

# INDIA

State of Pet Homelessness Project

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the State of Pet Homelessness Project market report for India. This is a global data project undertaken by Mars alongside leading animal welfare experts and organizations across 20 countries. It seeks to help gather data and insights to better understand the number of dogs and cats who do not have regular access to the care they need, within a loving home or a community – and the factors that may contribute to solving the related challenges.

## OBJECTIVE

Our aim is that the data collected can help identify the points in the cycle where pets are most at risk for becoming or remaining homeless and inform actions that reduce its prevalence. Pets that don't receive the sustained human care they need are at risk of poor health and compromised welfare. Tackling pet homelessness helps both animals and people – bringing the benefits of the human-animal bond to more people and ensuring every pet gets the sustained care and nutrition they need to thrive. Until now, there was no common way of looking at the issue. It is our hope that sharing this work and the collected data, will create conversations, drive action, and make a difference in the lives of millions of homeless cats and dogs.

## HOW THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

Measuring the scale of pet homelessness is a complex task, as the homeless pet population fluctuates constantly due to its many interconnected contributing factors. Stray pet numbers are difficult to count and increasing every day due to the rapid reproduction rates of unsterilized strays, and, in most countries, there is no single source of information on the shelter pet population at any given point in time.

The State of Pet Homelessness Project provides a wealth of data and uncovered insights into areas of action critical to tackling the pet homelessness challenge. Three areas were identified where we believe concerted effort and focus could make the biggest impact:

**PREVENT UNWANTED PETS. ENSURE SUSTAINED CARE. KEEP PETS IN HOMES.**

This report contains a small set of that data for India. The full data sets from all 20 markets are available online at [stateofpethomelessness.com](https://stateofpethomelessness.com).



This global data project across 20 countries consisted of:

<b>930 SOURCES REVIEWED</b>	<b>44 ANALYST INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>~30,000 PUBLIC SURVEYS</b>	<b>9+ MONTHS OF FIELDWORK</b>
<b>7,700+ HOURS GATHERING DATA</b>	<b>180 DATA POINTS</b>	<b>200 PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEWS</b>	



India

69%

of cats and dogs are homeless

69.3M  
TOTAL HOMELESS CATS AND DOGS

India has an above average level of overall pet homelessness of the 20 markets this project looked at. The opportunity is to understand how to prevent homelessness increasing and tackle the challenges that are present.

### 100.09M TOTAL CATS AND DOGS IN INDIA

85.61M TOTAL DOGS

14.48M TOTAL CATS

30.79M  
TOTAL OWNED  
CATS AND DOGS

8.8M  
TOTAL SHELTER  
CATS AND DOGS

60.5M  
TOTAL STRAY  
CATS AND DOGS



60.5M (71%)

DOGS ARE HOMELESS



8.8M (61%)

