



LITHUANIA

State of Pet Homelessness Project

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the State of Pet Homelessness Project market report for Lithuania. 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 Lithuania. The full data sets from all 20 markets are available online at stateofpethomelessness.com.



This global data project across 20 countries consisted of:

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

Lithuania has a low 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 still present.

382.3K TOTAL CATS AND DOGS IN LITHUANIA

253.2K TOTAL DOGS

129.1K TOTAL CATS

363.8K
TOTAL OWNED
CATS AND DOGS

9.6K
TOTAL SHELTER
CATS AND DOGS

8.9K
TOTAL STRAY
CATS AND DOGS



9.3K (4%)
DOGS ARE HOMELESS



9.2K (7%)
CATS ARE HOMELESS

5.3K
IN SHELTERS

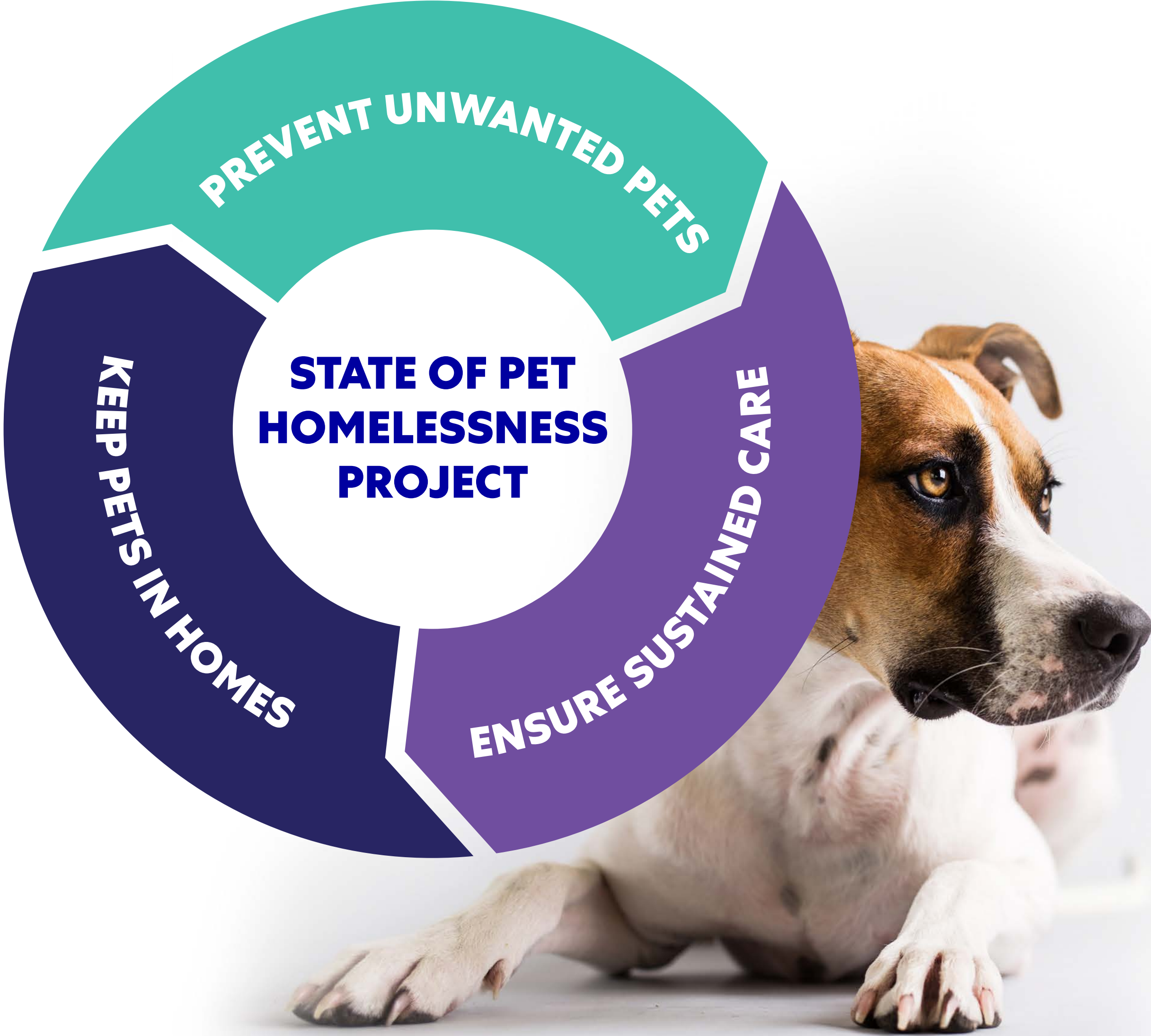
4K
STRAYS

4.3K
IN SHELTERS

4.9K
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.

