

CATS Report

Cats and Their Stats Scotland 2024

- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market
- Veterinary care
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour
- Companionship and challenges to ownership
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services



Contents page

Key findings

State of the nation

The cat market

Veterinary care

Cat care, welfare and behaviour

Companionship and challenges to ownership

Cats in summary

Where do we go from here?

Services



Contents

4	Methodology	28	Cat care, welfare and behaviour
5	Welcome	28	Sources of cat care information
6	A message from Sheila M Voas, Chief Veterinary Officer (Scotland)	31	A cat's environment
7	Key findings	33	Preventing harm to cats
8	State of the nation	36	Behaviour and stress
8	Cat population	37	Fireworks
9	Household cat ownership across the UK	38	Companionship and challenges to ownership
10	Profile of cat owners	38	Why we have cats
12	The cat market	45	The impact of cost of living on cat owners
15	What type of cats do people have?	46	Cats in summary
16	Veterinary care	48	Where do we go from here? A message from John May, Chief Executive.
16	Veterinary capacity	50	Services
17	Vet registration		
18	Vet visits		
20	Microchipping		
22	Insurance		
22	Vaccinations		
23	Parasite treatments		
24	Neutering and breeding		
26	Diet and body weight		
27	Health conditions and injury		

Methodology

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

An online survey was used to collect information among a nationally representative audience of adults over the age of 18 in Scotland, 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 Scotland 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 1,282 cat owners in Scotland.

Data presentation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Welcome to the annual Cats and Their Stats (CATS) Report Scotland© 2024

Welcome to CATS 2024, our fifth comprehensive survey about cats in Scotland, this is also the year that Cats Protection has proudly opened a brand new Cat Centre in Glasgow.

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 Scotland.

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 Sheila M Voas, BVM&S, ARAgS, hon DVM&S, FRCVS, Chief Veterinary Officer (Scotland)

Cats are a popular pet in Scotland, providing companionship and joy to their owners.

Sadly, some owners are unaware of the risk that not microchipping their cats means there is a danger of never being reunited with their beloved cats if they become lost. It is important that owners understand that even if their cat does not go outside or stray, they still need to be microchipped just in case they escape or get lost. A microchip is the quickest and easiest way of reuniting an owner with their lost pet, but owners must remember to also keep the contact details associated with the microchip up to date.

The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission, which advises the Scottish Government, is completing a report on responsible cat ownership. The project is looking into welfare issues relating to domestic cats including microchipping.

The Scottish Government's Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats recommends microchipping as best practice for identifying cats that are lost. A microchip, accompanied by up-to-date contact information helps organisations like Cats Protection who find lost cats to quickly reunite them with their owners, vitally freeing up their time and resources for the cats that need them the most, as well as reducing stress for cats and their owners.



Key findings

State of the nation

- There are around 840,000 owned cats in Scotland, a slight increase from 830,000 in 2023
- There remains a younger age skew for cat owners in Scotland, compared to the general Scottish population
- Scottish cat owners are slightly more likely to be female than male

The cat market

- The proportion of the pet cat population that is 'bought' in Scotland has increased and is higher than the UK as a whole
- For the first time, more pedigree cats were acquired in the last 12 months in Scotland than moggies
- There is concern around the potential for breeds with extreme traits to become more popular

Veterinary care

- 55% of Scottish owners say that they do not visit the vet as often as they would like to
- Nearly three quarters of Scottish cats are microchipped but this still leaves around 235,000 potentially without a microchip
- There has been a rise in Scottish owners who are not neutering because their cat is kept indoors

Cat care, welfare and behaviour

- More people in Scotland are doing research before getting a cat
- Social media is growing as a source of information about cat care, particularly for younger owners
- For the first time, we have gained insight into the use of accessories such as leads/harnesses and backpack carriers, which indicates they are more widely used than thought. Many of these accessories are associated with increased stress for cats

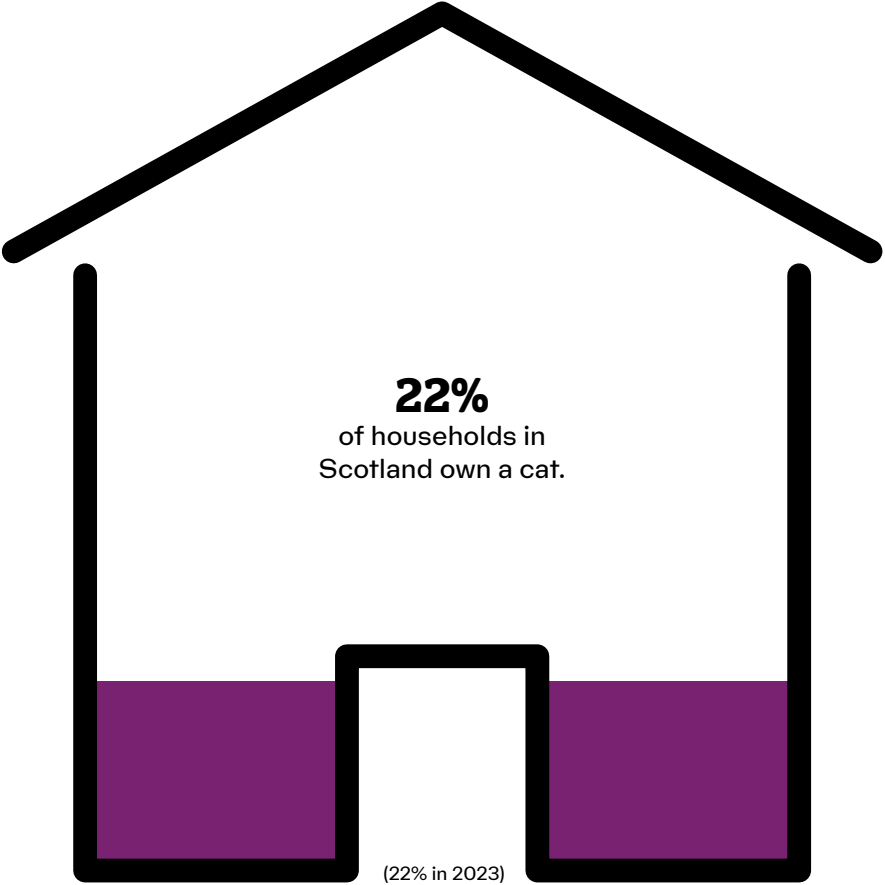
Companionship and challenges to ownership

- The wellbeing benefits of cat ownership are still a strong motivator for having a cat in Scotland
- The majority of Scottish owners spend time with their cat at least once daily
- The cost of living continues to impact Scottish cat owners, with over a third significantly and negatively impacted

State of the nation

- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation**
- The cat market
- Veterinary care
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour
- Companionship and challenges to ownership
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services

Cat population¹



There are around **840,000 owned cats** in Scotland.

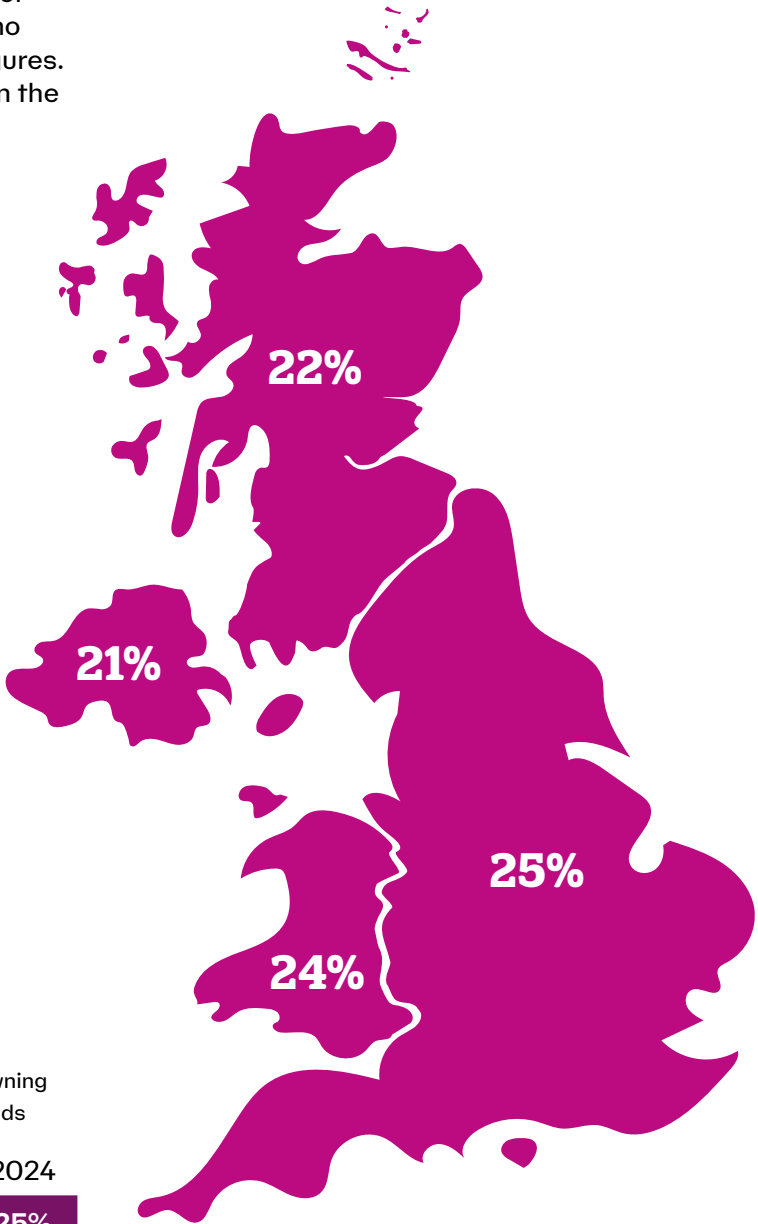
(830,000 in 2023)

The average number of cats per cat-owning household in Scotland is 1.5 cats (1.5 in 2023), with 63% of households having one cat, and 37% owning two or more cats. These figures are similar to the UK as a whole.

