear from this report that younger cat owners care greatly for their beloved companions, spending more time searching for advice about how to best look after their cat, ensuring they have insurance and making sure their cat is up to date with vaccinations.

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

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

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

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

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

The government also has a key role in addressing these challenges. With a growing but largely unregulated market, we know there are unscrupulous individuals out there looking to make a profit, breeding cats in poor conditions and with extreme body types, detrimental to their welfare. Cats Protection welcomes the government considering the regulation of Animal Welfare Establishments in Wales. If enacted, this legislation will ensure the welfare and safety of cats in Welsh rescue centres and end the practice of unscrupulous breeders posing as rescue centres to circumvent third-party selling laws.

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

John May OBE DL, Chief Executive, Cats Protection



Services

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

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

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

cats.org.uk/neutering

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

cats.org.uk/education

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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