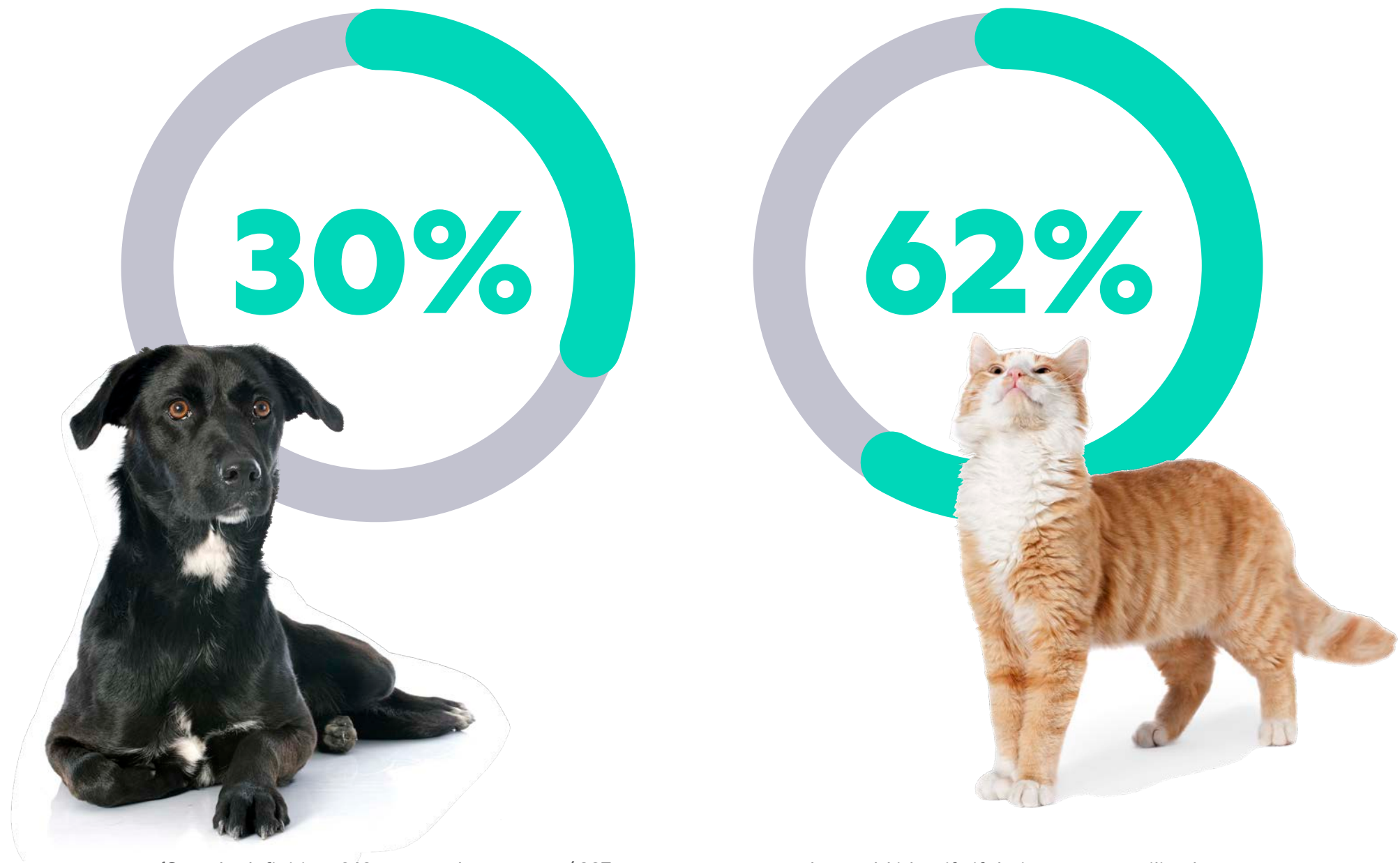


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One unsterilized homeless pet can quickly create many more. Reducing uncontrolled or unplanned breeding is a critical approach to decreasing pet homelessness.

IS YOUR PET NEUTERED/STERILIZED?¹