¹ Questions asked: Do you currently have a cat/s (that live with you)?/How many cats do you have in your household?
 Example calculation: 25% own a cat in the UK x 28.1m UK households* x 1.5 cats owned on average = 10.6 million cats owned across the UK.
 *Source: ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/datasets/familiesandhouseholds England regional breakdowns only. Sample size too small for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland regions.

Household cat ownership across the UK¹

Cat ownership levels vary across the UK, ranging from 21% of households in Northern Ireland owning one or more cats, to 25% of households in England, with no statistically significant changes from last year's figures. Ownership levels in Scotland are slightly lower than the UK as a whole.



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

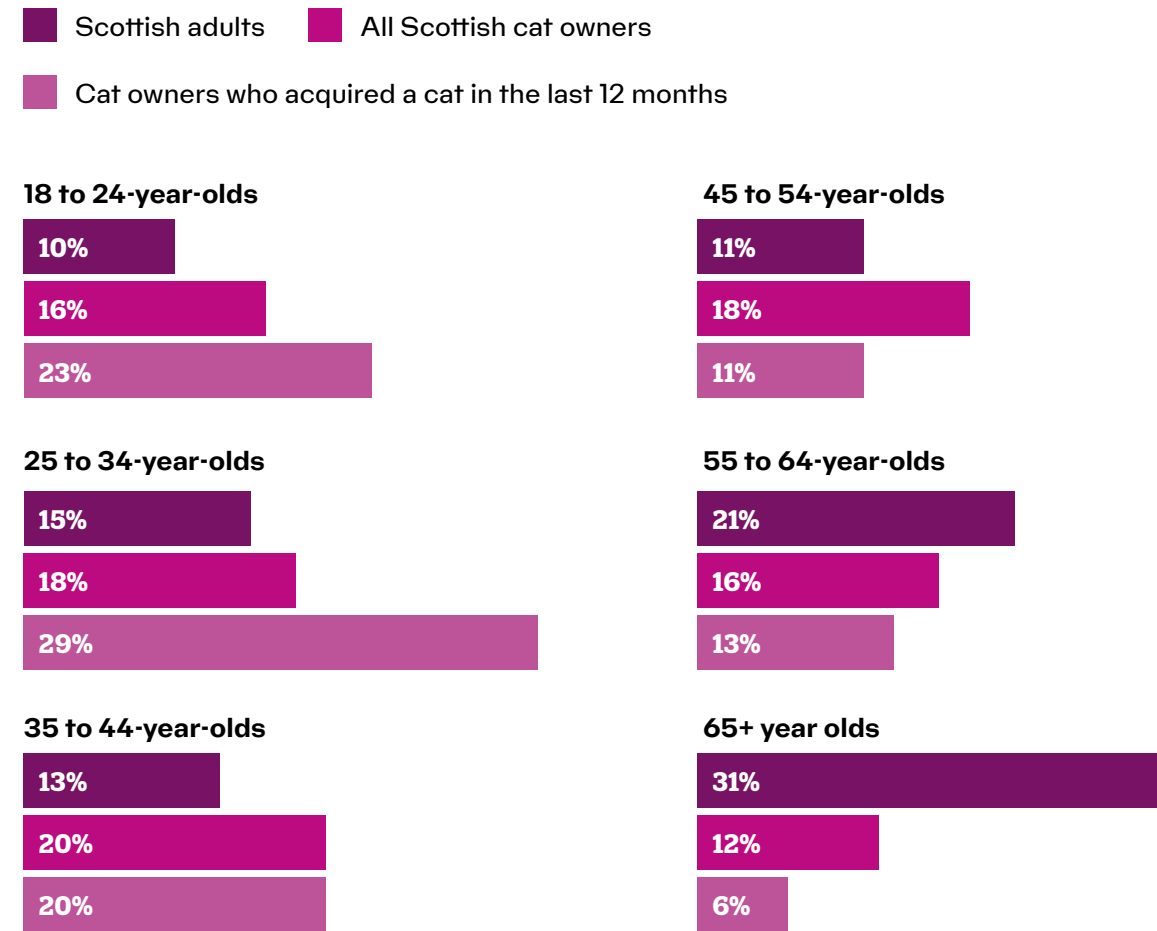
	In millions		% of cat-owning households	
	2023	2024	2023	2024
Total UK	11	10.6	26%	25%
England	9.2	9.0	26%	25%
Wales	0.6	0.5	29%	24%
Scotland	0.8	0.8	22%	22%
Northern Ireland	0.2	0.2	21%	21%

Profile of cat owners²

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



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

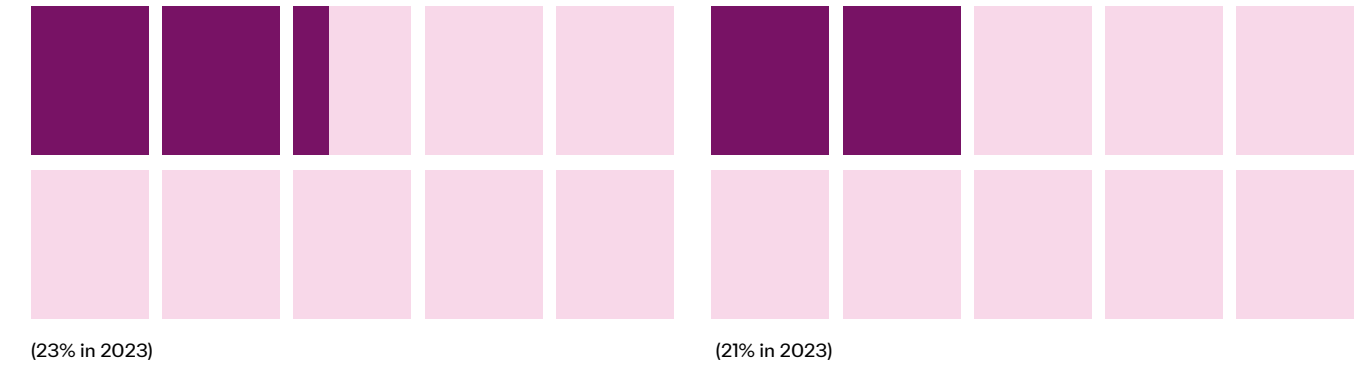


Those acquiring a cat in the last 12 months tend to be younger than the overall profile of Scottish cat owners, but slightly less so than the UK as a whole and some other devolved nations.

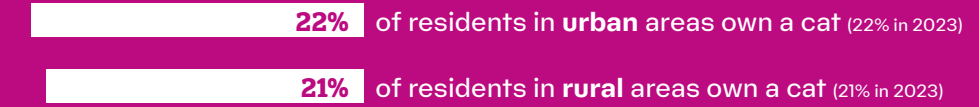
² Questions asked: Do you currently have a cat/s (that live with you)?/How many cats do you have in your household?/When did you acquire (for example, buy/adopt) your cat?

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

23% of females in Scotland own a cat **20%** of males in Scotland own a cat

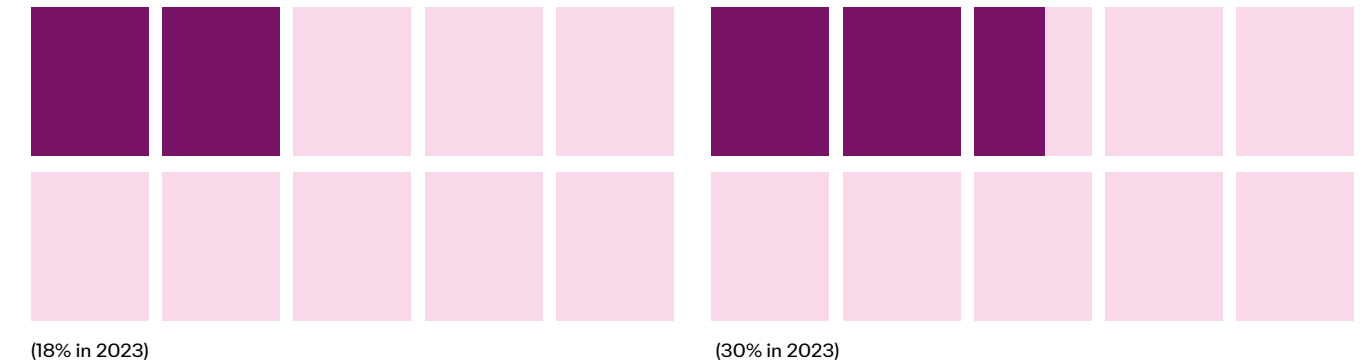


Where cats live in Scotland remains consistent with last year³.



Cat ownership is more likely for homeowners than those in rented accommodation in Scotland.