CATS ARE HOMELESS

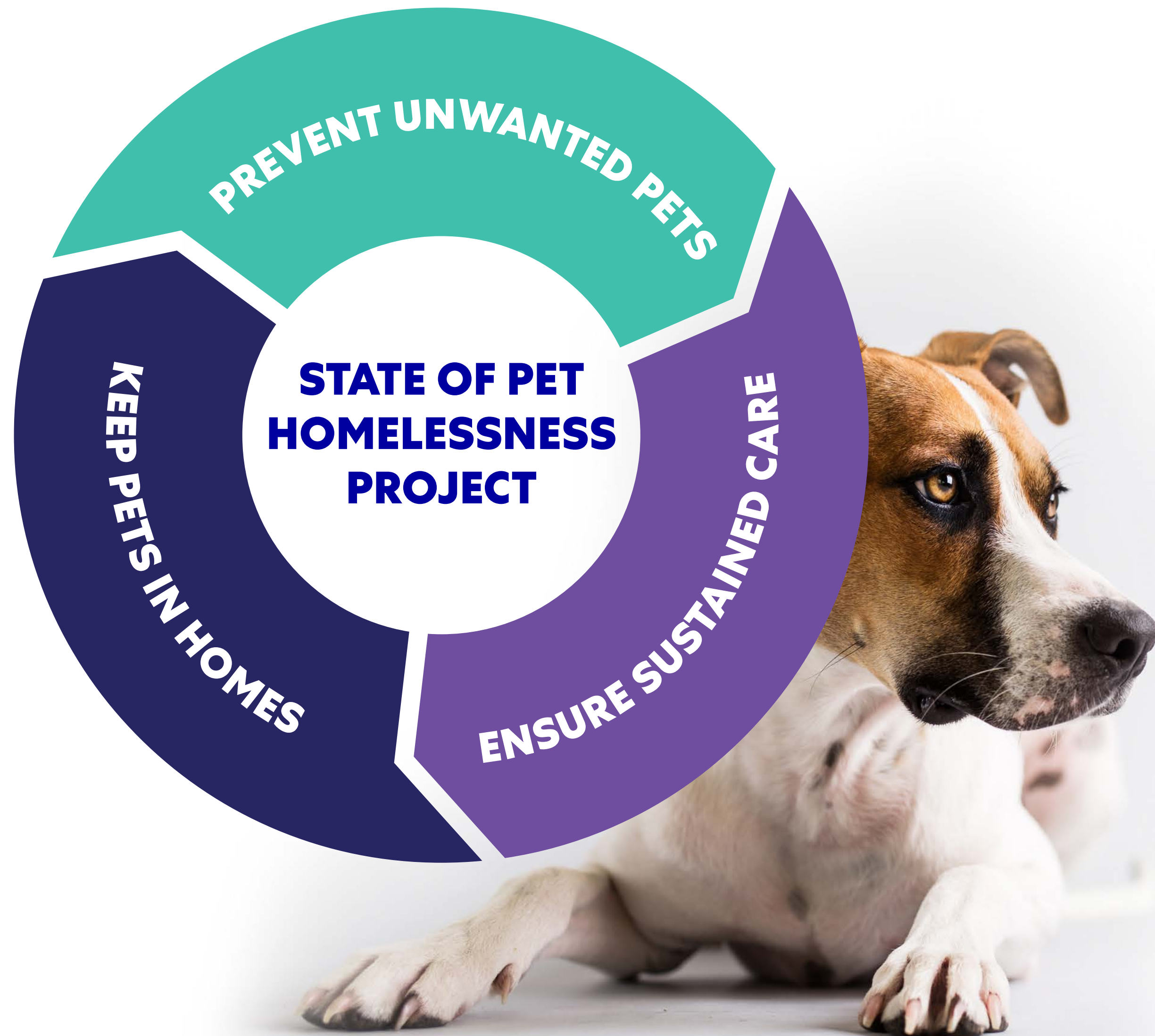
8M  
IN SHELTERS

52.5M  
STRAYS

800K  
IN SHELTERS

8M  
STRAYS

Pet Homelessness estimates based on primary and secondary research conducted by Euromonitor International (EMI) in 2022-2023, and owned pet estimates collected by Mars Consumer & Marketing Insights (CMI). Additional interviews were conducted with local expert organizations.



To bring transparency, awareness and insight to the challenge of pet homelessness, we have set out to build a data set that can offer insights into a range of attitudes and behaviors that impact the issue. Three interconnected themes emerged from the data, highlighting where interventions could help reduce pet homelessness.

### **PREVENT UNWANTED PETS**

Large populations of stray pets which can breed at a rapid rate are a huge part of the problem. This, coupled with irresponsible breeding practices, e.g. those that do not pay enough attention to health, temperament, positive early socialization, or to ensuring a good fit with the pet owner, can result in increasing numbers of homeless pets and groups of pets that are difficult to provide sustained care to or match with a home. Our data looks at this significant and critical piece of the challenge.