¹Sample definition: 263 current dog owners / 397 current cat owners who could identify if their pet was sterilized

WHAT THE PROFESSIONALS TELL US

“

**I would really be happy if
sterilization was mandatory,
but nobody would do that.”**

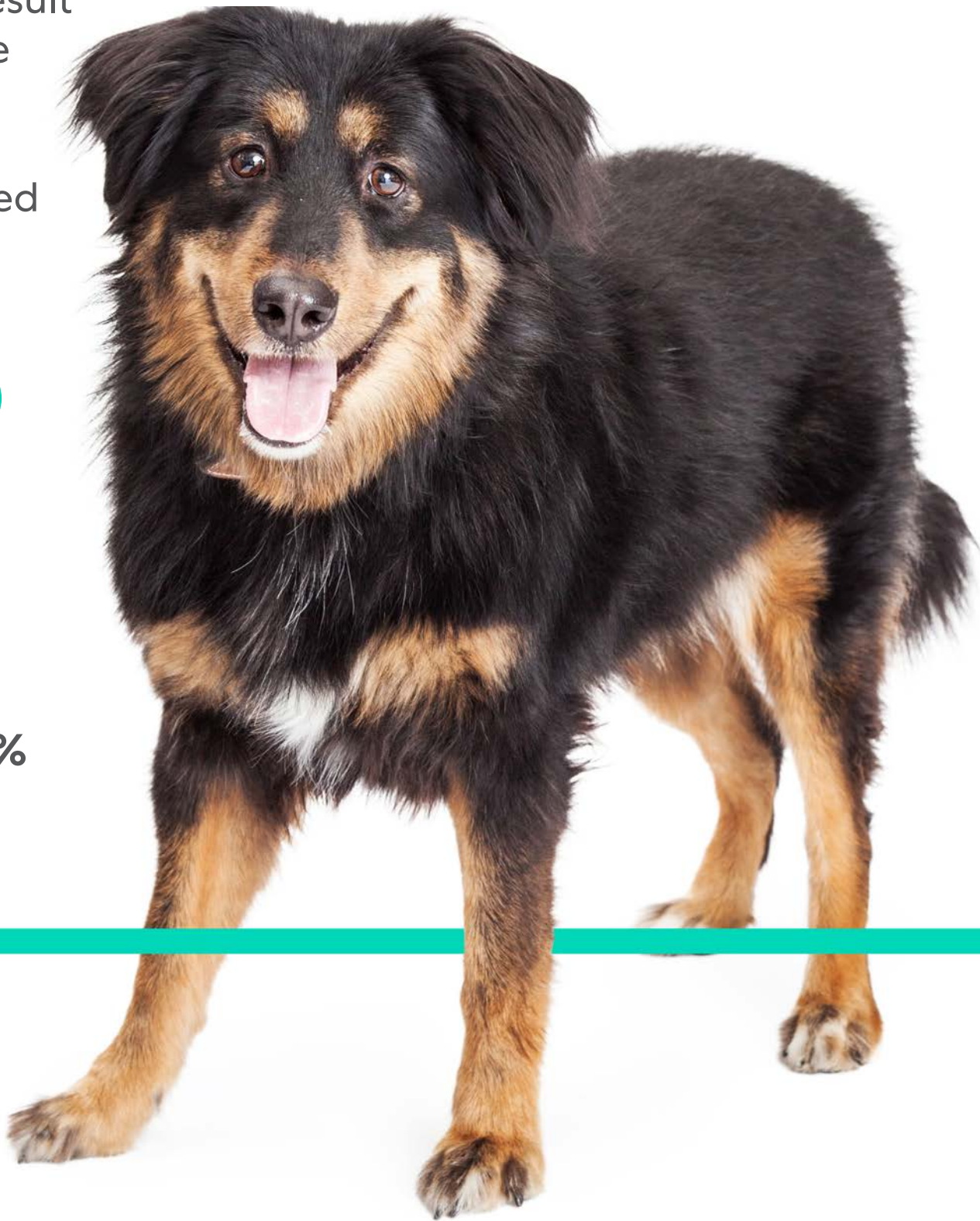
- Employee, Animal care house (cats and dogs)