20% of those who rent a home own a cat **26%** of those who own a home own a cat



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

- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market**
- Veterinary care
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour
- Companionship and challenges to ownership
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services

The cat market

14% of the current Scottish cat population were acquired during the last 12 months, equating to nearly 120,000 cats⁴.

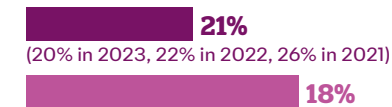
The proportion of the pet cat population that is 'bought' in Scotland has increased and is higher than the UK as a whole (34%) (data shown for all cats in current population)⁴. However, the gap between purchase and adoption is even wider for cats acquired in the last 12 months.

■ Acquired any time ■ Acquired in the last 12 months

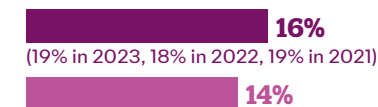
Bought*:



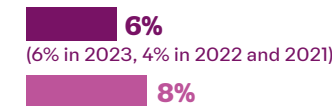
Adopted from a rescue/rehoming centre/animal shelter in UK



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 Scottish pet cat population where around:

320,000 were bought

185,000 were taken on or taken in

175,000 were adopted from UK rescue/rehoming centres/animal shelters



- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market**
- Veterinary care
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour
- Companionship and challenges to ownership
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services

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'.



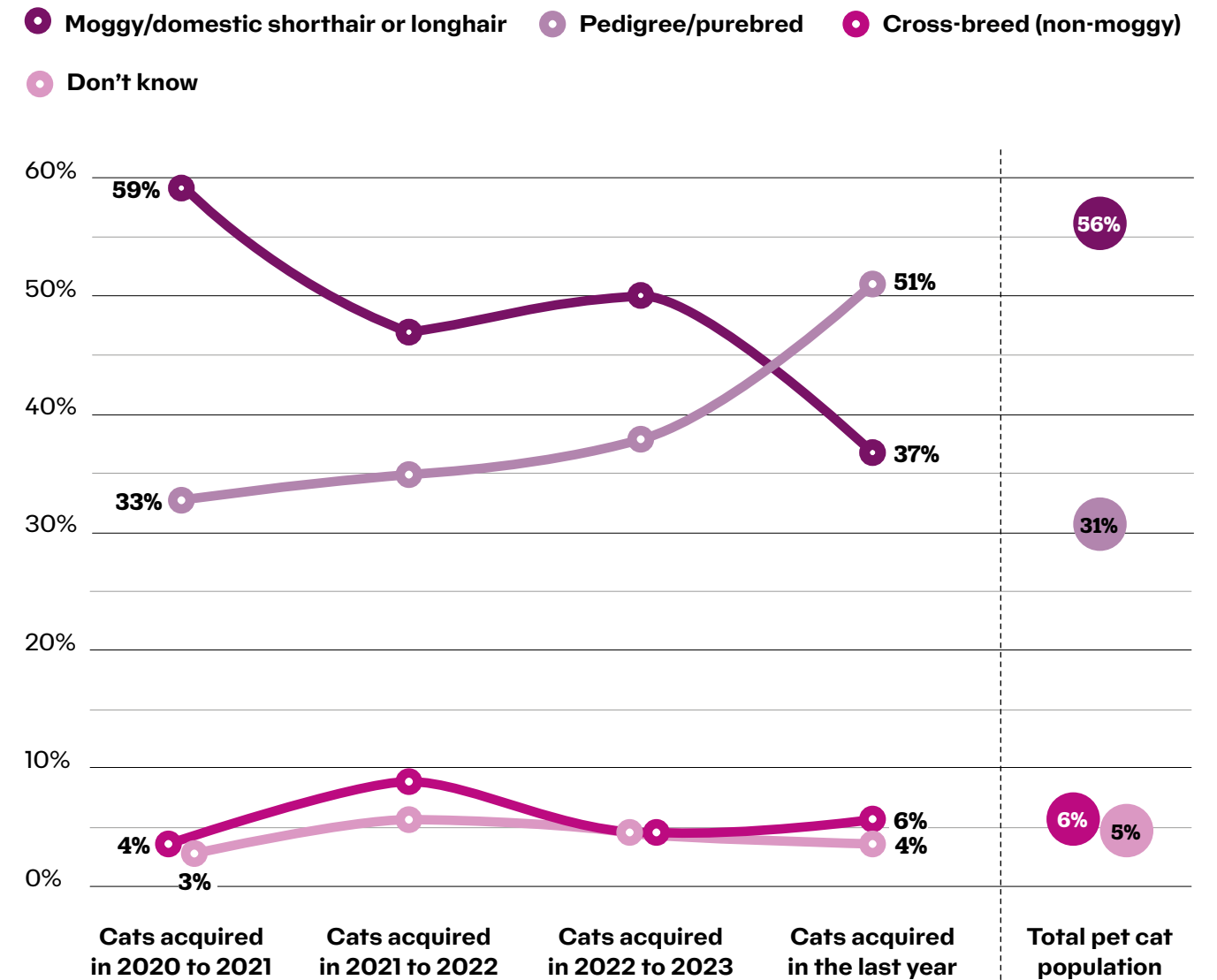
"The ongoing increase in cats acquired in Scotland being of pedigree/purebred origin is of some concern as this is likely to include cats with extreme characteristics and wildcat hybrids. Popularised by celebrities and social media, new owners are not always aware of the health and welfare conditions associated with certain breeds. Cats Protection is here to support Scottish owners with the welfare, behaviour and care for all cats."

Dr Fiona Brockbank MRCVS,
Field Veterinary Officer for
Scotland, Cats Protection



What type of cats do people have?

Pedigree cats seem particularly popular in Scotland, with a significant increase in the proportion of pedigree cats acquired in the last 12 months compared to previous years⁵.



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

- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market
- Veterinary care**
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour
- Companionship and challenges to ownership
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services

Veterinary care

Veterinary capacity⁶

25% of Scottish owners state that they have experienced difficulty accessing a vet.

(25% in 2023, 36% in 2022)

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

vet too busy



reduced service delaying booking of surgery



vet has reduced opening hours

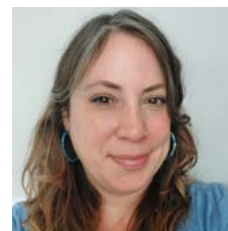


6 Questions asked: Still thinking about the vet, have you experienced any of the following over the last 12 months in relation to your cat?/Which of the following best describes how often you tend to go to the vet?

“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



The proportion of cats in Scotland who are registered with a vet is 92% (92% in 2023), which still leaves over 67,000 Scottish cats not registered with a vet.

Higher for:

uninsured cats



outdoor-only cats



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.

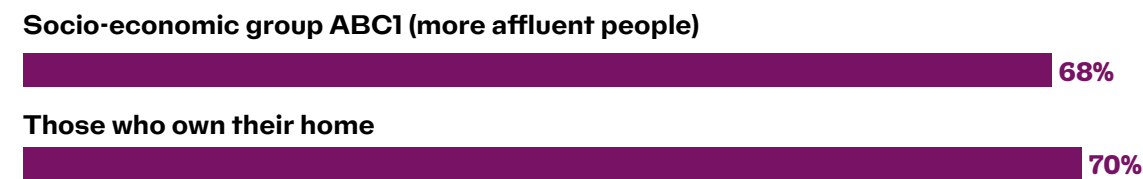
7 Cats Protection Vet Capacity Survey Fieldwork: Nov 2022 to Jan 2023. Sample: 236 UK vet professionals including veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses asking about their experiences in the prior 12 months.

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

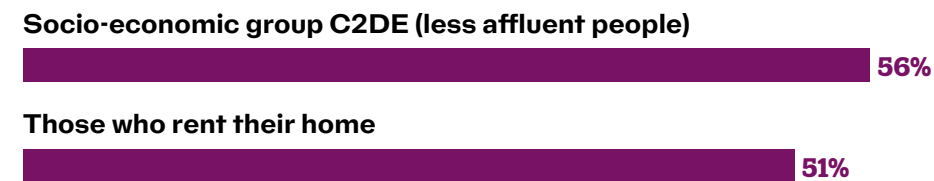
Vet visits⁹

63% of Scottish cat owners take their cat to the vet routinely each year, similar to the UK as a whole (62%).

Higher than average

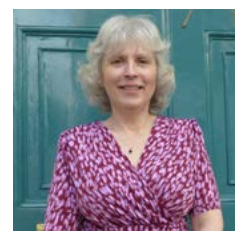


Lower than average



This means over 310,000 cats in Scotland are not receiving regular veterinary checks. 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.