### **ENSURE SUSTAINED CARE**

Helping to provide more homeless pets with responsible loving homes, or the sustained human care they need in the community, is a foundational step in tackling pet homelessness. Achieving it requires an understanding of the key barriers to acquiring or adopting a pet, or accessing veterinary care, as well as facilitating pathways to ownership, and provision of care for community animals, whose home may not be a conventional house but still need access to sustained care. Shelters may provide care for cats and dogs, but resources are often strained and, if pets are not adopted to new homes, demand may exceed capacity.

### **KEEP PETS IN HOMES**

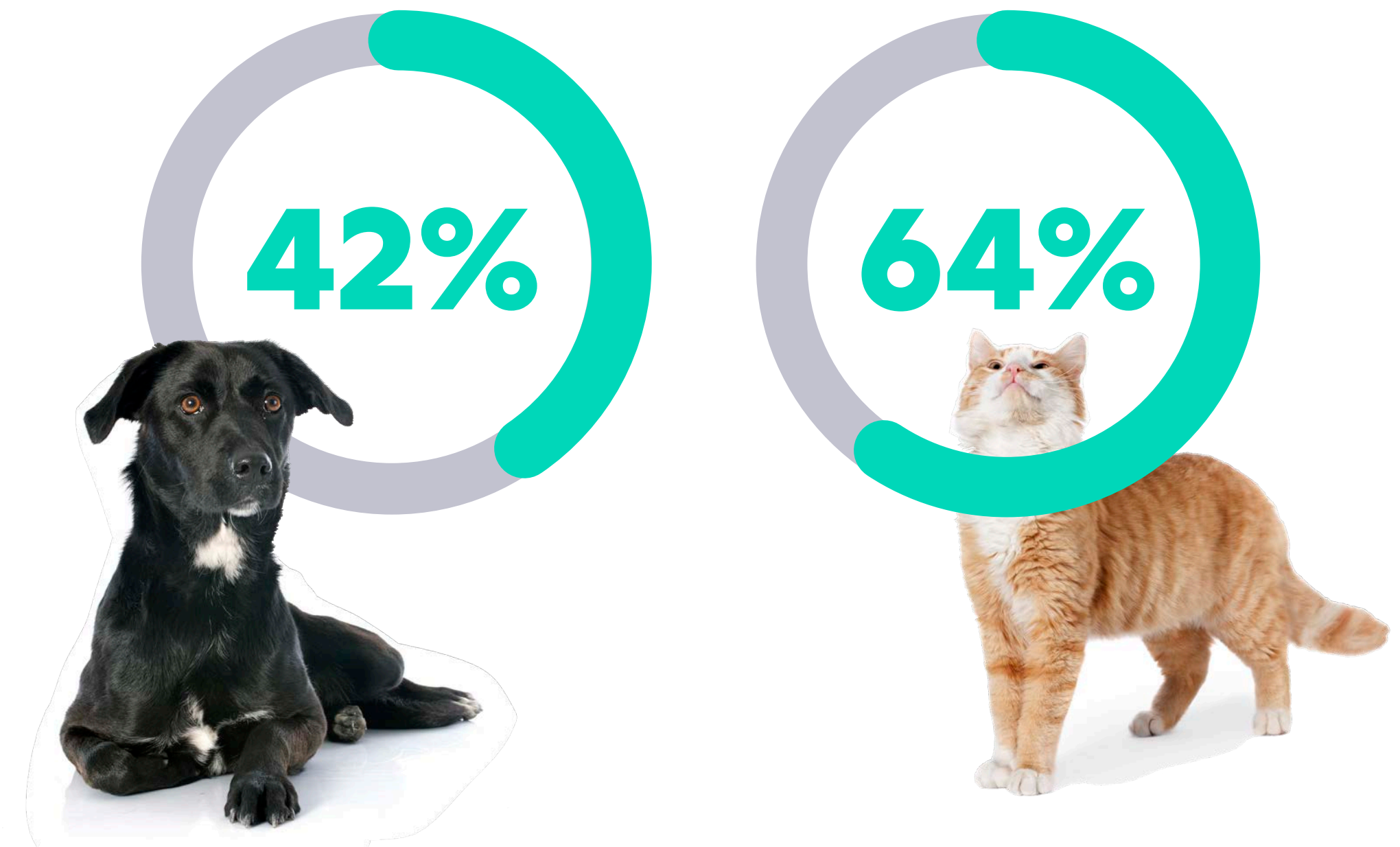
Keeping pets in homes is vital for both pet and owner to benefit from a longstanding bond. Pets are at risk of becoming homeless through being relinquished or abandoned if the pet ownership experience is difficult, or a pet owner can't access the advice and support they need. Pet owning practices which easily allow pets to stray or become lost can also result in owned pets becoming homeless. Our data looks at issues such as the cost of caring for a pet, common pet care practices and the incidence of lost pets.



