



The **2024** National Dog Survey



Welcome to the results of the National Dog Survey 2024

Dog ownership in the UK is changing, and Dogs Trust is here to help when dogs and owners need us the most.

The Dogs Trust 2024 National Dog Survey is just one of the many ways that we listen to the experiences, priorities, and needs of owners and their dogs. 2024 is our third National Dog Survey, and our biggest to date. This year over 373,000 dog owners told us about over 430,000 dogs.

The 2024 National Dog Survey provides us with extensive data and, along with our other research, it will lay out a roadmap for our work in the coming years.



Key findings

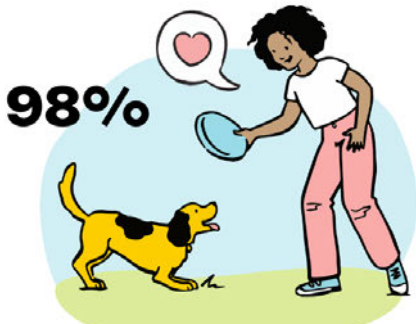
The National Dog Survey is the UK's largest survey of dog lovers and owners, and in 2024 more people than ever shared their experience of living with and caring for dogs.

406,218
people responded
to the survey

373,216
dog owners told us
about **430,406 dogs**

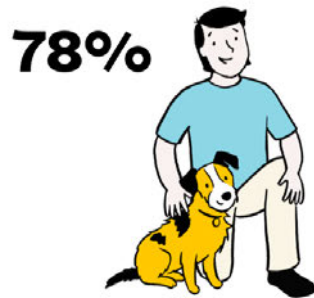
Our results vividly illustrate the aftermath of the pandemic puppy boom and peak in first-time ownership. Dogs became a source of hope and comfort in tough times, and many people brought forward their decision to get a dog due to time spent at home during furlough and lockdowns.

Owners agree that our canine companions help support our physical and mental health.



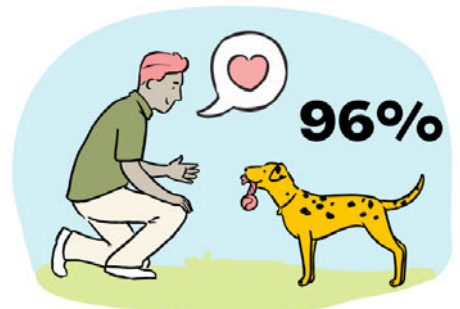
98%

of owners said their dog makes them happy



78%

said that owning a dog is a key part of their identity



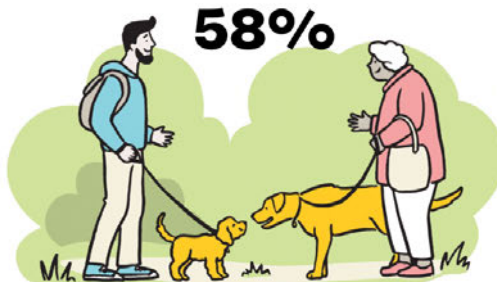
96%

said owning a dog is good for their mental health



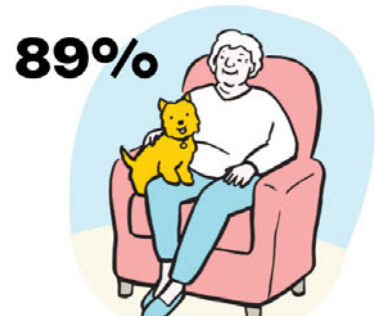
89%

said owning a dog makes them more active



58%

believe dog ownership reduces social isolation



89%

said their dog provides emotional support

There's no doubt our dogs mean the world to us. 99% of people say their dog is one of the family, 89% see their dog as their best friend, and 72% admit to spoiling their pooch.

Despite the benefits dogs bring, the commitment and responsibility of caring for dogs throughout their lives can be challenging. This year's survey revealed some of the realities of dog ownership.

57%

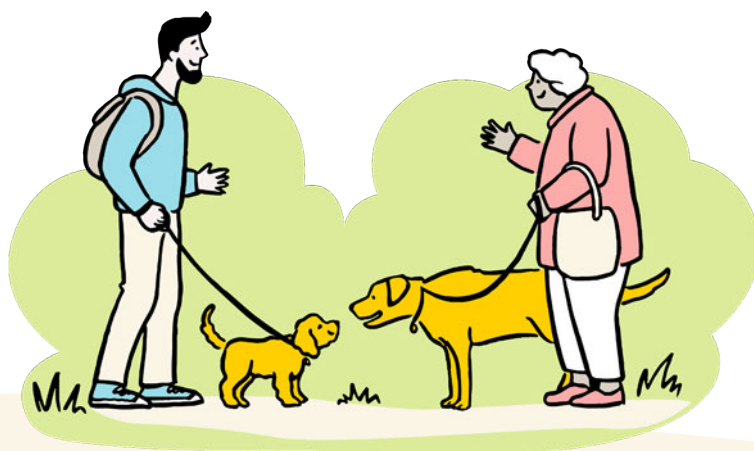
of 25 to 34-year-olds say they have found dog ownership to be hard work



26%

of dog owners said they had no-one outside of their household who could look after their dog for a week

As a result of the pandemic puppy boom, an unprecedented proportion (33%) of dogs in the UK are now reaching adolescence¹. The pandemic pups who missed out on important early-life socialisation and training opportunities are now navigating tricky behavioural issues.



52%

of dogs bark at noises outside the front door²

9%

of dogs struggle to relax when home alone³

17%

of dogs rarely stay calm around other dogs when out walking

16%

of dogs struggle to stay calm around strangers

¹ Assessed as dogs aged 1-3 years old, from the question "How old is your dog?"

² We asked: "How often does your dog stay quiet when hearing the doorbell, knocking, or noises outside the home?" with answer options on a 5-point scale from very rarely to very regularly.

³ We asked: "How often does your dog relax when left alone in the home?"

Our survey uncovered important insights into people's understanding of dog body language, their thoughts about dog behaviour, and how they tackle it.

80%

of dog owners said that they were confident in reading dog body language **but only 24% could consistently identify worried dog behaviours**

78%

felt that their dog would never bite them

Nearly two thirds

believed their dog would never bite other people

71%

reckon they were more likely to be bitten by a dog they don't know

Every day continues to be a school day! Dogs Trust advocates for lifelong learning for dogs and owners. While only 7% of owners currently take their dog to a training class, over half of survey respondents (52%) said that they value ongoing training for dogs. Additionally, almost 75,000 people told us that education about dog behaviour, including safety around dogs, and understanding dog body language, was a dog welfare issue that mattered most to them.



Dog demographics

There are around 13 million dogs in the UK - over one-third of households include at least one dog and around four in ten people live with a dog⁴.