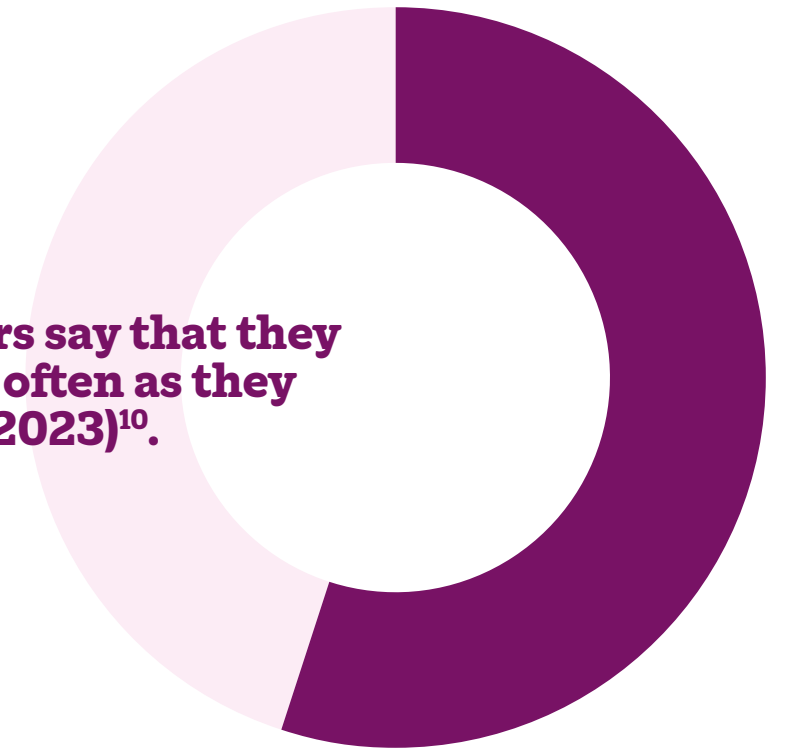
"While it's great that more owners are taking their cat to the vet routinely, it's disappointing to see that over half do not visit the practice as much as they'd like. Given recent high inflation and pressure on household incomes, it's understandable that costs, including vet care, are a concern. However,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



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

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

55% of Scottish owners say that they do not visit the vet as often as they would like to (53% in 2023)¹⁰.



Cost and stress are equally likely to stop Scottish cats visiting the vet as much as the owner would like¹⁰.



Tackling the stress of vet visits, for both cat and owner, must remain a focus for veterinary practices and welfare organisations.

35% of Scottish 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?

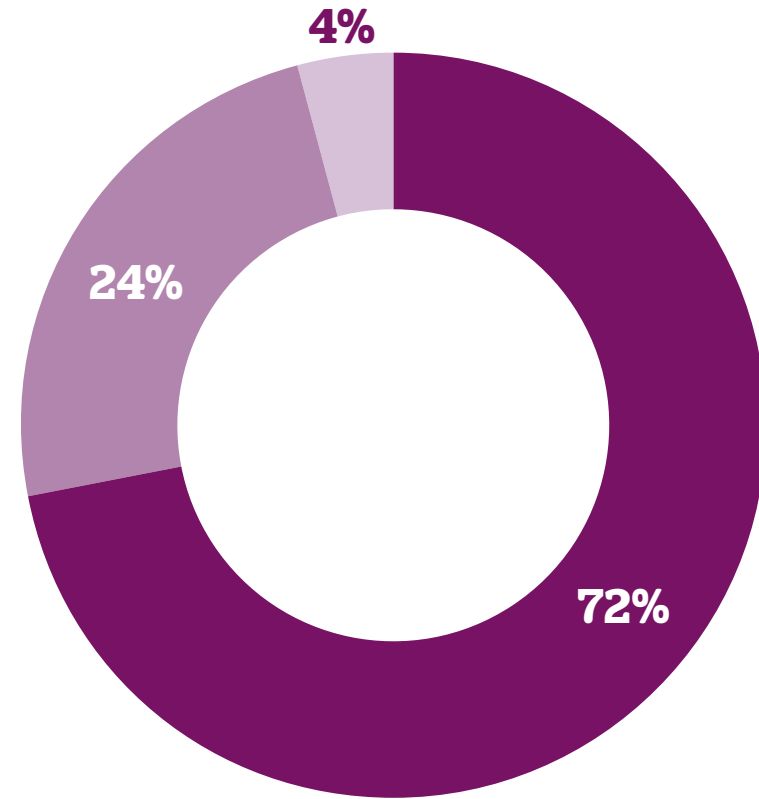
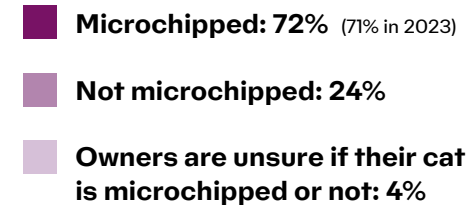
¹¹ Gowan R, Iff I. Chronic pain and behaviour. In: Heath S (ed.) Feline behavioural health and welfare. St Louis: Elsevier, 2016, pp 184–212.

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.

Microchipping¹³

72% of cats are microchipped in Scotland, slightly less than the UK as a whole (75%)

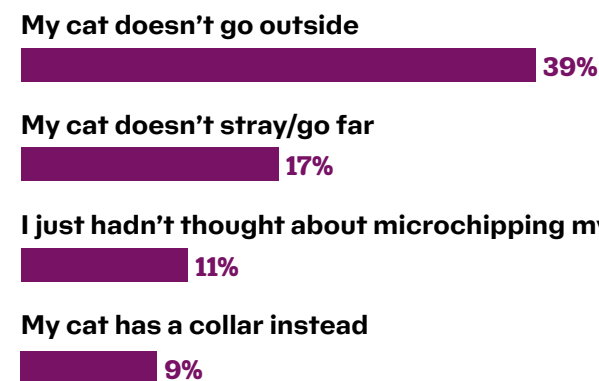


New regulations regarding compulsory microchipping of cats have come into force in England in June 2024. Microchipping numbers for dogs rose from 75% to 92% in the first four years following similar legislative changes and signs are positive that we will see the same result for cats¹⁴. This will hopefully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

The cats less likely to be microchipped

Around 235,000 Scottish cats are still potentially without a microchip, reducing their chances of being reunited with their owners, should they get lost or stolen.

Cat owners are choosing not to get their cat microchipped because they don't appreciate the risks of their cat getting lost¹⁵.



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?



"When a cat without a microchip comes into our care it can be difficult to reunite them with their loving family. We have been lucky to reunite many missing cats with their owners over the years because they were microchipped, and the details on the chip were up to date.

"Sadly, we see too many cats that are not microchipped. This puts a burden on our team trying to find their owners and takes up space in our pens for cats that need us the most. Cats Protection is calling on the Scottish Government to introduce compulsory microchipping of pet cats to help reunite missing cats with their owners."

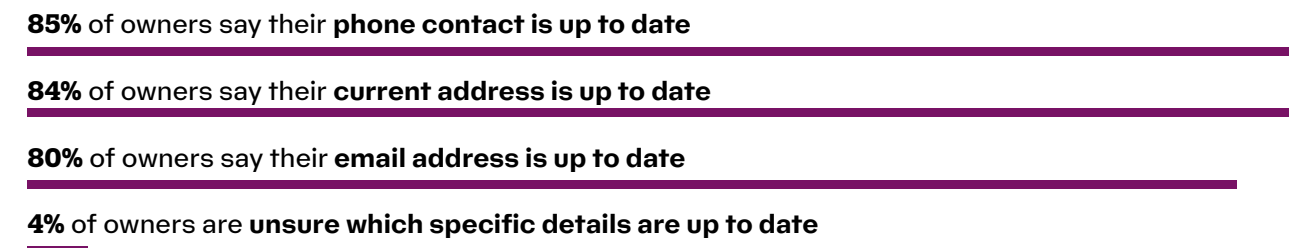


Kim Fleming, Scotland Cat Centre Manager, Cats Protection

Microchips and keeping details up to date¹⁶

91% of cats in Scotland with a microchip have up-to-date details (92% 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 Scottish 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?

- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market
- Veterinary care**
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour
- Companionship and challenges to ownership
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services