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.

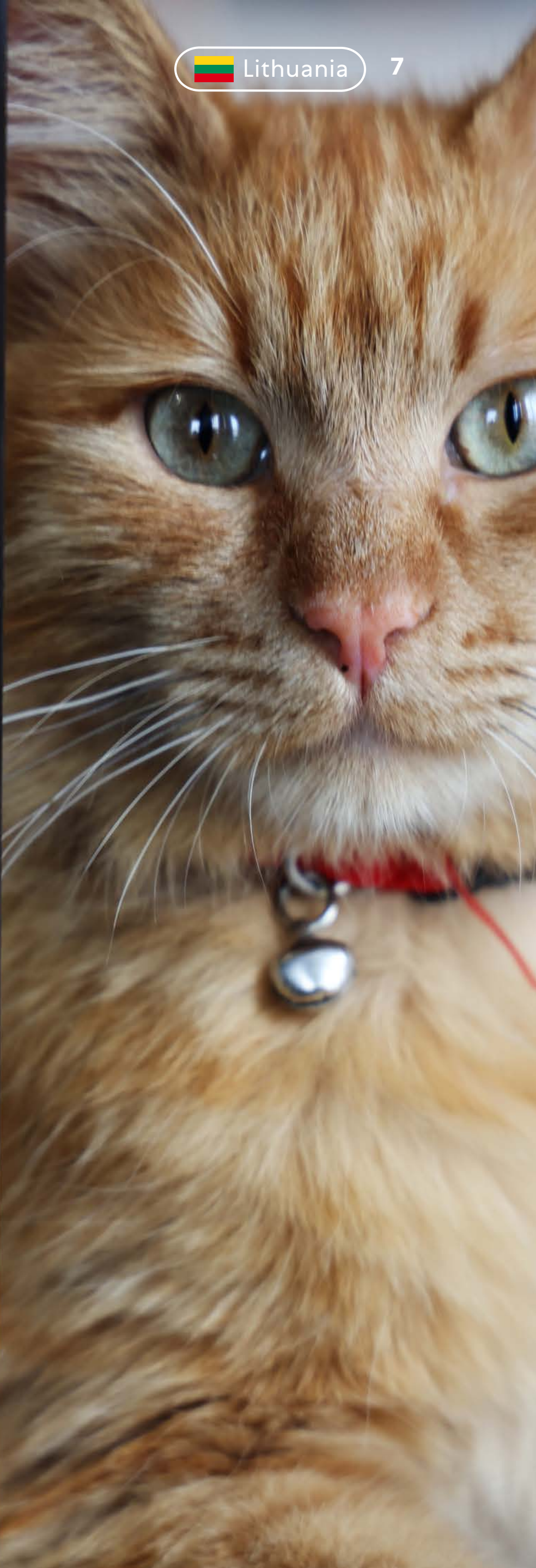
DOGS (Top 5 Responses)

- 1. PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL: 38%
- 2. Friend/Relative: 19%
- 3. Breeder: 17%
- 4. Rescue Center/Shelter: 8%
- 5. Born into the household: 6%



CATS (Top 5 Responses)