The average number of dogs curled up in dog-owning homes nationally was 1.36⁵. Most dog-owning homes had just one dog (74%). A fifth (20%) of dog-owning households own two dogs, 4% have a group of three and in 2% of dog-owning homes there's four or more!




Figure 1. Average number of dogs per dog-owning household by region of the UK \pm 95% confidence intervals. Dotted line denotes the average number of dogs per household across the whole UK.

Regionally, Northern Ireland (1.43) and Wales (1.42) have the most dogs per household, followed by the East Midlands (1.4). Greater London has the fewest dogs per dog-owning household with an average of 1.19.

⁴ Dogs Trust's UK Pet Dog Population estimate and UK Pet Food (formerly Pet Food Manufacturers' Association) 2024 Pet Population Report

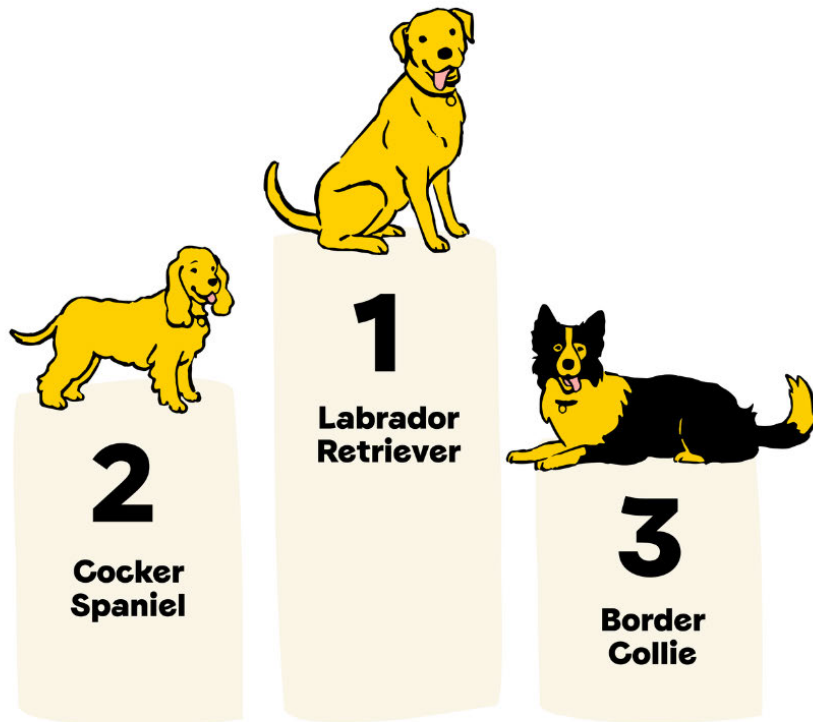
⁵ We asked: "How many dogs do you own?"

Crossbreeds
make up
42%
of dogs in the UK.



When it comes to types of dog, a magic mix comes out top! 42% of dogs in this year’s survey were crossbreeds with ‘supermutts’ – a completely unknown mix of breeds - taking the lead at almost 10%⁶.

Amazingly, our survey captured over 5,000 unique breeds and crossbreeds! Despite all that choice, Labrador retrievers remain the nation’s firm favourite breed, accounting for 8% of dogs in our survey. Cocker Spaniels and Border Collies sealed their positions at second and third most populous pure breeds yet again.



Among the known crossbreeds, Spaniel and Poodle mixes remain popular, as do Lurchers (sighthound mixes).

Miniature smooth-haired Dachshunds, or sausage dogs as they’re affectionately known, continue to race up the breed charts – from 28th among pure breed dogs born ten years ago to 4th among dogs born in the last year.


Some of the flat-faced breeds and types appear to be tailing off in popularity. French Bulldogs, which commonly suffer breathing problems, peaked in popularity during the 2020-21 “pandemic puppy boom”, but along with pug crosses such as the Jug (Jack Russell Terrier x Pug) and Puggle (Pug x Beagle), they are now declining in popularity.

⁶ We asked: “Which of the following breed options best describes your dog?”



Cockapoos (Cocker Spaniel x Poodles) peaked in popularity during 2020, amid the COVID lockdowns, favoured by first-time dog owners. Cavapoos (Cavalier King Charles Spaniels x Poodles) and Maltipoos (Maltese x Poodles) are still rising in popularity. Poodle crosses are heavily advertised as being family-friendly, hypoallergenic, and easy to train, though these claims are largely unsubstantiated⁷.

62%
of owners said
“my dog’s breed is known
to be good with children”



When it comes to the personality of our faithful friends, 62% of owners told us they believe their dog’s breed is known to be good with children⁸. But we know that every dog is an individual and there are many factors that can influence dog behaviour, so owners shouldn’t rely on breed stereotypes when it comes to picking a dog⁹.

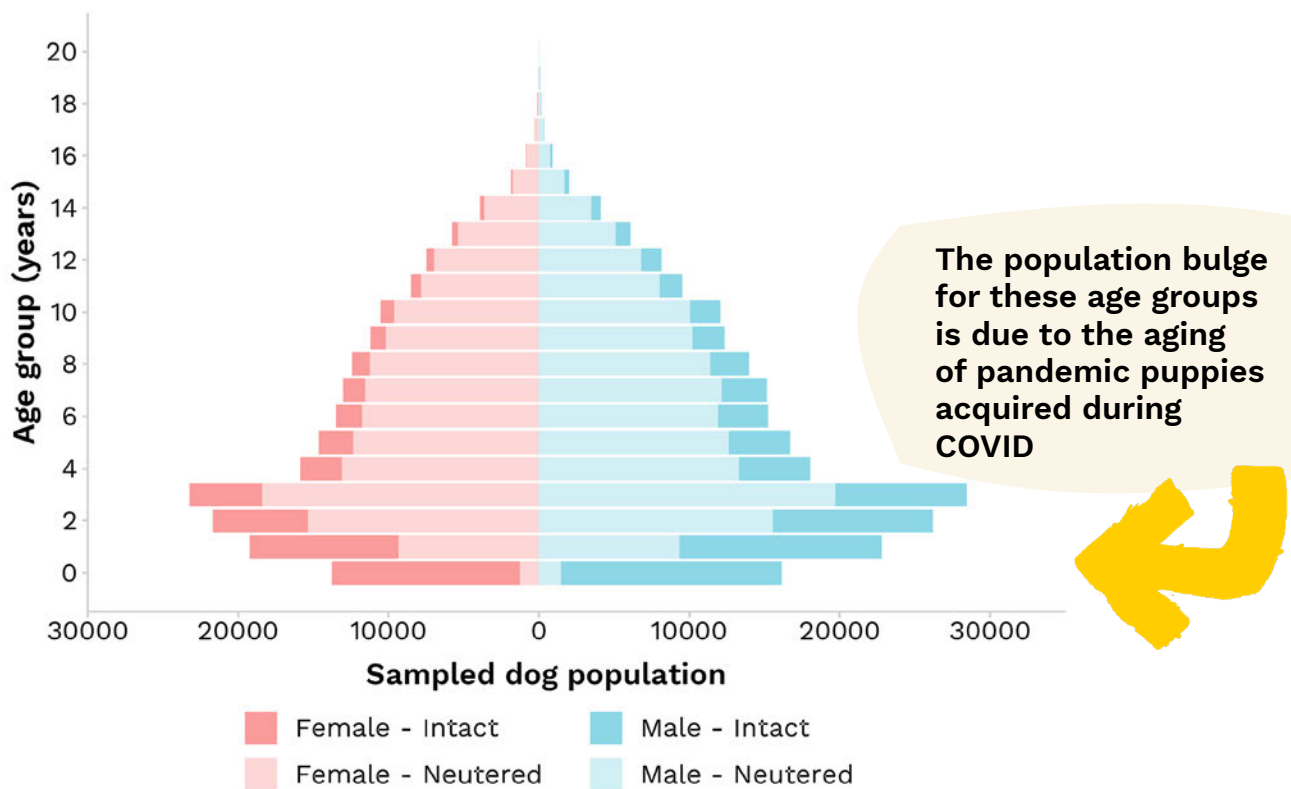
⁷ Burnett, E. et al. (2022) How much is that doodle in the window? Exploring motivations and behaviours of UK owners acquiring designer crossbreed dogs (2019-2020). *Canine Medicine and Genetics* 9, 8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40575-022-00120-x>
⁸ 62% of 118,829 survey respondents selected “strongly agree” or “agree” to the statement “My dog’s breed is known to be good with children”.
⁹ Morrill, K. et al. (2022) Ancestry-inclusive dog genomics challenges popular breed stereotypes. *Science* 376, eabk0639. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abk0639>