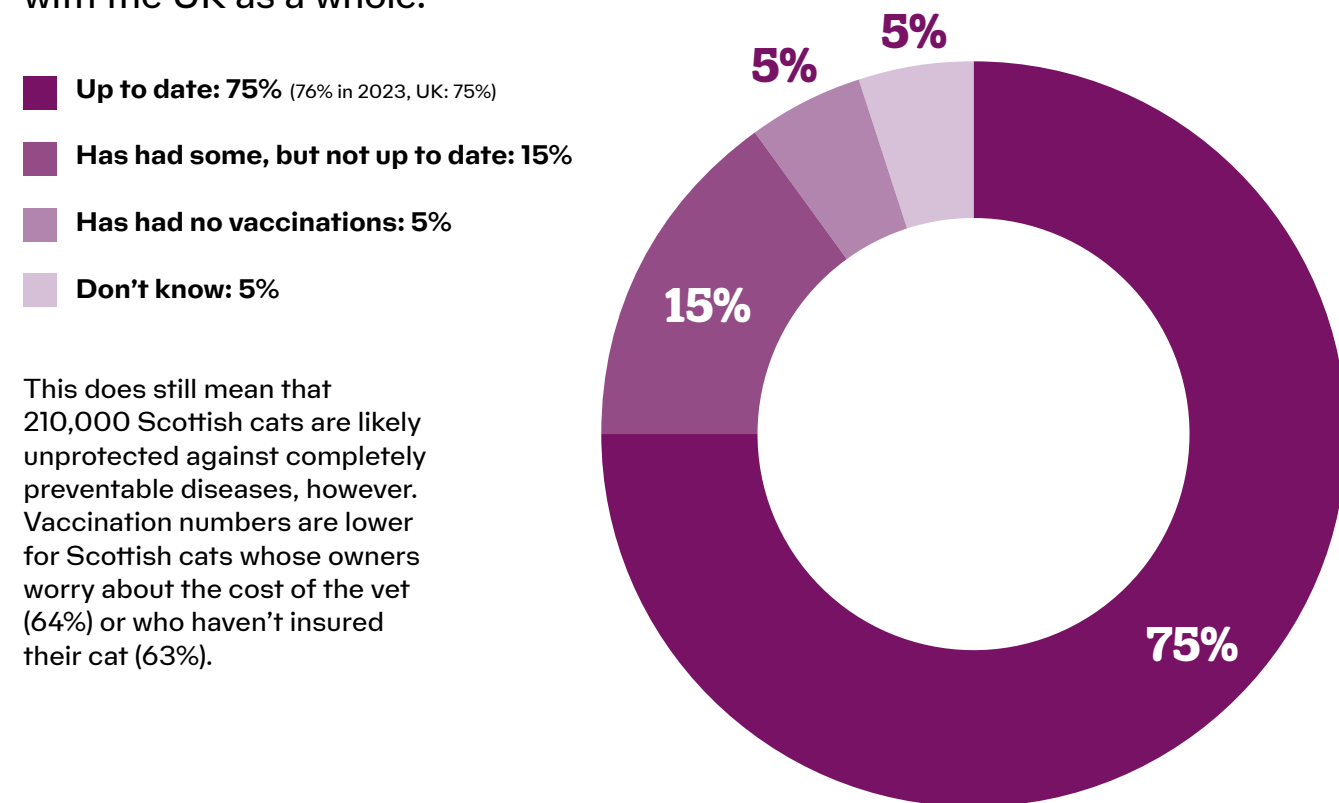
Insurance¹⁷

More cats are insured in Scotland than aren't insured: 51%, an increase from last year (45%).

The likelihood of a Scottish cat being insured drops as owner age increases (18 to 34: 59%, 35 to 54: 53%, 55+: 40%) and with socio-economic group (ABC1, more affluent: 58%. C2DE, less affluent: 43%). Scotland has the highest number of insured cats of all the devolved nations however, even across these 'lower likelihood' demographics.

Vaccinations¹⁸

Vaccination numbers remain in line with the UK as a whole.



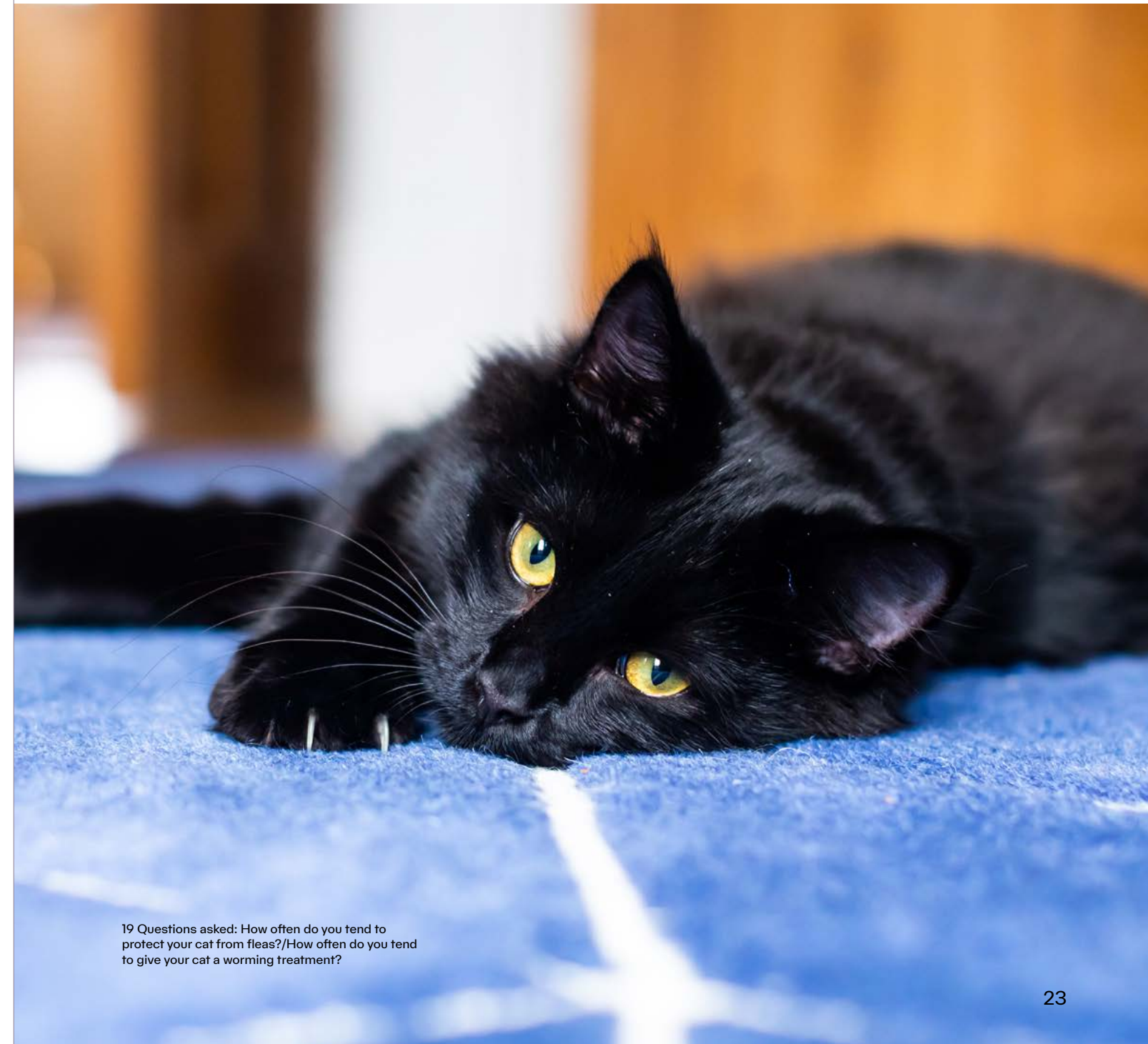
This does still mean that 210,000 Scottish cats are likely unprotected against completely preventable diseases, however. Vaccination numbers are lower for Scottish cats whose owners worry about the cost of the vet (64%) or who haven't insured their cat (63%).

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

56% of Scottish owners protect their cat against fleas and 59% protect against worms throughout the year as advised. This is lower than the UK as a whole (UK: 64% and 62%).

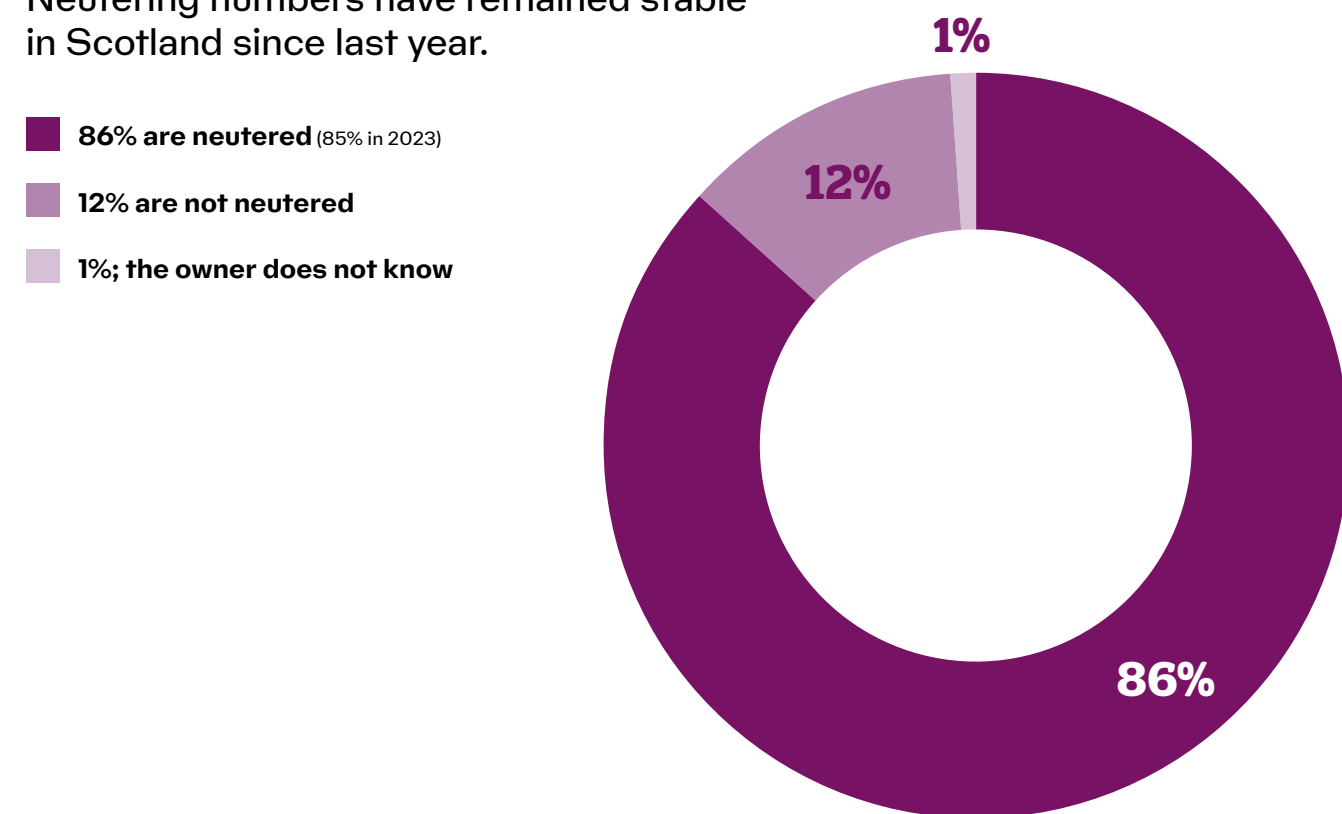
An individual cat's risk of becoming infected with parasites is strongly linked to their lifestyle, including whether they go outdoors and their diet. Parasite treatment recommendations should therefore be evaluated on a risk-benefit basis, and vets should educate owners about the best treatment protocol.