Large populations of stray pets which can breed at a rapid rate are a huge part of the problem. This, coupled with irresponsible breeding practices, e.g. those that do not pay enough attention to health, temperament, positive early socialization, or to ensuring a good fit with the pet owner, can result in increasing numbers of homeless pets and groups of pets that are difficult to provide sustained care to or match with a home. Our data looks at this significant and critical piece of the challenge.

One unsterilized homeless pet can quickly create many more. Reducing uncontrolled or unplanned breeding is a critical approach to decreasing pet homelessness.

### IS YOUR PET NEUTERED/STERILIZED?<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Sample definition: 1004 current dog owners / 253 current cat owners who could identify if their pet was sterilized



**WHAT THE PROFESSIONALS TELL US**

**“We as a country are very comfortable with community animals. We have always been. When we are talking about adoption, it could be popular in another decade or something because of social media.”**

- Founder, Animal hospital (cats and dogs)

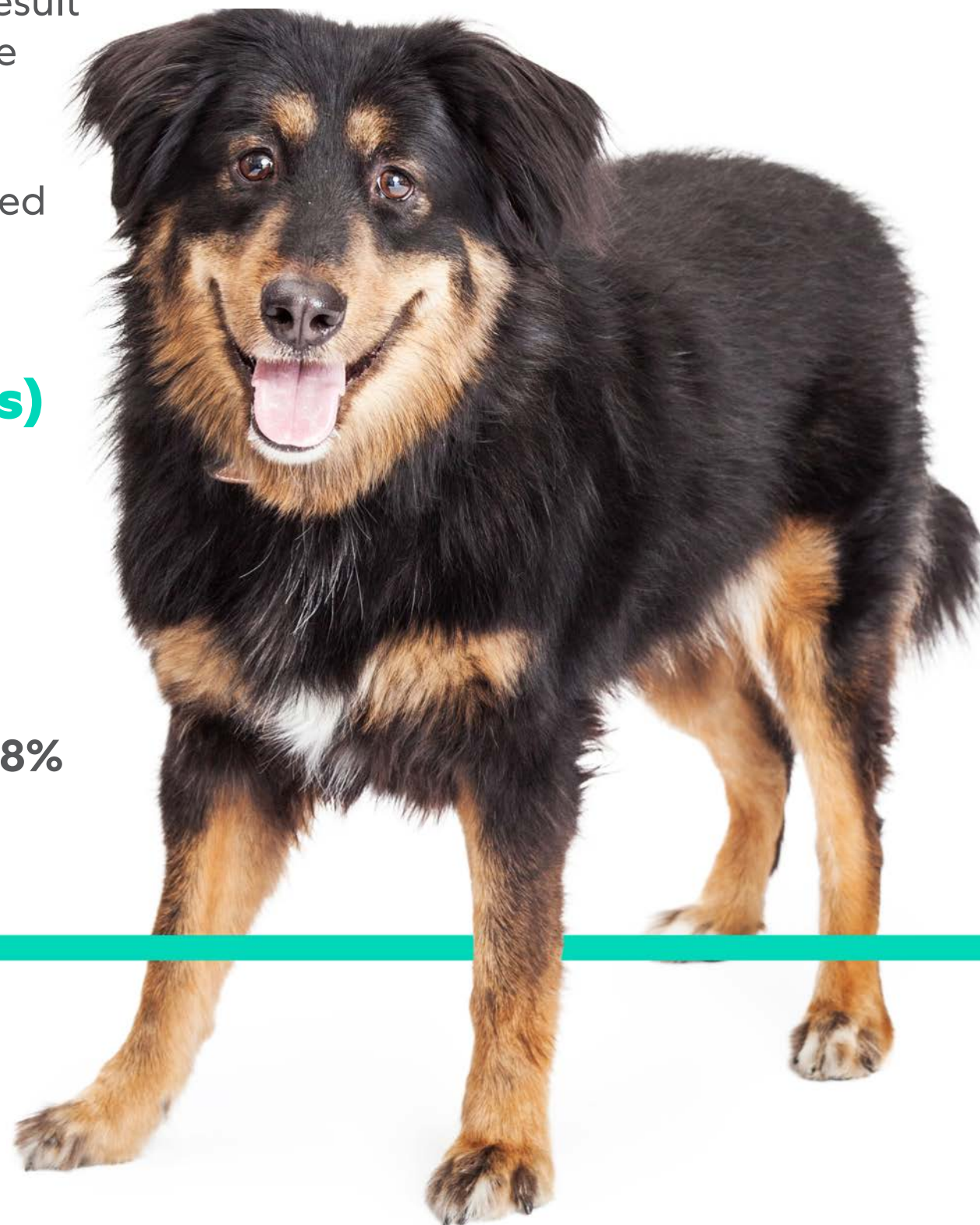


## WHERE DID YOU GET YOUR PET?¹

Where people get their pets reveals important insights about the pathways to pet ownership and the proportion of people making a direct impact on homeless pet numbers through adoption of shelter pets or strays. Pet breeders are also key. While responsibly bred pets are more likely to be matched to lifelong homes, irresponsible breeding practices, e.g. those that neglect health and temperament issues, or fail to ensure a good fit with the pet owner can result in unwanted pets. These behaviors increase the numbers of pets for which a home cannot be found, or pets which may find a home but later be relinquished or rehomed due to problems.

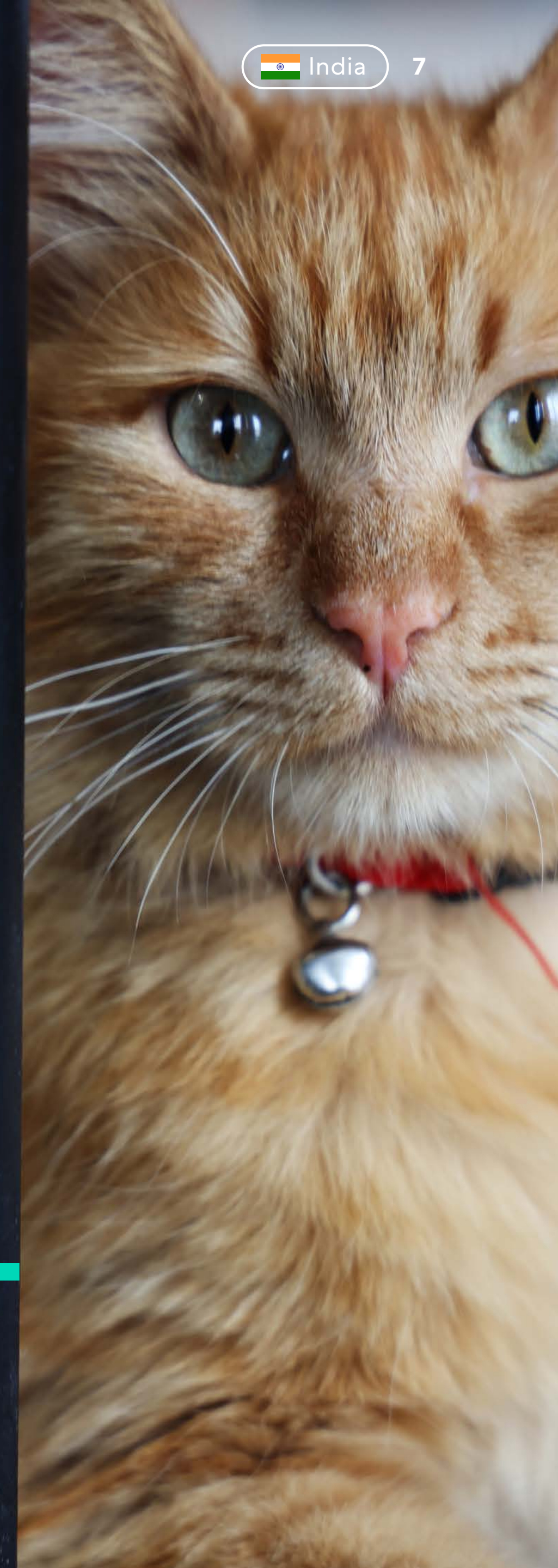
### DOGS (Top 5 Responses)

1. FRIEND/RELATIVE: 28%
2. Pet shop: 19%
3. Stray/I found it: 13%
4. Private Individual: 10%
5. Born into the household: 8%



### CATS (Top 5 Responses)

1. FRIEND/RELATIVE: 30%
2. Pet shop: 20%
3. Stray/I found it: 14%
4. Born into the household: 9%
5. (Tie) Private Individual and Breeder: 8%



¹Sample definition: 1004 current dog owners / 253 current cat owners



## WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU TAKE IF YOU ENCOUNTER A STRAY?<sup>1</sup>

Stray pets may interact with humans or remain hidden. Encouraging people to learn about appropriate ways to interact with different types of stray pets can help pets who would benefit from human care get access to what they need.

### DOG

50% ACT OF KINDNESS



27% CHASE IT AWAY



29% DO NOTHING



### CAT

46% ACT OF KINDNESS



24% CHASE IT AWAY



27% DO NOTHING



<sup>1</sup>Sample definition: 1211 has seen a stray dog / 1122 has seen a stray cat

## WHICH MEASURES DO YOU THINK WOULD BEST REDUCE PET HOMELESSNESS?<sup>2</sup>

Gathering opinions about potential solutions from a wide range of pet owners suggests solutions that can be quickly scaled.