How has COVID changed UK dog ownership?

There’s no doubt that the pandemic has had a huge and lasting impact on life with our dogs.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a large increase in the number of first-time dog owners¹⁰. First-time owners made up 37% of dog acquisitions in 2019, but this rose to 44% at the peak of the ‘pandemic puppy boom’ in 2020 when lockdown, furlough and working from home opened up the opportunity of dog ownership to many people for the first time. First-time ownership has now dropped below pre-COVID levels, potentially because so many people brought forward their decision to welcome a new furry family member. We expect that the proportion of first-time dog owners among people that get dogs will return to pre-COVID levels in the coming years, but future National Dog Surveys will tell.

The unprecedented number of pandemic puppies growing up into young adult dogs is bringing about new challenges. Lockdown restrictions meant that many pandemic pups missed out on all-important early-life socialisation experiences^{11, 12}. These teenage dogs, more often owned by first-time dog owners, are starting to display behaviours that are concerning their owners. At Dogs Trust we are seeing a growing demand for our free-to-access Behaviour Support Line, with over 7,500 calls made this year, and sadly over 40,000 calls from owners asking about relinquishing their dogs to our care.



Source: Dogs Trust National Dog Survey 2024

Figure 2. Dog population pyramid showing the age distribution of dogs in the 2024 survey. Male dogs (blue) shown to the right, female dogs (pink) shown to the left. Light colours denote neutered dogs. N = 427,072 dogs.

¹⁰ We asked: “Is your dog the first dog you have owned as an adult?” and “When did you get your dog?”

¹¹ Kinsman, R. H. et al. (2024) Puppy socialisation experiences in relation to age and COVID-19 lockdown restrictions in the UK and ROI. *Animals* 14, 1471.

¹² Brand, C. L. et al. (2024) Impacts of puppy early life experiences, puppy-purchasing practices, and owner characteristics on owner-reported problem behaviours in a UK pandemic puppies cohort at 21 months of age. *Animals* 14, 336.

Out and about

The world has become much busier for dogs. Last year, we heard about how owners wanted to see more restaurants, shops, transport, accommodation, and holiday options made dog-friendly – reflecting how we see dogs as part of our family and day-to-day lives¹³.

Thanks to the increased dog population in the UK, you're more likely to come across another dog when out and about. 64% of dog owners walk their dogs on pavements around residential areas on at least a daily basis¹⁴. While the added exercise of dog walking might benefit us – 89% of people told us that owning a dog makes them more active¹⁵ – it's not always a walk in the park for dog owners.

Thousands of dog owners told us in last year's survey about their worries around unwanted interactions with unfamiliar dogs. Many felt that the potential for conflict was more likely with more dogs around. This year, we sought to quantify the incidence of such interactions as well as people's worries¹⁶.

"I think the biggest concern with dog ownership in the UK at the moment is the sudden increase in people with dogs, since lockdown, who have not socialised or trained them properly as puppies. Aggressive or reactive dogs seem more common than ever."

"There are so many badly socialised dogs from the COVID lockdown period, that walking my dog is more stressful."

We found that nearly a third of dogs (30%) had been involved in an incident with another dog which caused worry for the safety of a dog or person. More than one in ten dogs (11%) were said to have developed behavioural changes following an incident with another dog. One in 20 (5%) dogs had received veterinary treatment following an incident with another dog.



30%

of dogs had been in an "incident*" with another dog

11%

of dogs suffered behavioural changes following an incident with another dog

1 in 20

dogs had received veterinary treatment following an incident with another dog

*where the respondent was worried for the safety of a dog or a person

¹³ In 2023, we asked: "What one thing would improve your life with your dog?"

¹⁴ This year we asked: "How often do you walk your dog(s) in the following areas?"

¹⁵ 89% of 132,562 survey respondents said that they "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement "Owning a dog makes me more active."

¹⁶ We asked: "Has your dog ever been involved in an incident with another dog in a public space where you were worried for your own or your dog's safety?"

“The times that my dog has been attacked have made both of us anxious on walks. I love him and think he’s a wonderful dog, but his reactivity since these incidents has been really challenging and it’s often hard to know the best course of action to take.”

Understandably, the potential for conflict can be worrying. 36% of dog owners admitted they worry about other dogs scaring or biting theirs. Over a fifth of dog owners (21%) told us that they avoid walking where or when there are likely to be other dogs about.

Differences in how people manage their dogs on walks can lead to friction. While 47% of dog owners preferred for their dog to be off-lead as much as possible, 43% preferred for other dogs to be kept on lead.

Before you let your pooch off-lead, you need to be confident that they’ll always come back when you call; whatever’s going on around them. Our survey found that one in ten dogs rarely come back when called¹⁷. You should teach your dog that coming back to you is always a good thing, and will result in tasty treats, playtime, or whatever reward they like best.

Dogs on leads might not want to be approached. There are many reasons why a dog may be walked on-lead. They may be recovering and under vet’s orders, they may be in training, they may have a strong desire to chase, they may be worried or at risk of fleeing, it may be legally required, or it could be any other reason. Some empathy and understanding of other people’s and dogs’ needs goes a long way.



¹⁷ We asked “How often does your dog come back when called?” with a 5-point answer scale from very rarely to very regularly.

