

**Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW**

**Inquiry into the veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales**

**Supplementary questions: Kristina Vesk, Cat Protection Society**

**Supplementary question 1.**

**What reform or support would you like to see for desexing of cats in NSW – and how do you think that desexing could relieve pressure on the veterinary industry?**

The Cat Protection Society of NSW believes that every cat deserves a loving and responsible home, but the reality is that there are more cats than homes available, and if those cats can't be legally desexed, their numbers will continue to grow.

We are in a situation where the goal of registration, admirable and laudable for owned pet cats, disallows the desexing of many loved and cared for community cats (because those cats do not have one single 'owner' to whom they can be registered and live with). There are also cat owners who are fearful of registration for different reasons, including privacy/data sharing, and those who don't have landlord permission to keep a cat. Registration has been very successful for many cats and owners but unfortunately it has also presented a barrier to desexing.

To disallow desexing of unregistered cats causes poor welfare outcomes for cats and other animals, including wildlife, as well as harm to people who, whether they like cats or not, do not want to see cat populations continue to grow.

Killing those cats will (and has been shown to) cause moral injury to people working with cats (including veterinary teams), and trauma and mental harm to the people who love and care for them. What vet wants to spend half their working week killing healthy cats? Who will catch the cats to be killed? Carers whose trust has been earned by the cats won't help a mass slaughter.

The horror that was unleashed in 2020 at the Port of Newcastle "cull" led to nothing but traumatised people, and maimed, injured, and half-dead cats whose trust in people was then shattered. The people they had trusted had been caretakers of the breakwall; looking out for birds, fish and other animals as well as the cats who they had been desexing, socialising, and rehoming. Veterinary teams would be deeply affected admitting cats with such horrific injuries as resulted from that episode. If it achieved anything, it was to prove killing isn't the answer.

<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/13/2/271>

Desexing cats has positive feline health and welfare outcomes for the individual desexed cat and the broader feline population (as they are less likely to fight, this reduces the risk of infectious diseases; new generations of homeless kittens are not born). These benefits can be expanded, and population growth limited, by ensuring every cat has an opportunity to be desexed before three to four months of age.

Community benefits of targeted desexing programs are identified as substantially positive, as detailed in the Rehoming of Companion Animals in NSW Draft Report by CIE (pp72-75). <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/responsible-pet-ownership/rehoming-practices-review/>

There are economic benefits through a reduction of demand on pounds and shelters; increased community amenity with managed feline populations (reduced numbers of wandering cats); reduced moral injury to people working in veterinary and shelter services (due to reduced euthanasia of healthy cats and kittens); positive mental and physical health benefits for individual and community cat carers as a result of a positive welfare intervention; and positive health and welfare benefits for cats. However, such programs are severely limited by legal barriers and a lack of funds. Desexing (particularly early-age desexing) would also reduce the burden of cats and kittens 'dumped' at vet clinics.

Over time, intensive early-age desexing strategies would see more cats having a home to call their own, with all that goes with that, including veterinary care that sees them living longer, happier lives. Cat Protection commissioned a professional education package on early-age desexing for veterinarians and it is available free of charge <https://catcare.org.au/vet-professional-education-package/> There are still veterinarians who are not practising early-age desexing; we recommend that veterinary schools and the AVA promote the critical importance of early-age desexing in cats.

If early-age desexing were accompanied with even at least initial vaccinations, this would help to protect cats from illness and to build herd immunity to feline panleukopaemia virus. In turn, this would reduce the incidence of feline panleukopaemia entering pounds and shelters, and the consequent death and illness. Veterinarians would see those improved feline public health benefits flow also to owned cats. No veterinary teams want to see animal suffering, especially when it can be prevented. Early-age desexing and vaccination have a profound impact on the prevention of suffering.

Subsidies, discounts and free desexing make a real difference. Cat Protection has commissioned Ipsos to conduct cat welfare surveys in NSW over several years, and these consistently report that about 90% of cats are desexed but also consistently report cost, time, and age of cat as barriers to desexing. I have attached for the Committee a copy of the 2023 report. Earlier reports can be found on our [catcare.org.au](https://catcare.org.au) website at <https://catcare.org.au/cats-in-the-community/>

Even a short delay in desexing can lead to unplanned litters; by the time a kitten is six months, she could be delivering her first litter of kittens. Another consistent finding in the surveys has been the difference in the estimated cost of desexing;

those who have not desexed their cats think the cost is considerably higher than those who have desexed their cats. This perception can lead to further delays as people think they have to save more money which will take more time. The survey also found that 70% of people feeding stray cats would be happy to desex them if it were cheap or free.

Cat Protection experienced a quadrupling of demand for our Adopt-a-Stray program when we had a half price offer, showing demand is extremely sensitive to cost. From 13 February to 10 March 2023, we ran the program at half price (\$50 instead of \$100), resulting in bookings for 180 kittens and 59 adults. At the normal price from 9 January to 10 February 2023, we booked 41 kittens and 11 adults. Even accounting for the holidays, this is an enormous difference in demand that clearly reflects price.

Cat Protection is grateful to the NSW Government for the \$1.5m grant we received for a targeted desexing program to run from July 2023 to June 2025. Even with our own programs running in tandem (the grant program does not replace our existing programs of Adopt-a-Stray or discounted desexing and vaccination) we cannot meet the demand for assistance.

Most charities and even governments and councils use something to manage demand for supported services and typically this means limiting access to concession/pension card holders. However, the current housing and cost-of-living pressures have left even fully employed people struggling to make ends meet. There is an urgent need to offer heavily subsidised or free desexing to a broader range of households.