### DOGS (Top 5 Responses)

1. SUPPORTING PROGRAMS THAT CONNECT PEOPLE TO SHELTERS: 26%
2. Fighting animal cruelty: 24%
3. Microchipping: 22%
4. Raising awareness of the benefits of having a pet: 22%
5. Raising awareness around responsible breeding practices: 22%

### CATS (Top 5 Responses)

1. RAISING AWARENESS OF THE BENEFITS OF HAVING A PET: 30%
2. Sterilization: 29%
3. Promoting programs so people know where to adopt: 28%
4. Supporting programs that connect people to shelters: 28%
5. (Tie) Fighting animal cruelty and Financial aid to owners, carers or fosters in low-income communities: 25%

<sup>2</sup>Sample definition: 1142 current or previous dog owners / 266 current or previous cat owners





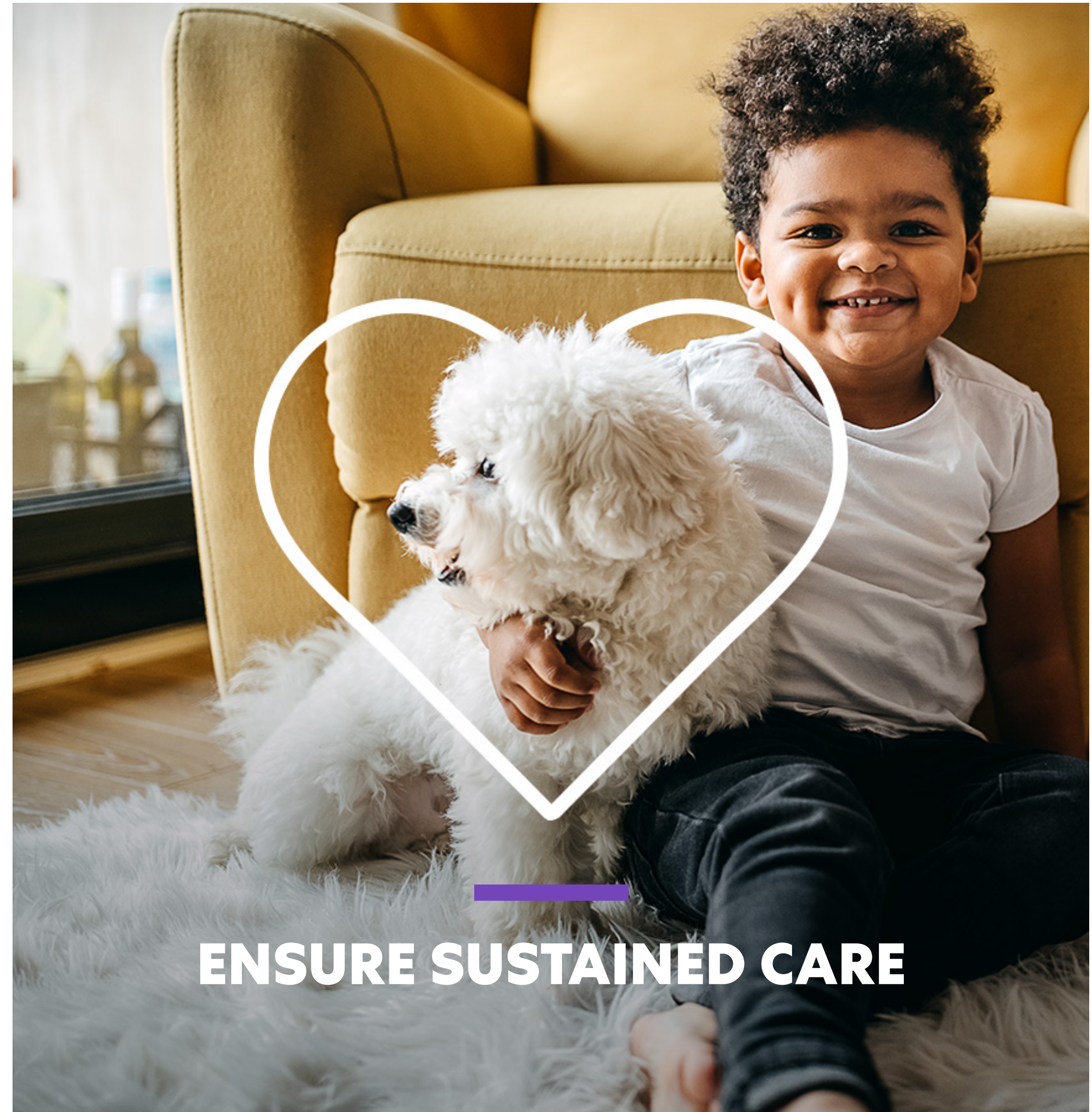
Helping to provide more homeless pets with responsible loving homes, or the sustained human care they need in the community, is a foundational step in tackling pet homelessness. Achieving it requires an understanding of the key barriers to acquiring or adopting a pet, or accessing veterinary care, as well as facilitating pathways to ownership, and provision of care for community animals, whose home may not be a conventional house but still need access to sustained care. Shelters may provide care for cats and dogs, but resources are often strained and, if pets are not adopted to new homes, demand may exceed capacity.

Getting more people interested in pet ownership and turning that interest into action creates more loving homes for pets.