The majority of dog owners were in agreement on some dog walking etiquette though. 71% of dog owners agreed that “dogs should be put on lead when there is another dog on lead”.

This did not necessarily mean that people wanted to bubble wrap their dogs; 57% agreed that they like their dog to interact with other dogs. However, people wanted interactions to be on their terms and to be managed in a way that they, and their dog, feel safe.

With more dogs out and about, particularly in the adolescent age range and including those who missed out on early-life socialisation during the pandemic, Dogs Trust will continue to promote responsible dog ownership and the considerate use of shared space for everyone. We know some dogs need more space to feel comfortable, and our behaviour team is always on hand to advise on safe dog interactions. We want every dog and owner to enjoy their time spent outside.



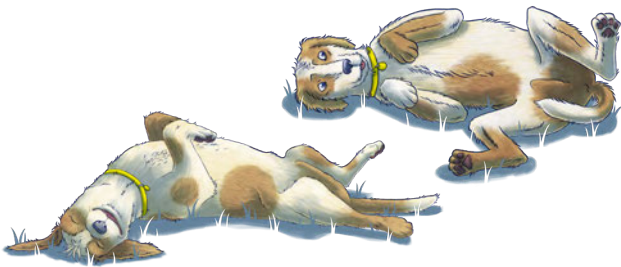
Canine communication - do we really understand them?

Our dogs communicate using their bodies in all kinds of different ways. Understanding dog body language helps us to recognise and meet their needs better. Learning to understand our dogs can prevent dog bite incidents and reduce the number of dogs given up for rehoming for displaying unwanted behaviours.

However, in our survey, many dog owners showed they couldn't spot the subtle early warning signs that dogs may be feeling uneasy which can lead to a situation escalating¹⁸. 80% of owners believed they were confident in their ability to read dog body language but, when tested, only 24% could accurately identify the dogs that were worried and needed space.

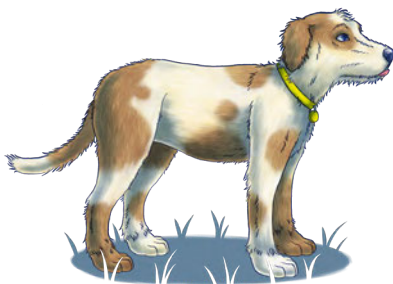
It is a common misconception that a dog rolling over when approached means they want a belly rub. 76% of survey respondents failed to spot that this might mean a dog is feeling worried and actually in need of more space.

Those who strongly agreed that they were confident in reading dog body language were in fact less likely to answer correctly than the people who only slightly agreed, highlighting a problematic over-inflated belief in abilities.



Only 24%

correctly identified an **appeasement roll** as being a sign of a worried dog (top) vs 88% correctly identifying a **relaxed lying** position (bottom).



Only 41%

correctly identified a dog licking their lips with ears pinned back as being worried (**59% failed to recognise** these as signs of stress and needing more space).



Only 34%

correctly identified a **yawning dog** as potentially being worried (meaning **66% failed to recognise**).



53%

failed to recognise that a dog licking their lips while turning their head away could also be a sign that a dog is anxious.

¹⁸ Survey respondents were asked to select the images of dogs that looked worried and needed space.

Would you know the warning signs?

Our National Dog Survey respondents had strong thoughts about whether their dog would bite. More than three-quarters (78%) believed their dog would never bite them. Nearly two-thirds (63%) said their dog would never bite a stranger. And nearly 68% of respondents said they completely trusted their dog to behave appropriately around other people¹⁹.

Like us, dogs have shorter fuses when they're ill or in pain²⁰. Dogs use aggressive behaviour, including biting, as a last resort when they feel scared or threatened. Dogs Trust believes many bites could be prevented if owners understand the early warning signs that their dogs are distressed or in pain.

Most bites to children happen in the home with a familiar dog²¹, so it's vital that owners recognise the dog body language to look out for and to never leave a dog alone with a child.

We know that dogs in pain are more likely to bite. Again, owners appear overconfident, with 87% saying that they could tell if their dog was in pain. It's important to know that dogs won't always yelp when they're in pain; changes in movement, behaviour or demeanour could be more subtle²². It's important to have your dog assessed by a vet if their behaviour suddenly changes. Many dogs with behavioural issues are likely to have undiagnosed and untreated pain.

78%

believed their dog would never bite them

63%

said their dog would never bite a stranger

32%

thought that a wagging tail always means a dog is happy, which isn't always the case

¹⁹ We asked respondents to agree or disagree on a 5-point scale to statements about dog bite risk

²⁰ Mills, D.S. et al. (2020) Pain and problem behavior in cats and dogs. *Animals* 10, 318.

²¹ Tulloch, J.S.P. et al. (2021) Paediatric emergency department dog bite attendance during the COVID-19 pandemic: an audit at a tertiary children's hospital. *British Medical Journal Paediatrics Open* 5, e001040. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjpo-2021-001040>.

²² Dogs Trust Dog Friendly Clinic - how pain affects behaviour

Dog behaviour - the challenges

Since the start of 2024, a quarter of all owners who've contacted Dogs Trust asking us to rehome their dog have said they'd made the decision because of their dog's behaviour.

From this year's survey, we found that 76% of dogs displayed at least one 'undesirable' behaviour²³. These included behaviours such as barking at the door or noises outside the home (52%), being distressed by fireworks (26%), or jumping up uninvited (25%), as well as being reactive to other dogs while out walking (17%), poor recall (10%) and pulling on the lead (9%).

10 behaviours asked about:

- **52%** of dogs rarely stay quiet when hearing door knocking or noises outside the home.
- **26%** of dogs rarely stay calm when fireworks can be heard.
- **25%** of dogs rarely greet politely with paws on the floor (i.e., jump up uninvited).
- **17%** of dogs rarely stay calm around other dogs when out walking (i.e., reactive to other dogs).
- **16%** of dogs rarely remain calm around strangers
- **10%** of dogs rarely come back when called
- **9%** of dogs rarely leave an item when asked
- **9%** of dogs rarely relax when left at home alone
- **9%** of dogs rarely walk calmly when walked on-lead
- **2%** of dogs rarely sleep through the night



What's deemed a 'problem behaviour'²⁴ is different for every owner. Behaviour that bothers one owner may not be a problem, or may even be encouraged, by a different owner. We asked owners whether their dogs' behaviours were a problem to them or their household.

²³ Undesirable behaviour was classified as rarely or very rarely performing any of the ten listed ideal behaviours, as defined by societal expectations of dogs.

²⁴ Problem behaviour was defined as any undesirable behaviour whereby the owner selected "This behaviour is a problem to me or my household".

We found that the three behaviours which troubled owners the most were separation anxiety (a problem for 30% of owners whose dogs rarely relax when home alone), not walking calmly on-lead (30%) and being reactive around other dogs (28%).