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 remained stable in Scotland since last year.



²⁰ Question asked: Is your cat neutered/spayed?



The Scottish cats less likely to have been neutered

Younger cat owners aged 18 to 34 are less likely to have neutered their cat (80%), compared to 87% of 35 to 54-year-olds and 93% of those aged over 55. Outdoor-only cats are also less likely to be neutered (77%), despite likely being at greatest risk of unwanted pregnancy.

Wanting their cat to have kittens is one reason that Scottish owners in particular choose not to neuter their cat²¹.

My cat doesn't go outside



I want my cat to have kittens



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

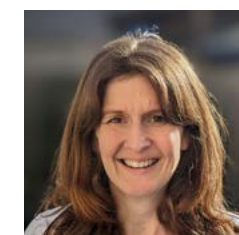


There has been a rise in those who are not neutering because their cat is kept indoors. The relative popularity in owners proactively wanting their cat to have kittens seen in the UK-wide data is also evident in Scotland, although this figure was also high last year, so no relative rise is seen.

"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

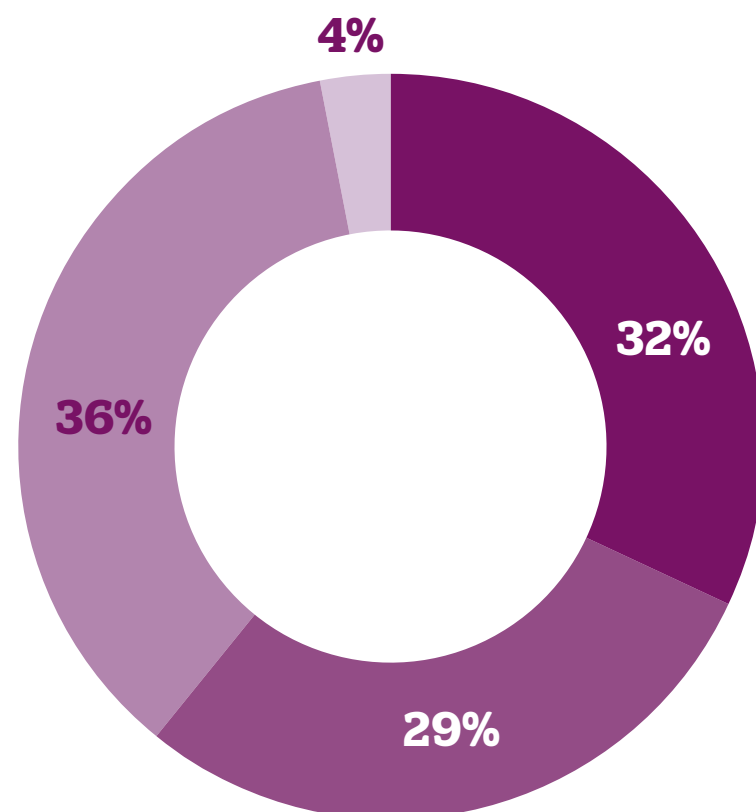


²¹ Question asked: What are the reasons your cat is not neutered? Filtered by owners of cats that are not neutered. Only responses over 10% shown.

Diet and body weight²²

Scottish owner perception of their cat's weight.

- Overweight: 32%**
- Ideal weight: 29%**
- Underweight: 36%**
- Don't know: 4%**



4% of Scottish 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 Pet Obesity Report 2019 | UK Pet Food

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

76% of Scottish cat owners state that their cat has no diagnosed health conditions (79% in 2023).

Top five most common health conditions in Scottish cats.

Dental disease

4%

Digestive disorders

4%

Allergic skin disease

3%

Obesity

3%

Overgrooming

3%

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, for example 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.

28% of Scottish owners said that their cat had been injured since they have owned them²⁶. The most common reason for injury is fights with other animals, particularly cats from outside the household²⁶.

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

²⁶ Question asked: Since having your cat, has your cat ever been injured?

- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market
- Veterinary care
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour**
- Companionship and challenges to ownership
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services

Cat care, welfare and behaviour

Sources of cat care information

More people in Scotland are doing research before getting a cat: 37%²⁷



Overall, Scottish owners still turn to their vet first as a primary source of information about cats but people are Googling more and more²⁸.

Contact my vet



Search the internet/Google



Talk to my friends and family



Search social media



Contact an animal charity



Contact a pet shop



Buy or borrow a book



²⁷ Question asked: To what extent do you agree with the following statement (I did lots of research before getting my cats)?

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, fun content)?

The use of social media platforms as regular sources of information about cats for Scottish owners continues to grow²⁹.

YouTube



Facebook



TikTok



Instagram



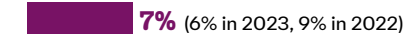
X (formerly known as Twitter)



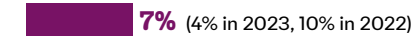
Pinterest



Snapchat



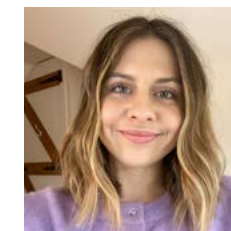
LinkedIn



Online resources are becoming increasingly common as the first place that Scottish owners turn to for advice, with younger people showing a stronger preference for social media (18 to 34: 30%).

"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/types of cat."

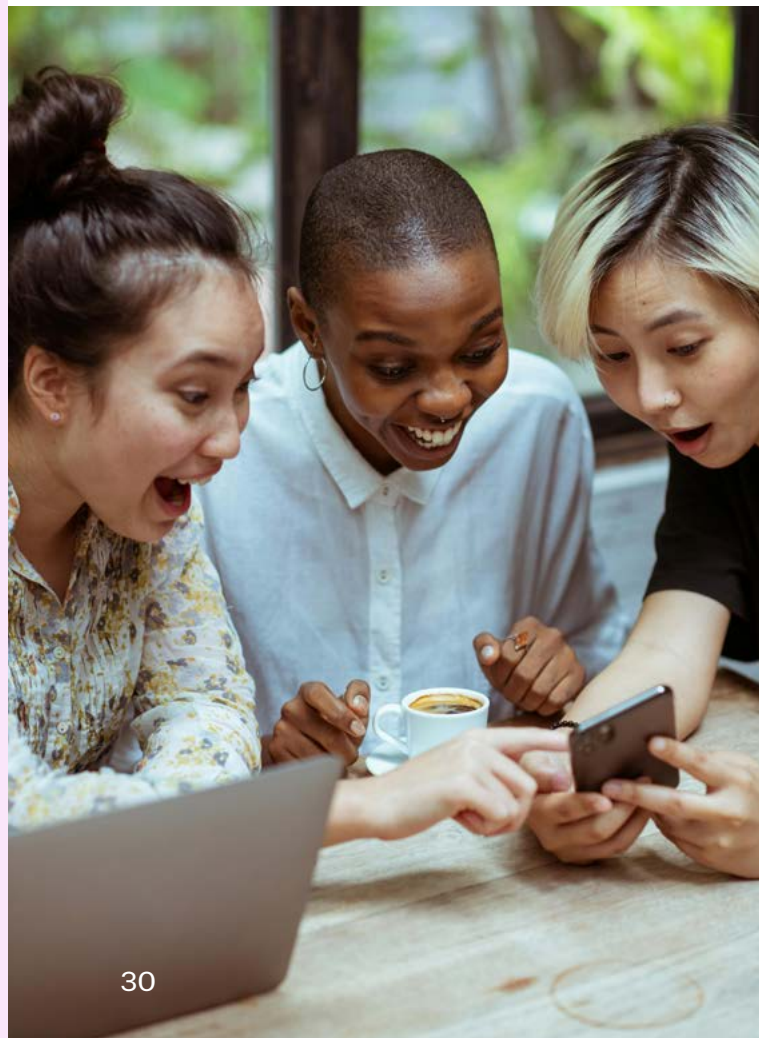
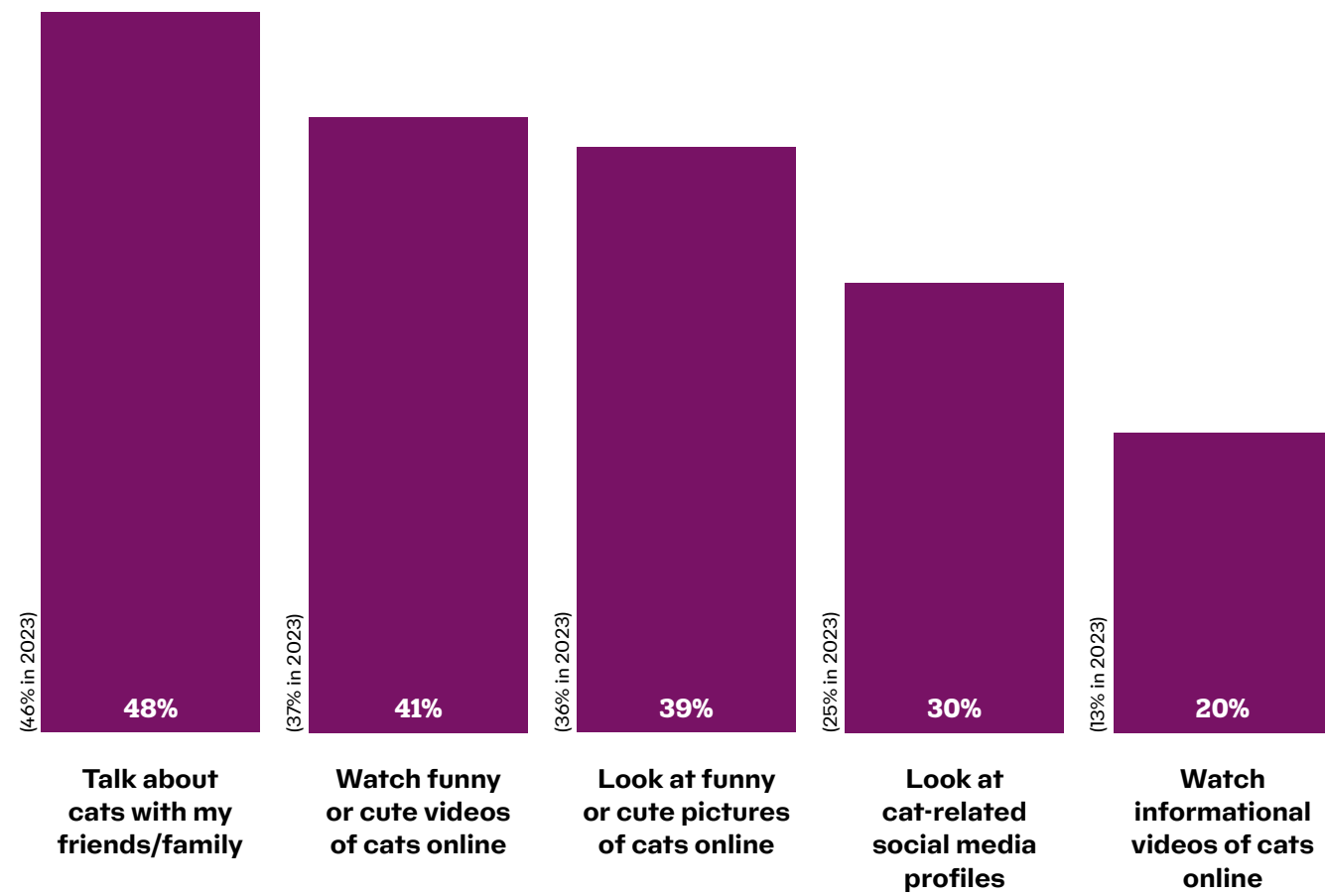
Faye Shellard, Social Media Manager, Cats Protection