### ARE YOU THINKING OF GETTING A PET IN THE NEAR FUTURE?<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Sample definition: 2565 owners and non-owners



## WHAT'S PREVENTING YOU FROM OWNING A PET?<sup>1</sup>

Reducing the initial barriers to pet ownership makes it easier for more people to become pet parents.



### DOGS (Top 5 Responses)

1. I'M SCARED OF DOGS: 31%
2. They aren't hygienic: 30%
3. I'm afraid it might bite/be aggressive: 28%
4. Can carry diseases: 26%
5. Smell: 25%



### CATS (Top 5 Responses)

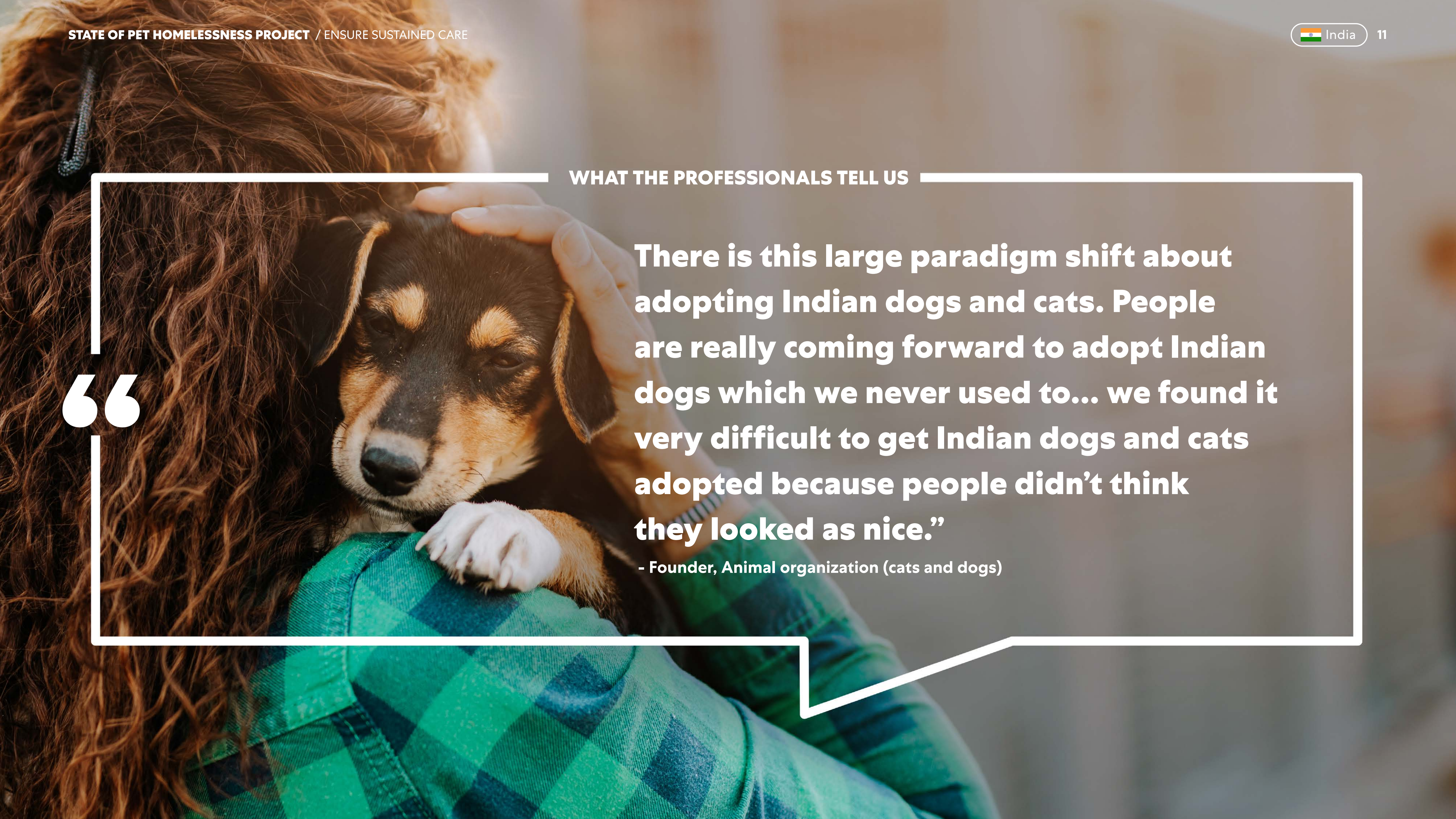
1. THEY AREN'T HYGIENIC: 26%
2. Smell: 25%
3. Can carry diseases: 24%
4. I'm afraid it might bite/be aggressive: 23%
5. I'm scared of cats: 22%

<sup>1</sup>Sample definition: 1423 non-dog owners / 2299 non-cat owners

WHAT THE PROFESSIONALS TELL US

**There is this large paradigm shift about adopting Indian dogs and cats. People are really coming forward to adopt Indian dogs which we never used to... we found it very difficult to get Indian dogs and cats adopted because people didn't think they looked as nice."**

- Founder, Animal organization (cats and dogs)





Changing the perception of rescued animals can get far more pets out of shelters and into loving homes.

**IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING GETTING A PET,  
DO YOU PLAN ON ADOPTING FROM A SHELTER?<sup>1</sup>**

**6%**  
**CONSIDERING  
GETTING A DOG  
FROM A SHELTER**

**9%**  
**CONSIDERING  
GETTING A CAT  
FROM A SHELTER**

<sup>1</sup>Sample definition: 803 dog considerers / 479 cat considerers



**KEEP PETS IN HOMES**

Keeping pets in homes is vital for both pet and owner to benefit from a longstanding bond. Pets are at risk of becoming homeless through being relinquished or abandoned if the pet ownership experience is difficult, or a pet owner can't access the advice and support they need. Pet owning practices which easily allow pets to stray or become lost can also result in owned pets becoming homeless. Our data looks at issues such as the cost of caring for a pet, common pet care practices and the incidence of lost pets.

Pets are lost more frequently than many may realize, leading to an unintended yet noteworthy increase in homeless pets. Keeping pets from straying is a beneficial objective for pets and the people who care for them.

**HAVE YOU EVER HAD A PET GO MISSING?¹**

**DOGS**  
**29% (7.28M)**

37% (2.69M) of those who lost their dog got them back.

**CATS**  
**12% (628K)**

55% (375K) of those who lost their cat got them back.

**HAVE YOU HAD A PET GO MISSING IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?¹**

**DOGS**  
**9%**



**CATS**  
**6%**

¹Sample definition: 1979 has or had a pet



## WHAT ARE THE BEST METHODS TO HELP LOST PETS?<sup>1</sup>

Understanding public perceptions of lost pet prevention techniques and how to help find lost pets can focus community efforts and increase utilization.

### DOGS (Top 5 Responses)

1. TAGS WITH CONTACT DETAILS: 41%
2. Microchipping: 35%
3. Communication from shelters when pets are lost by an owner: 33%
4. Updates in social networks: 28%
5. Communication from shelters when the pet turns up in their shelter: 28%

### CATS (Top 5 Responses)

1. TAGS WITH CONTACT DETAILS: 45%
2. Microchipping: 34%
3. Communication from shelters when the pet turns up in their shelter: 34%
4. Updates in social networks: 30%
5. Communication from shelters when pets are lost by an owner: 28%

### IS YOUR PET MICROCHIPPED?<sup>2</sup>

Microchipping is considered an effective way to permanently identify pets but, crucially, reuniting lost pets with owners via this method relies on owner contact details being registered and kept up to date on the microchip database.

**DOGS**  
**23%**

**CATS**  
**31%**

<sup>1</sup>Sample definition: 566 has lost a dog / 195 has lost a cat

<sup>2</sup>Sample definition: 1004 current dog owners / 253 current cat owners

## WHY MIGHT YOU CONSIDER REHOMING YOUR PET?<sup>1</sup>

Caring for a pet is a significant commitment of time, energy and money. Understanding the potential causes for rehoming can guide the efforts of organizations and businesses in supporting current pet owners to continue to care for their cat or dog.



### DOGS (Top 5 Responses)

1. I AM NO LONGER FIT ENOUGH TO TAKE CARE OF HIM/HER: 21%
2. Its behavior is inappropriate: 21%
3. I don't have enough time to look after him/her as I would like to: 20%
4. I will move and cannot take him/her with me: 20%
5. A member of my household/close friend/family is allergic: 19%

## ARE YOU CONSIDERING GIVING UP YOUR PET IN THE NEXT YEAR<sup>2</sup>

The benefits of pet ownership are numerous, but when confronted with significant challenges, giving up or rehoming might seem like the only option.

**DOGS**  
**38%**

**CATS**  
**57%**



### CATS (Top 5 Responses)

1. COSTS OF KEEPING PET BECOME TOO EXPENSIVE: 22%
2. I don't have enough time to look after him/her as I would like to: 21%
3. I will move and cannot take him/her with me: 20%
4. A member of my household/close friend/family is allergic: 20%
5. I am no longer fit enough to take care of him/her: 17%

<sup>1</sup>Sample definition: 1142 current or previous dog owners / 266 current or previous cat owners

<sup>2</sup>Sample definition: 1004 current dog owners / 253 current cat owners

## WHAT THE PROFESSIONALS TELL US

**“People call us and say they are moving and we cannot take our pet with us or there is a baby in our home and we cannot risk it so we cannot keep our pet. Then there are the people who don't call, just drop the dog on the road and leave them to their luck. People are not taking care of their pets because they consider them as animals, not family.”** - Organizer, Shelter (cats and dogs)





## TAKEAWAYS

India is above the global average<sup>1</sup> of 35% homeless cats and dogs. There are significant opportunities to address the stray pet population, help more pets find the sustained human care and nutrition they need to thrive, and prevent pets from being rehomed.



## PREVENT UNWANTED PETS

The number of people getting pets from shelters is low compared to other markets, with only 5% of dog owners and 3% of cat owners reporting their pet came from a shelter. Friends and relatives are the most popular route for getting pets with 28% of dogs and 30% of cats coming from those sources.

Microchipping (31%) and sterilization (64%) levels for cats are similar to the global averages, however the rates in dogs are below average (23% are microchipped and 42% are sterilized).