Separation related behaviours

For 30% of dogs that rarely relaxed when home alone, this was said to be a problem to the owner or their family.

Loose-lead walking

For 30% of dogs that rarely walk calmly when out on the lead, this was said to be a problem to the owner or their family.



Dog “reactivity” or undesirable behaviour around other dogs

For 28% of dogs that rarely stay calm around other dogs when out walking, this was said to be a problem to the owner or their family.

Barking at the front door, despite being most commonly reported, was least likely to pose a problem, with some anecdotes that it was encouraged.

In fact, the most common response to undesirable dog behaviour was to manage it²⁵, as opposed to trying to change the behaviour or seek help for it.



²⁵ For each undesirable behaviour, respondents could select the approach they took to that specific behaviour, including the statement “I am managing this behaviour in other ways”

Changing canine behaviour

Owners try many ways to solve dog behaviour issues. With the amount of information (and misinformation) readily available online, owners struggle to know where to turn for reliable advice when faced with behavioural challenges with their dog.

Depending on the type of behaviour issue, between 31% and 42% of owners said they'd searched the internet to seek help or try to improve their dog's behaviour. Where owners sought help varied depending on the nature of their dog's behaviour issue.

- **Veterinary consultation** was more common for fireworks distress (50%), trouble sleeping through the night (36%), and separation-related behaviours (23%).
- **Seeking help from a dog trainer** was more common for undesirable behaviour around other dogs (52%) or strangers (48%), recall (56%) and loose-lead walking (56%).
- A minority had consulted a **Clinical Animal Behaviourist**, with only 4% of dogs who rarely relax when home alone having had such expert help for their separation-related behaviour.

It is important to get advice from a professional or authority who is qualified to deal with a specific problem. The dog training and behaviour sector is unregulated, meaning anyone can call themselves a dog trainer or behaviourist. More than 23,000 people told us they would like to see this change²⁶. Dogs Trust offers **extensive guidance** on what to look for when seeking advice.

Our dog trainers can teach new behaviours such as how to walk on a loose lead without pulling, whereas our behaviourists deal with why a dog feels a certain way about something and how that can be changed.

Dogs Trust developed the Behaviour Support Line in response to our previous two National Dog Surveys. We saw that people wanted a free, easy-to-access resource to help them. Since its launch, over 13,000 people have benefited from talking to our team of dog behaviour specialists who can offer advice based on the latest science and research in dog behaviour.



²⁶ Regulation of dog behaviour and training professionals was one of the answer options to the question "Which dog welfare issues matter most to you?"

Bark to school



Only 1 in 15

owners (<7%) currently take their dog to a training class

This year's National Dog Survey asked how dog owners felt about training their dogs²⁷.

More than half of the dog owners surveyed (52%) valued ongoing training as important for dogs, and 45% thought that everyone should go to training classes. But only 1 in 15 people said that they were currently taking their dog to a training class²⁸. Many dog owners said they could do it themselves (56%) or that dog training was about common sense (49%). Of those who have attended training classes, 72% agreed that their dog benefitted. And for those who hadn't yet attended a class, 43% thought that their dog would benefit.

27% said that they would only attend dog training classes in the future if a behaviour problem arose, and 6% of owners believe it is not necessary to train dogs at all.

92%

of dog owners who currently attend training classes say they are fun

"I value ongoing training."
– 52% agree

"Everybody should go to training classes with their dogs."
– 45% agree



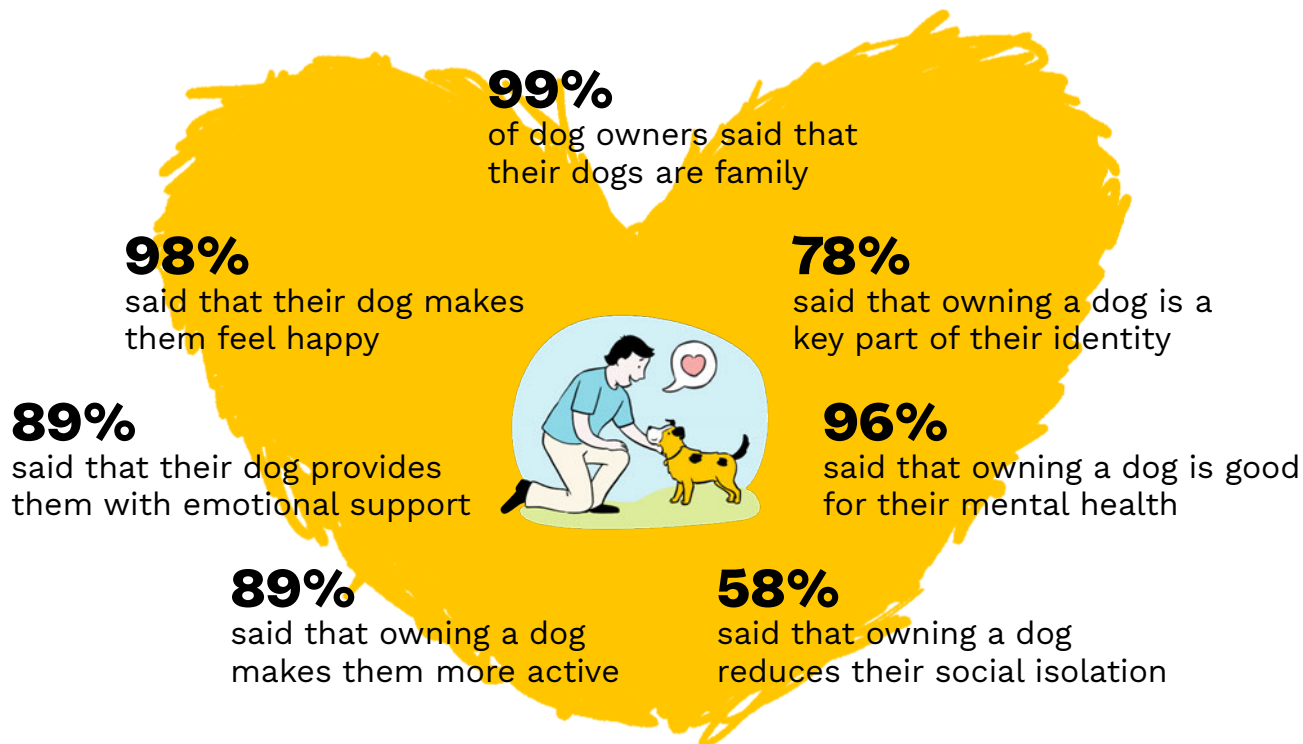
²⁷ Dog owners were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a set of statements about dog training on a 5-point scale from strongly agree to disagree.

²⁸ We asked: "Do you attend training classes with your dog?". These were not necessarily Dogs School classes.

Dogs really are family

Where would we be without our canine family members? We are very much a nation of dog lovers and see our dogs as valuable members of the household.