- 1. PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL: 29%
- 2. Stray/I found it: 22%
- 3. Friend/Relative: 22%
- 4. Rescue Center/Shelter: 8%
- 5. Born into the household: 8%



¹Sample definition: 263 current dog owners / 397 current cat owners



WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU TAKE IF YOU ENCOUNTER A STRAY?¹

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



CAT



¹Sample definition: 244 has seen a stray dog / 369 has seen a stray cat

WHICH MEASURES DO YOU THINK WOULD BEST REDUCE PET HOMELESSNESS?²

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

DOGS (Top 5 Responses)

- 1. STERILIZATION: 43%
- 2. Fighting animal cruelty: 41%
- 3. Providing subsidized vet services: 31%
- 4. Banning puppy mills/farms: 30%
- 5. Microchipping: 29%

CATS (Top 5 Responses)

- 1. BANNING KITTEN MILLS/FARMS: 42%
- 2. Providing subsidized vet services: 41%
- 3. Sterilization: 40%
- 4. Fighting animal cruelty: 36%
- 5. Advocacy so rental homes allow cats and dogs: 26%

²Sample definition: 401 current or previous dog owners / 426 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?¹

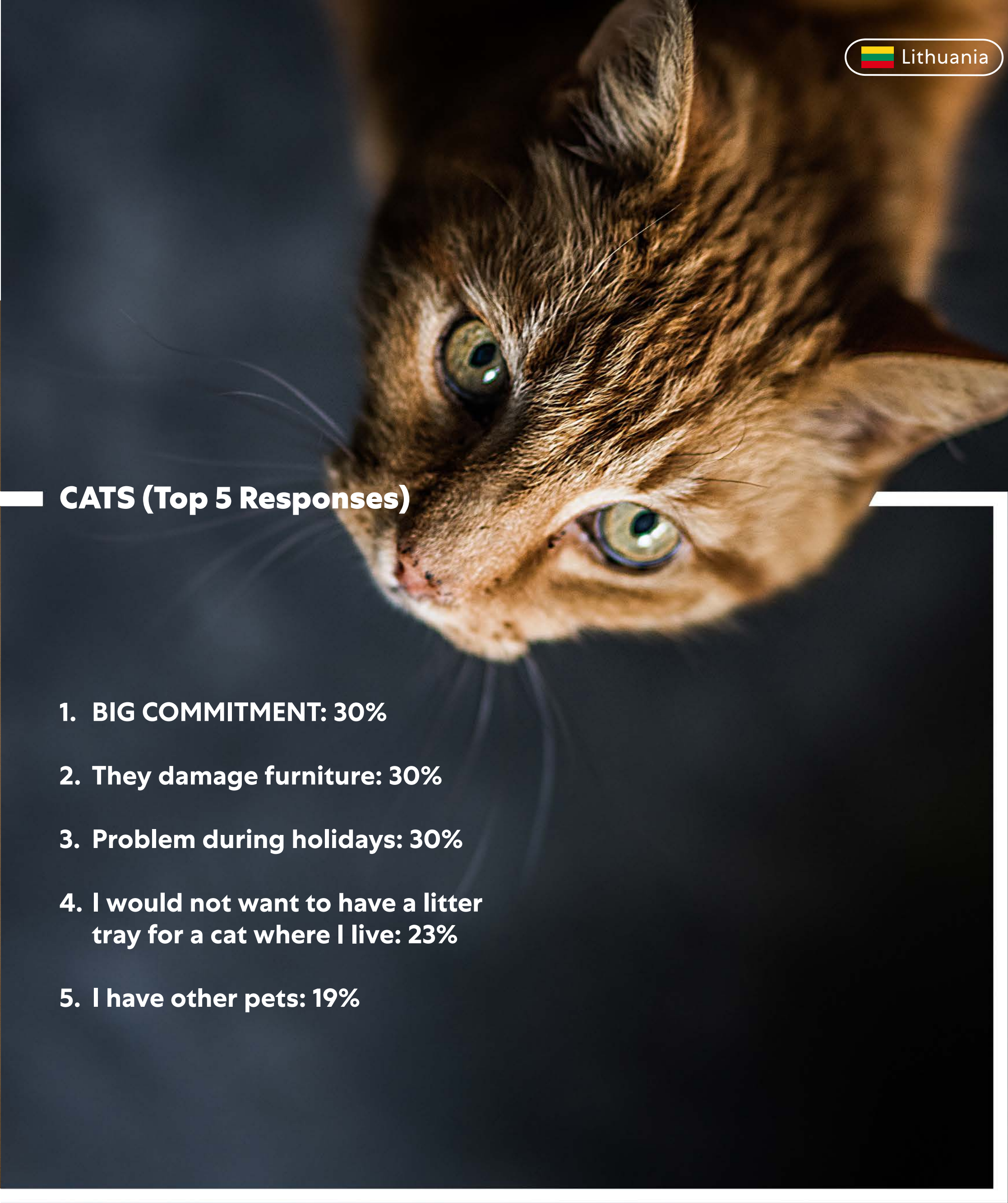


¹Sample definition: 1001 owners and non-owners



WHAT’S PREVENTING YOU FROM OWNING A PET?¹

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

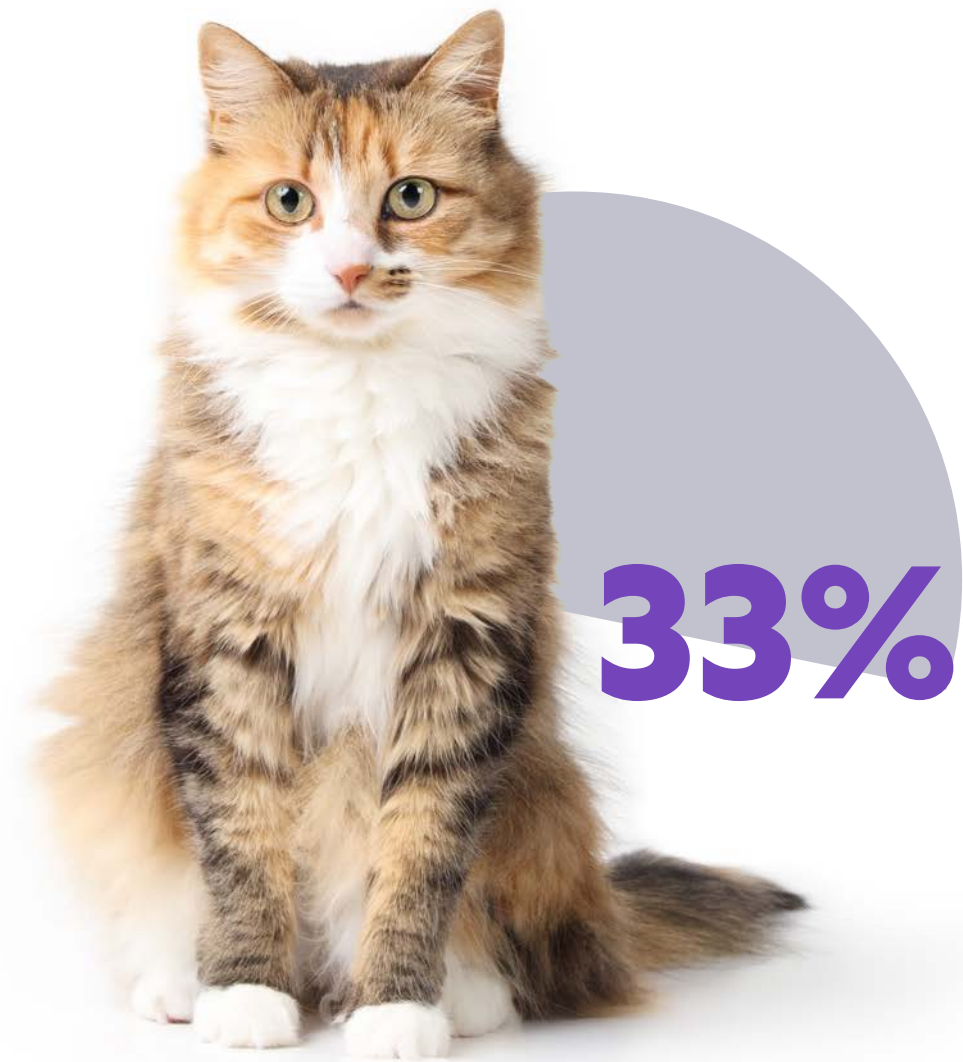


¹Sample definition: 600 non-dog owners / 575 non-cat owners

WHAT THE PROFESSIONALS TELL US

“My shelter’s purpose is not to give away as many animals as possible, but to give away animals to those who are responsible only so that the process is successful.”