## ENSURE SUSTAINED CARE

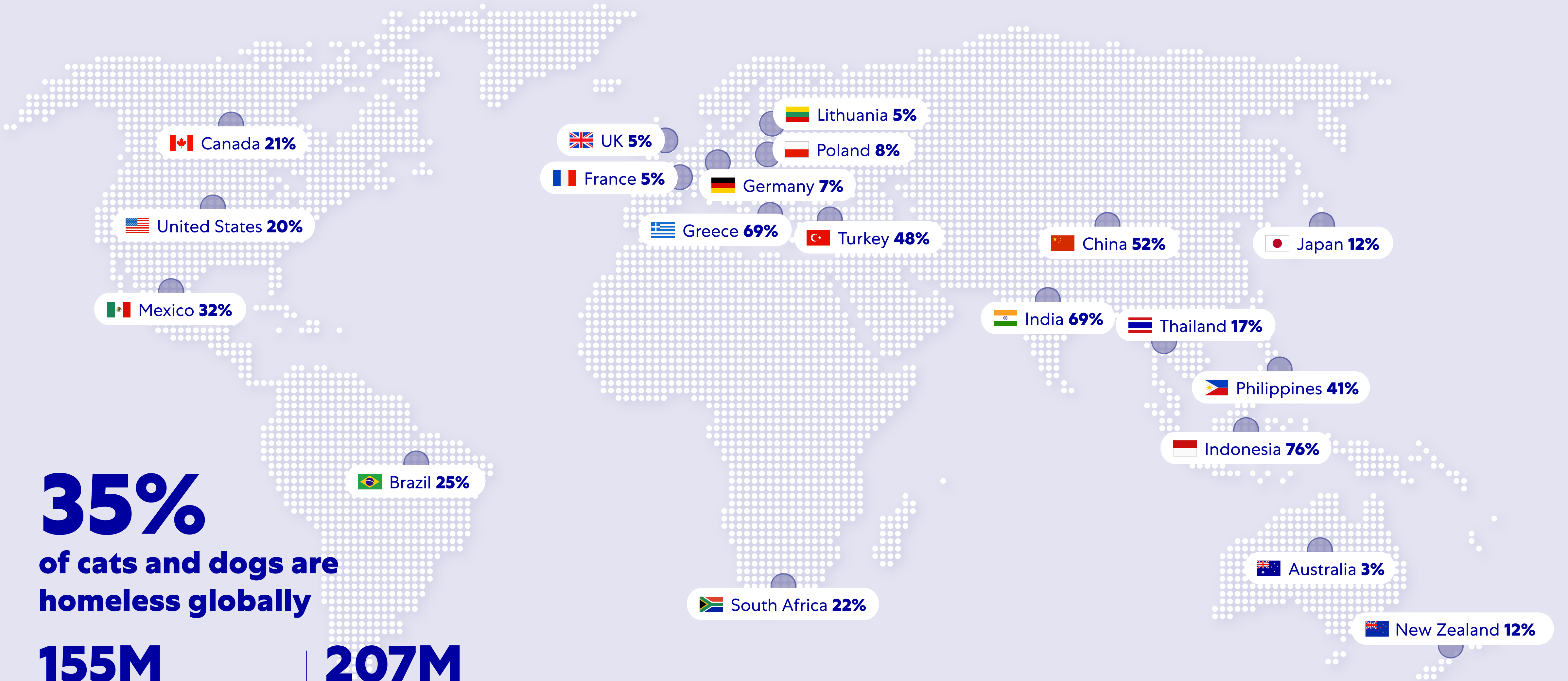
There are a considerable number of people in India thinking of getting a pet in the near future, with almost twice as many planning to get a dog (47%) than a cat (28%).

## KEEP PETS IN HOMES

Keeping owned dogs and cats in homes for the long term could have a significant impact on homelessness in India, as the proportion of owners stating they may have to rehome their pet in the next 12 months is high for both dogs (38%) and cats (57%).

<sup>1</sup>“average” or “global average” refers to the average of the 20 countries included in this project

## 20 COUNTRIES INCLUDED IN THE STUDY



**35%**  
of cats and dogs are  
homeless globally

**155M**  
HOMELESS DOGS

**207M**  
HOMELESS CATS



At Mars, we have worked for many years to play our part in tackling pet homelessness issues around the world, with a wide range of programs, partnerships and donations to support vulnerable pets.

#### WE ADVOCATE FOR:

- Organizations and individuals to get involved in recognizing, measuring and acting to change the issue of pet homelessness; helping to improve the accuracy and availability of data around the number of homeless pets.
- Pet-friendly government legislation and policies to keep pets and people together and enable more people to benefit from the companionship of pets.
- Pet owner and prospective pet owner education to promote and support responsible pet ownership.
- Programs to help homeless pets find a loving home or receive sustained care.
- Programs to limit the uncontrolled breeding of stray and street pets.
- Programs to reduce the number of pets at risk of becoming homeless.

#### WHERE DID THE DATA COME FROM:

The data in this report is drawn from three sources:

1. Pet Homelessness estimates based on primary and secondary research conducted by EMI in 2022-2023, and owned pet estimates collected by Mars CMI.
2. Public sample surveys (online and in the field) of pet owners and non-pet owners conducted by Kantar in 2022-2023.
3. Pet Professional interviews, such as shelters and NGOs working in the pet homelessness space.

To find out more about the State of Pet Homelessness Project and the actions that we are taking alongside partners and stakeholders please visit: [stateofpethomelessness.com](https://stateofpethomelessness.com).

The following partner organizations are among those working to drive the efforts to end pet homelessness and are members of the advisory panel of the State of Pet Homelessness Project. Please continue to support them and the local resources in India.





Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this research study are solely the beliefs and personal opinions of the individuals who participated in the interviews or surveys. These perspectives do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of Mars or any affiliated organizations. The purpose of this research is to gather varied viewpoints and insights from different individuals and these should not be interpreted as endorsed or supported by Mars.