Dogs have a positive impact on us and play a big part in making our day-to-day lives better. Nearly all respondents to the 2024 National Dog Survey (96%) said owning a dog is good for their mental health and reduces their social isolation (58%). 89% of people said that their dog provides them with emotional support, with the same proportion admitting dog ownership makes them more active.



Owners shared in heart-warming detail, the depth of connection they felt with their canine companions²⁹:

“Life without my dog isn’t worth thinking about. He adds more to my life than words will ever fully convey.”

“After losing my husband suddenly my dog has helped me through lots of sadness. I don’t think I would have gotten through without him. He’s my best mate and I love him deeply.”

“My dog is the best thing that’s ever happened to me. He is getting older and slowing down a bit, but still full of life and brings absolute joy to our household everyday. Dogs are amazing!”

“Working from home since the COVID pandemic my dog has become my best friend”

“[Our dog] is a member of our family. We do not see him as a pet as such. He is now an old boy so we look after his needs. He is loved, cared for and extremely spoiled.”

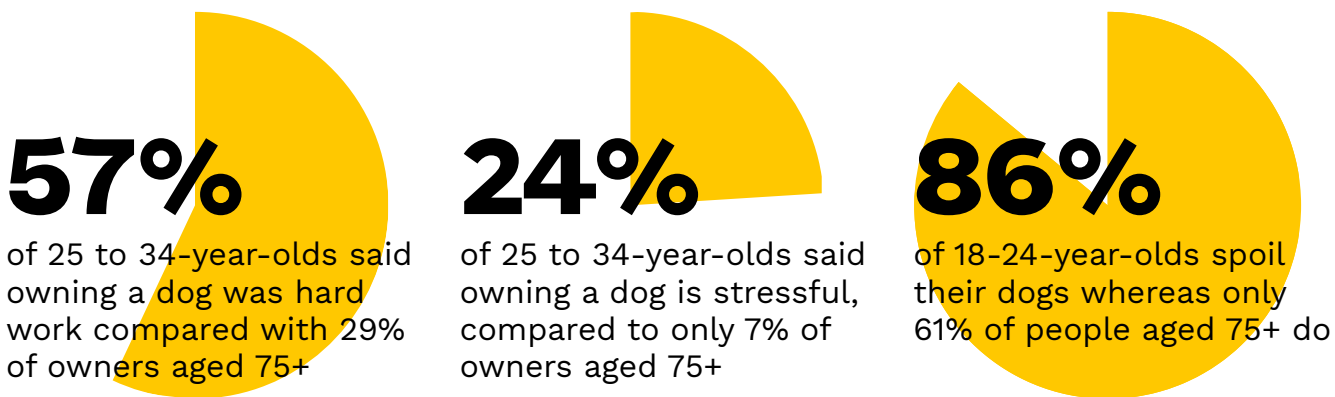
²⁹ We asked: “Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your dog(s), your relationship with them or your life together?”

Huge benefits but big responsibilities

Being a responsible dog owner was one of the most important welfare issues for over 172,000 people who answered the 2024 National Dog Survey. And there's no doubt that with the joys come challenges.

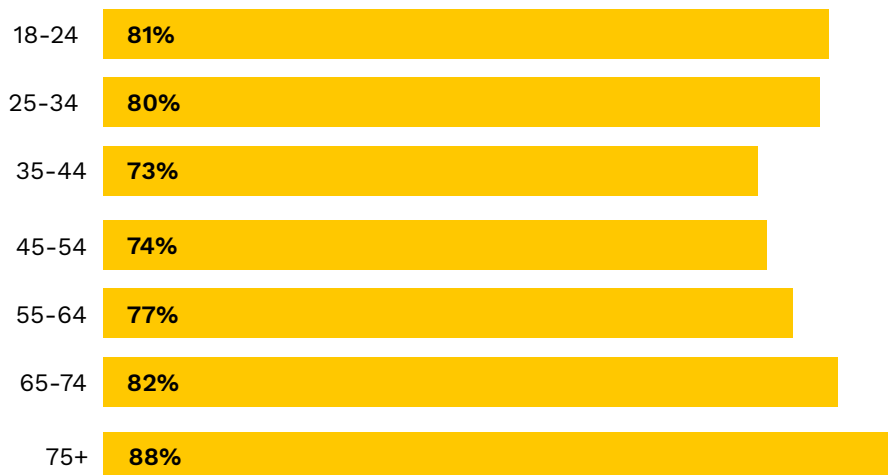
Young owners were more likely to find dog ownership "hard work" (57% of 25–34-year-olds) and "stressful" (24% of 25–34-year-olds), perhaps as they're also juggling work and family. This age group were also most likely to say that owning a dog puts a strain on their mental health (5%)³⁰.

Older dog owners are more likely to believe "a dog is just a dog" and are slightly less likely to view their dogs as "family" (98% of people aged 75+ compared to 99% of 18 to 24-year-olds) than young owners. Younger people are also more likely to spoil their dogs than older owners, with 86% of 18-24-year-olds saying they spoil their dogs.



The youngest and oldest owners appeared to be the most emotionally invested, being the most likely to agree that their dog is their best friend, provides emotional support, is a key part of their identity, and reduces their social isolation. These age groups were also the people who struggled most to cope with their dogs. Since we care so deeply for our dogs, it's no wonder that behaviour issues with our canine companions can take a toll on our mental health³¹.

Owning a dog is a key part of my identity



³⁰ We asked dog owners to agree or disagree on a 5-point scale to statements about the benefits and challenges of dog ownership.

³¹ Barcelos, A.M. et al. (2023) Dog owner mental health is associated with dog behavioural problems, dog care and dog-facilitated social interaction: a prospective cohort study. *Scientific Reports* 13, 21734. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-48731-z>

"I love my dog! Her behaviour has always been a problem when she is with other dogs. I've spoken to vets but the only advice they have given is professional behaviour therapy which I can't afford."

"She is our baby. We all adore her. She has got the loveliest temperament of any dog I've ever owned and I couldn't imagine life without her, even if she doesn't always do as she's told!"

"I struggle with my mental health and my dog helps massively. My dog is my best friend, she's my little sunshine, the light on my darkest days and I couldn't be without her."

"Life with [our dog] can be quite hard as he is dog reactive and I feel like I isolate ourselves by avoiding taking him and the other dogs where there might be dogs now."

"I often feel like I'm not good enough for him and that I've made a mistake. I struggle to cope with [his behaviour]."

"They are hard work but it's worth every minute. Our dogs are our family."

"Due to the difficulties [my dog] has with living in the human world, I feel that we have worked hard as a team and, as a result, developed a really strong bond. I've also learned so much from him about his world and expectations."