- Manager, Shelter (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?¹**

38%
**CONSIDERING
GETTING A DOG
FROM A SHELTER**

33%
**CONSIDERING
GETTING A CAT
FROM A SHELTER**

¹Sample definition: 89 dog considerers / 96 cat considerers



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
16% (39K)

63% (25K) of those who lost their dog got them back.

CATS
20% (24K)

60% (14K) of those who lost their cat got them back.

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

DOGS
2%



CATS
4%

¹Sample definition: 921 has or had a pet



WHAT ARE THE BEST METHODS TO HELP LOST PETS?¹

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. OTHER: 40%
- 2. Updates in social networks: 17%
- 3. Microchipping: 15%
- 4. Tags with contact details: 15%
- 5. Local news channels: 13%

CATS (Top 5 Responses)

- 1. Other: 51%
- 2. Updates in social networks: 16%
- 3. Tags with contact details: 12%
- 4. Microchipping: 11%
- 5. Signs in local community: 10%

IS YOUR PET MICROCHIPPED?²

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

50%

CATS

28%

¹Sample definition: 143 has lost a dog / 180 has lost a cat

²Sample definition: 263 current dog owners / 397 current cat owners

WHY MIGHT YOU CONSIDER REHOMING YOUR PET?¹

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: 39%
- 2. A member of my household/close friend/family is allergic: 19%
- 3. I will move and cannot take him/her with me: 15%
- 4. I don't have enough time to look after him/her as I would like to: 12%
- 5. Its behavior is inappropriate: 3%

ARE YOU CONSIDERING GIVING UP YOUR PET IN THE NEXT YEAR²

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

DOGS
4%

CATS
5%

CATS (Top 5 Responses)