²⁹ 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)?

- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market
- Veterinary care
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour**
- Companionship and challenges to ownership
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services

Top five cat-related activities that Scottish owners engage in several times a week or more³⁰



Cats continue to increasingly be enjoyed by cat owners online, particularly cute or funny content. Over three quarters (78%) of Scottish owners say that they look at funny or cute pictures or videos of cats online at least once a month³¹.

Overall, Facebook and YouTube remain popular sources of 'fun' cat-related content (Facebook: 40%, YouTube: 39%). TikTok has seen a rise in popularity for this kind of content (34%, 29% in 2023), and is the most popular source of fun cat content for Scottish owners aged 18 to 24 (69%)²⁸.

³⁰ 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).
³¹ Question asked: How often do you tend to do each of the following?



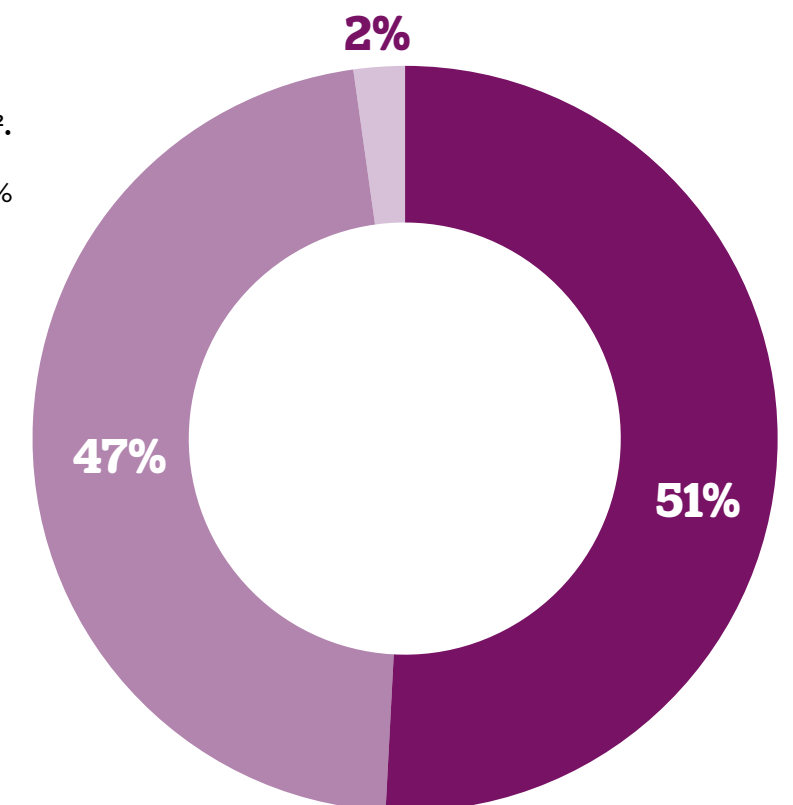
A cat's environment

Indoor versus outdoor cats

Most Scottish cats have outdoor access³².

- They go both indoors and outdoors: 51% (53% in 2023)
- They always stay indoors: 47% (45% in 2023)
- 36% for the UK as a whole
- They always stay outdoors: 2% (2% in 2023)

There is a higher proportion of indoor-only cats in Scotland than anywhere else in the UK.



³² Question asked: Which of the following best applies to your cat?

- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market
- Veterinary care
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour**
- Companionship and challenges to ownership
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services

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

Owner concern over harm/disappearance keeps Scottish cats indoors³³.

Concerned about them being hit by a vehicle



Concerned about them going missing



Concerned about fighting/being injured by other cats



Concerned about them getting stolen



Concerned about diseases/parasites



So they don't harm/bring in wildlife



My cat chooses to not go outside



Scottish owners seem to have a greater degree of concern about their cat being harmed or lost compared to cat owners in other regions. As loved pets, while this concern is understandable, 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.

"Providing your cat with 'enrichment' activities such as using puzzle feeders, and engaging in short, regular, interactive play sessions daily, can help ensure a cat's behavioural and physical needs are met. Enrichment is essential for every owned cat, but it is particularly important for cats who live exclusively indoors. Other ways to add in enrichment throughout the day can include training, such as teaching a cat to sit or to respond to their name, or adding new and novel objects to their environment such as a cardboard box with a collection of cat-safe leaves and twigs from outside."

Sammie Ravenscroft, Regional Behaviour Officer for Scotland, Cats Protection



³³ Question asked: What are the reasons that your cat always stays indoors?
Base: All Cat Owners, whose cat stays indoors.

Preventing harm to cats

28% of Scottish cats have been injured since being in their owner's care²⁶.

Cat fights remain the most common cause of injury: 14%²⁶

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 5% of Scottish 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 Scottish cat owners has improved but 45% are still not aware of the risks (47% in 2023)³⁴.

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.

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

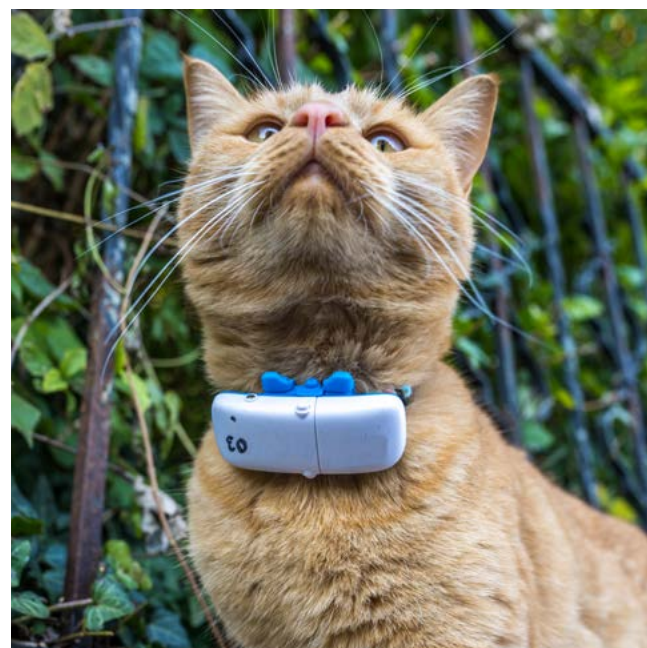
Accessories for cats³⁵

Some cat accessories seem to be gaining in popularity. 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: 11% (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: 12% (UK: 10%)