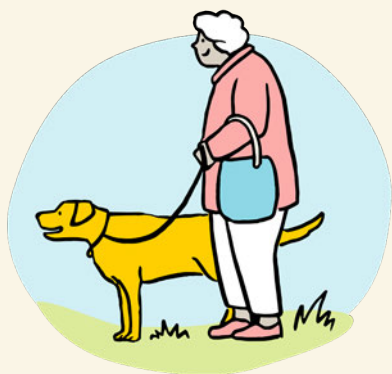
It takes a village to care for a dog

Extra hands make light work – and that’s true for dog care.

The 2024 National Dog Survey asked about the support around owners that enables them to go to work, deal with emergencies, or take holidays. More than a quarter of dog owners (26%) said they had nobody from outside their household, excluding paid professionals, that they could rely on for help with dog care. Older owners in particular struggle with finding support.

The results suggested that the older people get, the fewer people they have available to help with their dog. 15% of 25 to 34-year-olds said they had no-one to look after their dog for a week – but this proportion rose to 37% for people aged over 75.

More older people* have no one they can rely on for dog care:



19% had no one to check on their dog

24% had no one to walk their dog

28% had no one to look after their dog overnight

37% had no one to care for their dog for a week

* Percentages relate to people aged 75+

“My dog is so loving and funny and goes with me or my partner wherever we go. As much as we love her, it is a tie, as you have to think about how long they’re on their own if we go out, can’t go shopping with them, can’t have a spontaneous night away. We are always thinking of our girl.”

“The hardest thing for us is having [our dog] cared for when we are away. She wouldn’t cope in kennels, and boarding with our dog walker is so expensive we cannot afford it. The loveliest thing for us is the affection and emotional support we get from [our dog].”

Dog welfare

Devoted dog lovers don't just care about their own pets. Our 2024 National Dog Survey respondents were asked to choose up to four dog welfare issues that mattered to them most³².

67%

said that tackling neglect of and cruelty toward dogs mattered most to them



Unsurprisingly for a nation of dog lovers, neglect and cruelty was a top concern for most survey respondents (67%) and puppy farming was a concern for over half of respondents (52%). Responsible dog ownership was key for 41% of respondents, including both dog owners and non-owners.



52%

said that tackling puppy farming mattered most to them

Control of dangerous dogs, including bite incidents and out-of-control dogs was a top concern for 28% of people. Dogs Trust is campaigning for effective breed-neutral legislation and enforcement (which was a prime concern for 7%), with measures which allow for early intervention and owner education.

Bite prevention begins with better understanding of dogs. 18% of survey respondents said that understanding of dog body language and safety around dogs was one of four welfare issues that mattered most to them.

Almost a quarter of respondents (24%) thought that overhauling breeding practices to prioritise dog health and temperament over looks and profit mattered most. And a fifth (21%) said that puppy smuggling troubled them most.

³² We asked: "Which dog welfare issues matter most to you? Please select up to four issues which matter the most."

Conclusions

Over 400,000 dog lovers have spoken, and Dogs Trust has listened.

It's our biggest survey response ever and gives us a clear picture of how we live with, interact with, and care for our dogs.

The results show that it's a changing world for our canine companions. The pandemic puppies are growing up and first-time dog owners are navigating the challenges of adolescence with their dogs, and other people's dogs too.

Our survey results clearly show that dogs are more than just part of the family. They help give us valuable emotional support and they get us out walking and meeting other people – and other dogs. But it's not always easy. Dog ownership is rewarding but it's also hard work and a lifetime commitment. We worry about our dogs because we care for them so deeply. Our dogs can make us feel stressed, particularly when their behaviour is challenging. We know that finding qualified dog behaviour professionals can feel overwhelming. And finding people to help us care for our dogs is more challenging the older we get, as support networks shrink.

Dogs Trust is dedicated to supporting dog lovers across the nation. Our go-to resources and valuable support can help everyone to be responsible owners, ensuring every dog lives a happy, healthy life. In an ever-changing world, we strive to create the best society for dogs to thrive, fostering care and understanding, with the reassurance that Dogs Trust will always be there for dogs when they need us most.



Appendix 1: Demographics of survey respondents

Why do we ask for respondent demographics?

We collect data on age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and household composition to ensure that our strategies reflect the diverse needs and perspectives of dog owners across the UK. Knowing more about dog owners helps us tailor our services and address the challenges of dog ownership faced by different groups.