- 1. I AM NO LONGER FIT ENOUGH TO TAKE CARE OF HIM/HER: 36%
- 2. A member of my household/close friend/family is allergic: 18%
- 3. I will move and cannot take him/her with me: 14%
- 4. I don't have enough time to look after him/her as I would like to: 12%
- 5. Costs of keeping pet become too expensive: 7%

¹Sample definition: 401 current or previous dog owners / 426 current or previous cat owners

²Sample definition: 263 current dog owners / 397 current cat owners

WHAT THE PROFESSIONALS TELL US

“If we could incentivize municipalities to perform more microchipping, we could see the problem of strays in a better way. Namely which ones are strays and which animals have been allowed to run around and they were lost.”

- Manager, Shelter/Animal care (cats and dogs)



TAKEAWAYS

Lithuania is well below the average¹ of 35% homeless cats and dogs. However, there are still significant opportunities to help more pets find the sustained human care and nutrition they need to thrive.



PREVENT UNWANTED PETS

The sterilization rate for dogs (30%) is well below the global average (49%), however cats are sterilized at the global average (62%).

Private individuals are the number one place where current owners got their dogs (38%) and cats (29%).

ENSURE SUSTAINED CARE

When it comes to getting a new pet, 38% of people said they would consider adopting a dog from a shelter and 33% say they’d consider adopting a shelter cat. However, only 8% of dog owners and 6% of cat owners got their current pet from a shelter, suggesting that there may be a gap between intentions and actions at the time of acquiring a pet, or barriers to adoption of shelter pets.