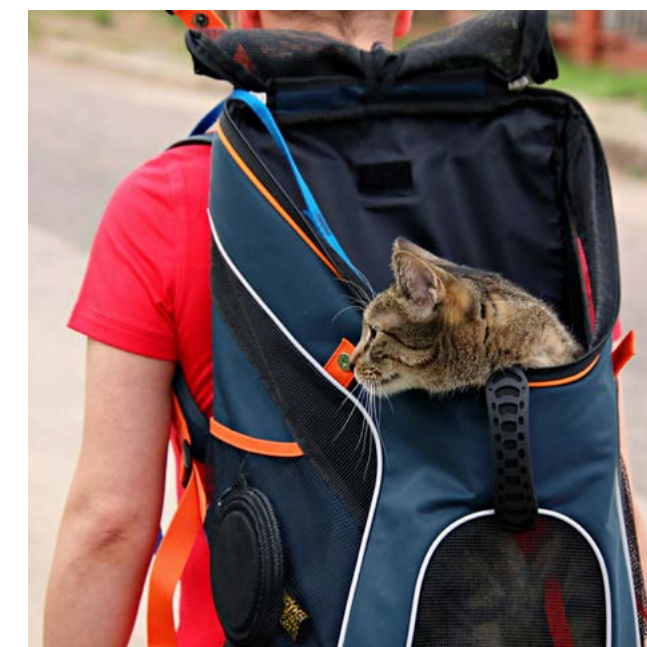
If not well fitted, harnesses can be uncomfortable for cats or allow escape. Most importantly, they prevent the flight response and feeling trapped can significantly escalate stress in cats, which in turn can lead to other behavioural problems including, but not limited to, aggression towards people 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: 9% (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.



10% of Scottish 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.

Runs away from people in the house
 28%

Shows fear towards noise
 27%

Hides around the house for long periods of time
 12%

Screams/screeches
 11%

Shows aggressive behaviours towards people in my household
 9%

Not get on with/fight with my other cats
 8%

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

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

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

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

60% of Scottish 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. 59% of Scottish 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 four behaviours:

hides or becomes withdrawn
 22%

appears startled
 18%

tries to escape or run away
 14%

shows fearful body language
 14%

"Managing the unpredictability of fireworks can limit the stress they have on our pets. Cats Protection welcomes the Scottish Government giving powers to councils to introduce Firework Control Zones. If used correctly, these zones will ease the stress on local animals by restricting firework use to only planned, professional displays. This will not only allow local pet owners to prepare their homes and cats for displays but also enable animal rehoming organisations like Cats Protection to prepare their centres and the animals in their care for fireworks."

Alice Palombo, Advocacy & Government Relations Officer, Scotland, Cats Protection



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.

- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market
- Veterinary care
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour
- Companionship and challenges to ownership**
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services

Companionship and challenges to ownership

Why we have cats

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

As company for me/my family



I've always had cats



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



To help me feel less stressed/anxious



To help me feel less lonely



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



They needed looking after/to be taken in



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



My child/children wanted one



My partner wanted one/already had one



Once again, companionship, reducing loneliness and reducing stress are collectively the top reasons that Scottish people choose to own a cat (54%. 55% in 2023).

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

Scottish owners form deep connections with their cat⁴⁰.

I often talk to my cat



Having a cat brings me joy



I hate leaving my cat when I go away



I love spoiling my cat



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



I talk about my cat a lot



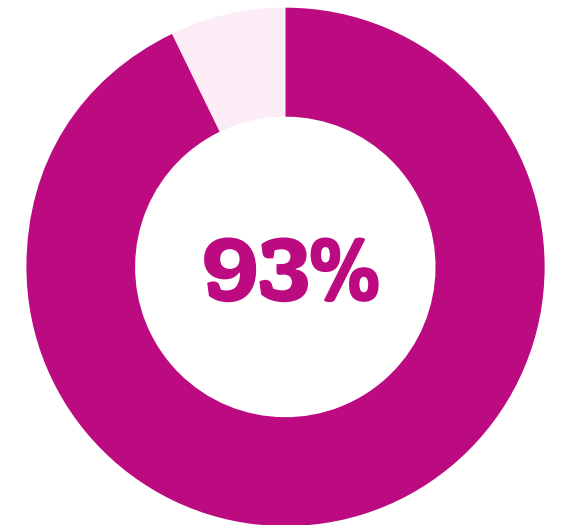
I think about my cat a lot when I'm not with them



I put my cat's needs before my own



93% of Scottish 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 Scottish owners spend time with their cat at least once daily⁴¹.

Sitting with/stroking my cat



Actively play together daily



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?

- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market
- Veterinary care
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour
- Companionship and challenges to ownership**
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services

39% of Scottish 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.



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.

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, which is now available in Scotland. This specialist cat fostering service ensures that cats belonging to people experiencing domestic abuse are taken care of until they can be safely reunited with their owner, offering some peace of mind at a very challenging time.

"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



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

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

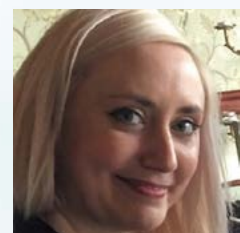
- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market
- Veterinary care
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour
- Companionship and challenges to ownership**
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services

Paws to Listen: Where grief finds understanding

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 when their cat passes away or goes missing.

"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



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

- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market
- Veterinary care
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour
- Companionship and challenges to ownership**
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?
- Services



The impact of cost of living on cat owners

The impact of cost-of-living increases has not eased, with 35% of Scottish owners saying that they have been significantly and negatively impacted by the rise in living costs⁴⁴. 19% of Scottish 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 Scottish owners seriously worried about how they will meet their cat's needs in the future⁴⁵. 6% 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. A quarter of Scottish owners (25%) 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	11.0	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%

- 22% of households in Scotland own a cat (22% in 2023)
- There are around 840,000 owned cats in Scotland (830,000 in 2023)
- The average number of cats per cat-owning household in Scotland is 1.5 cats, with 63% of households having one cat, and 37% owning two or more cats

The cat market

- The proportion of the pet cat population that is 'bought' in Scotland has increased and is higher than the UK as a whole (34%) (data shown for all cats in current population)

	Cat was acquired...			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Bought	30%	33%	33%	37%
Adopted	26%	22%	20%	21%

- Pedigree cats seem particularly popular in Scotland, with a significant increase in the proportion of pedigree cats acquired in the last 12 months compared to previous years

	Cats acquired in...				Total pet cat population
	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	the last year	
Moggy/ domestic shorthair or longhair	59%	47%	50%	37%	56%
Pedigree/ purebred	33%	35%	38%	51%	31%

Veterinary care

- 25% of Scottish owners state that they have experienced difficulty accessing a vet
- 8% of cats (67,000) are not registered with a vet
- 63% of Scottish cat owners take their cat to the vet routinely each year, similar to the UK as a whole (62%)
- 55% of Scottish owners say that they do not visit the vet as often as they would like to
- 72% of cats are microchipped in Scotland (71% in 2023), slightly less than the UK as a whole (75%). 24% are not microchipped
- More cats are insured in Scotland than aren't insured: 51%, an increase from last year (45%)
- Vaccination numbers remain in line with the UK as a whole. Up to date: 75%
- 56% of Scottish owners protect their cat against fleas and 59% protect against worms throughout the year as advised. This is lower than the UK as a whole (UK: 64% and 62%)
- 86% of cats in Scotland are neutered (85% in 2023). 12% are not neutered

Cat care, welfare and behaviour

- More people in Scotland are doing research before getting a cat: 37% (29% in 2023)
- Most cats have outdoor access; 51% go both indoors and outdoors, 47% always stay indoors (36%: UK)
- 60% of cats have displayed at least one potential stress behaviour in the last 12 months (UK: 64%)

Companionship and challenges to ownerships

- The wellbeing benefits of cat ownership are still the main driving force behind having a cat:
 - companionship, reducing loneliness and reducing stress are collectively the top reasons that people choose to own a cat (54%)
- 93% of Scottish 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 35% of Scottish owners saying that they have been significantly and negatively impacted by the rise in living costs
- A quarter of owners (25%) have doubts about how they would pay vet bills if their cat became sick or injured
- 13% of owners are seriously worried about how they will meet their cat's needs in the future

- Contents page
- Key findings
- State of the nation
- The cat market
- Veterinary care
- Cat care, welfare and behaviour
- Companionship and challenges to ownership
- Cats in summary
- Where do we go from here?**
- Services**

Where do we go from here?

A message from John May, Chief Executive, Cats Protection

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

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

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

We are seeing 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 positive owner motivation or the potential likelihood for health issues which can occur in pedigree cats. Across the UK, 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 Scottish Government has played a key role in trying to address these challenges by becoming the first nation in the UK to introduce cat breeding regulations. This means anyone breeding three or more litters of kittens in a year needs a licence from their local authority. Licence holders are also prohibited from breeding sick or unhealthy cats, or cats with extreme body types such as Scottish Folds or Munchkins. However, with a growing market for cats with extreme body types, we know there are unscrupulous individuals that fall outside the licensing threshold, looking to make a profit by breeding cats without considerations for their welfare.

Cats Protection will continue to focus efforts on highlighting these challenges with government and we hope to see amends to cat breeding regulations to make a better life 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

Contents page
Key findings
State of the nation
The cat market
Veterinary care
Cat care, welfare
and behaviour
Companionship
and challenges to
ownership
Cats in summary
Where do we
go from here?
Services



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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