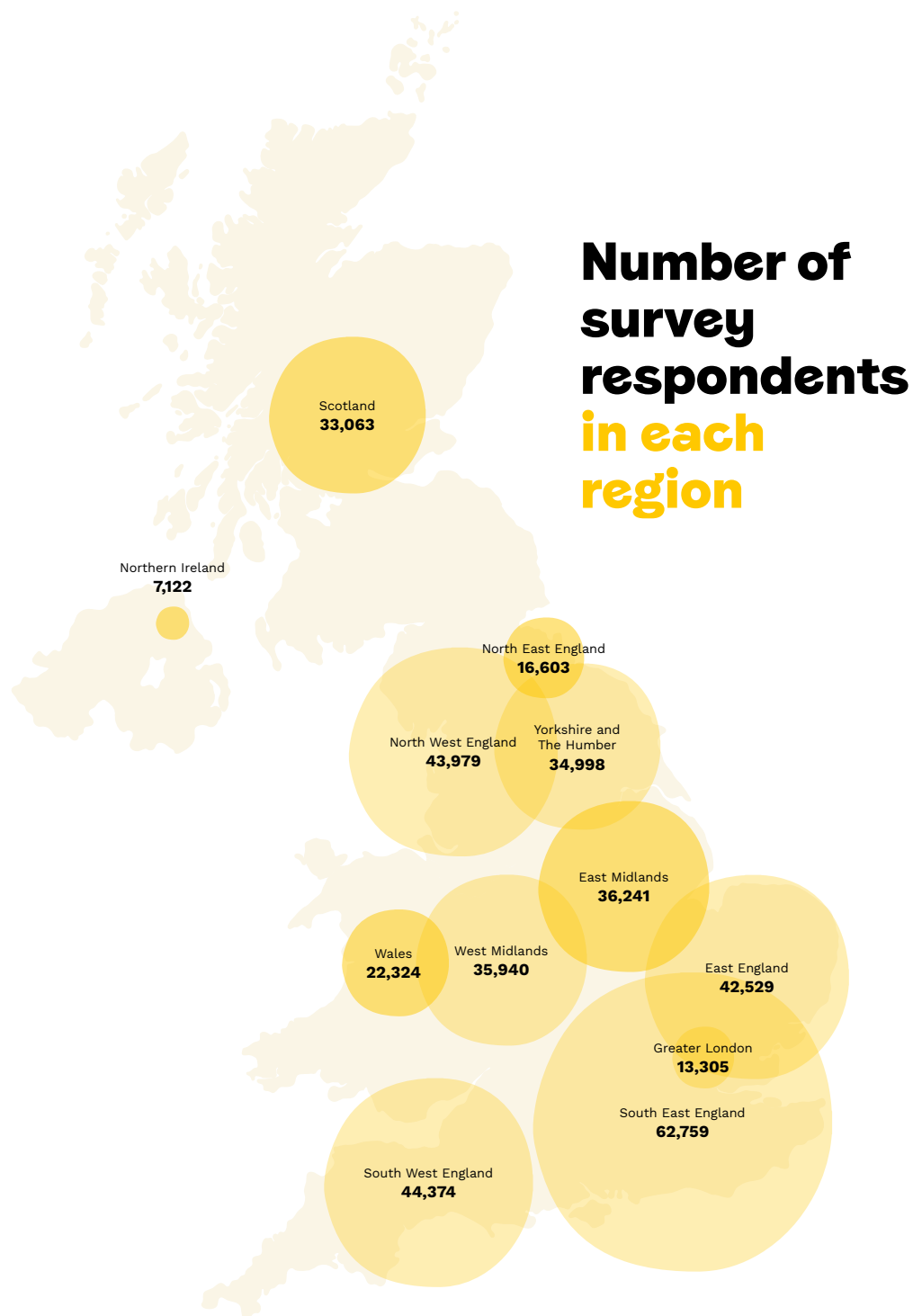


Figure 3. Number of survey respondents (both dog owners and dog lovers) per region of the UK. Based on those who answered the question “Where do you live?”

Gender identity

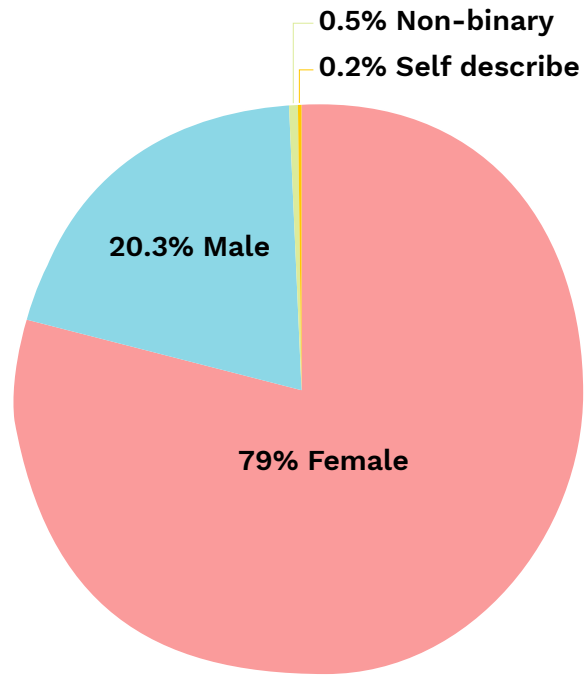


Figure 4. Gender breakdown of survey respondents based on those who answered the question “Which of the following best describes your gender identity?” (N = 398,325).

Age

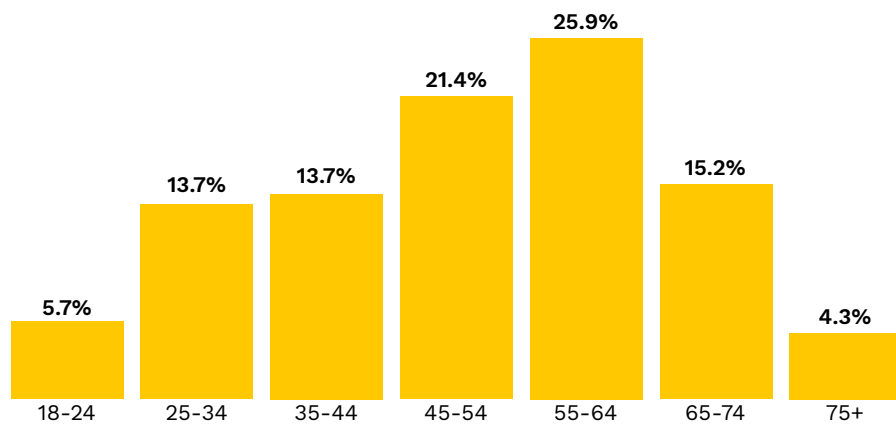


Figure 5. Age groups of survey respondents based on those who answered the question “How old are you? Please select your age group” (N = 401,342)

Appendix 2: Methodology

Data collection

Our online survey took place at <https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/national-dog-survey/take-part> from 2nd May to 20th June 2024. Respondents were directed to specific sets of questions depending on whether they currently had a dog or not.

We asked owners questions about the type of dogs they had, their dog walking habits and preferences, and their dogs' behaviour. These questions could be answered for multiple dogs, if appropriate. We also asked people about their attitudes to dog training, risk of dog bites, and the perceived benefits of dog ownership, as well as their relationship with their dog(s).

All participants, including those without a dog, were asked to assess four dog body language illustrations for stress signals and if any of the dogs looked worried and needed more space. They were also asked to select up to four dog welfare issues that mattered most to them from a specified list.

At the end, we asked for people's demographic information to understand more about them. All of the questions were optional except for the first question asking how many dogs they owned, as this dictated which subsequent questions would be asked. Most questions were multiple choice with occasional options for more detailed text responses. The survey typically took 16 minutes to complete.



Inclusion criteria

People completing our survey had to be at least 18 years old and live in the United Kingdom. Participation was entirely voluntary.

Recruitment

People who had completed the National Dog Survey 2023 and agreed to be contacted were emailed on 2nd May 2024 and invited to complete the survey. It was advertised on social media, including paid Facebook advertisements, from 6th May 2024 until 14th June 2024.

Data analysis and presentation

For each question, descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) were calculated. Since all questions were optional, percentages presented are based on available responses. Throughout the report, percentages are rounded up from 0.5%.

A dog breed's overall popularity was calculated as a proportion of all other dogs reported in the survey. As data were obtained via cross-sectional survey (completed at one point in time), to assess a dog breed's popularity over time, age cohorts were used as a proxy of time. A breed's popularity at any given time point was inferred from the percentage of all dogs reported of the same age.

Analysis of free-text responses commenced with identification and examination of frequently occurring words and combinations of words. Samples of text using subsets of these words were read to identify related topics. Free-text responses were then grouped into themes. Direct quotes were anonymised by redacting dogs' and people's names.

All analyses and data management were conducted using the statistical programming language 'R'.

Ethical review

The study was approved by the Dogs Trust Ethical Review Board (ERB077).



Since 1891, we've been working for a better future for dogs and the people who love them.

When a dog is in distress, we care for them. When a dog needs a home, we find them a loving family. When an owner needs a helping hand (or paw) – or they just can't cope, we're ready to step in.

For every dog, for every owner, we're by their side through thick and thin, throughout their lives. The bond they have is special to us. It changes lives, making each day happier and more complete. It's why we believe A dog is for life.®

Discover who we are, what we do, and how we'll never stop fighting to make tomorrow's world a better place for all dogs.

A dog is for life®



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