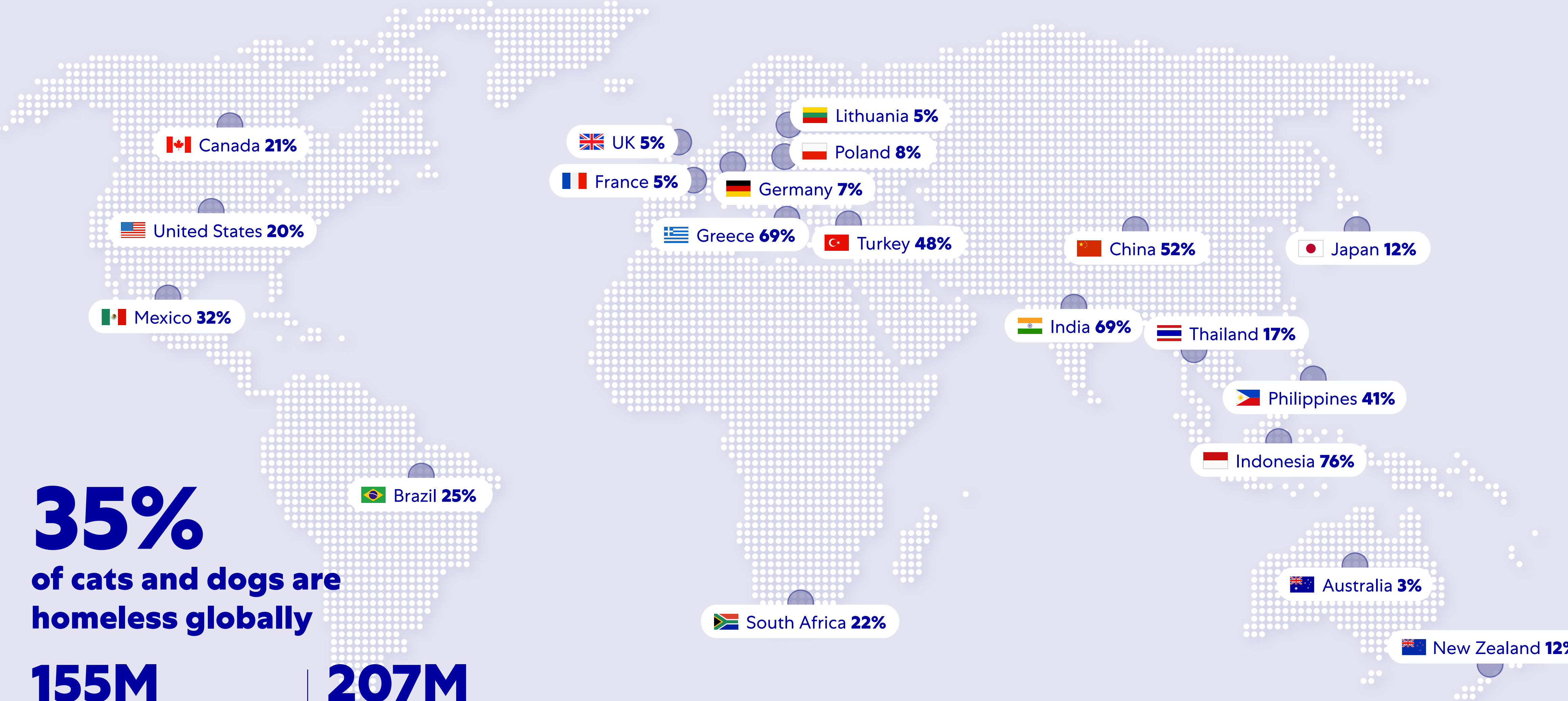
The proportion of people considering getting a cat (12%) or dog (13%) in the next year is much lower in Lithuania than the global averages of 30% and 37%. “Too expensive” and “big commitment” were the top responses for what is preventing people from owning a pet.

KEEP PETS IN HOMES

The rates of owners being reunited with lost pets are the highest across all countries, with cats being the highest globally at 60%. This is despite low levels of microchipping of cats (28%) compared to the global averages of 31%.

¹“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.

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 Lithuania.





Disclaimer

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.