However, in the current veterinary workforce shortage, even with more money to subsidise desexing, it will be challenging finding enough vets to accommodate demand. The long-term benefits of early-age desexing and vaccination are clear but difficult to achieve within the current regulatory context and workforce shortage.

In summary, we would recommend reforms to permit managed community cat desexing programs (and which relieve the regulatory burden on vets); promotion of early-age desexing; and more funding for subsidised/free cat desexing. Veterinary teams will benefit from reduced numbers of cats and kittens abandoned at their clinics, reduced euthanasia of healthy cats and kittens, and improved public feline health.

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29 September 2023

## Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW

### Inquiry into the veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales

#### Supplementary questions: Kristina Vesk, Cat Protection Society

#### Supplementary question 2.

**Can you please explain to the Committee why you think we need to adopt a “One Health/One Welfare” approach in relation to veterinary care, and what would that look like in practice?**

One Welfare recognises that good welfare is fundamental to good health – animals and people with poor welfare have poor health. Good social, mental and physical health provide the foundations for people’s positive wellbeing, education, social and economic participation.

Poor welfare states (eg fear, anxiety, stress, mental anguish, overcrowding, poor nutrition, stress, lack of proper sleep and rest, lack of access to care, lack of exercise and mental stimulation, loneliness) lead to poor health outcomes in people and animals, and these negative outcomes continue to feed into a cycle of poor health and welfare.

Human health and wellbeing are interconnected with the welfare and health of animals and the environment: we all need clean air, clean water, and disease mitigation for good health. Our ecosystems are shared.

For example, the misuse and overuse of antimicrobials has led to the global health crisis of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). In 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared AMR as one of the top ten global public health threats. It is estimated that by 2050, there will be 10 million people dying due to drug-resistant infection. Hospitals are a key site for the transmission of AMR bacteria. AMR in agriculture and farming also pose a serious risk to human health (as well as animal health and the environment).

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370\(21\)00502-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370(21)00502-2/fulltext)

In a joint statement by Australia’s Chief Medical Officer, Chief Veterinary Officer and Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer to mark World Antimicrobial Awareness Week in 2021, they said: “Antimicrobial resistance is happening right now and affects all Australians. It also affects animals and the shared environment we live all live in.”

<https://www.amr.gov.au/news/joint-statement-australias-chief-medical-officer-chief-veterinary-officer-and-chief-environmental-biosecurity-officer-mark-world-antimicrobial-awareness-week-2021>

The Australian Government’s *National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy – 2020 and Beyond* states “In this long-term Strategy, Australia commits to tackling antimicrobial resistance in humans, animals, food and the environment as a priority. This will be done under the ‘One Health’ approach, which recognises the interconnection between people, animals, plants and their shared environment.” (p2)

Also, that “Infections are the core reason for antimicrobial use; therefore, efforts to prevent, reduce and control their spread helps lower the need for antimicrobials in the first place. The less antimicrobials used, the less opportunity there is for organisms to develop resistance.” (p7)

Since poor welfare leads to poor health, it follows then that strategies to improve welfare will improve health, and thus play an important role in tackling AMR.

Finally, the *Strategy* also emphasises that AMR is “one of the most complex public health threats the world has ever faced: its potential implications range from economic, human and animal health, food safety and agriculture to environment and trade ... Reducing the need for, and use of, antimicrobials will require Australians from all walks of life – including patients, animal owners, consumers and civil society organisations – to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the dangers posed by antimicrobial resistance.” (p14)

<https://www.amr.gov.au/resources/australias-national-antimicrobial-resistance-strategy-2020-and-beyond>

Vets are critical, frontline health practitioners in strategies to deal with the threat of AMR. Vets are also people, and we need to consider them in a One Welfare context:

- To protect their mental health
- To value their labour (do not expect vets in private practice to deal with stray and injured animals, including wildlife, without remuneration; do not expect them to operate as pound services if they haven't signed a contract to operate as a pound service)
- To prevent moral injury (strengthen referral services; strengthen social services; strengthen animal cruelty laws [violence and cruelty are not species-specific])
- To protect their safety at work
- To acknowledge the challenge faced by vet teams who, because their animal patients need them, can't avoid unpleasant clients: clinics aren't restaurants that can refuse service to a hostile customer
- Improve planning laws so that vet clinics are appreciated as key health services that need to be accessible to their communities (and planning should permit “animal boarding” as both necessary to the nature of being a hospital as well as an opportunity to recoup capital investment)
- To recognise veterinarians and veterinary workers as key frontline health practitioners – biosecurity, zoonoses, mental health
- To recognise that their work delivers cost savings to the economy through better human health, and that good animal health and welfare contribute social as well as economic benefits, both directly and indirectly.

More broadly, but more specifically to companion animals and veterinary team members, welfare issues might be seen when an animal is taken to a clinic: does the pet owner need support (eg referral to a social worker)? Do they need referral to animal welfare support (eg the ‘overwhelmed carer’ [too many pets])? Do they need referral to compliance / legal authorities (eg suspected hoarder)? Is family and domestic violence suspected? Who supports the vet in these cases? Where is the

social infrastructure that does not impose the entirety of the moral (and potentially, legal) hazard on the vet?

What if councils had properly funded community services that supported people before things got beyond difficult and went to dangerous? What is there between doing nothing and criminal prosecution? And with the bar set so low for animal cruelty, officers authorised under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act have little available to them in any case.

Councils (generally) don't even record complaints about companion animals unless they are actual breaches of the law – so what can neighbours do when they see/hear/smell companion animals experiencing poor welfare? It might be a fairly simple matter of reaching out to the householder – are they okay? Do they need support? Can they be linked into a charity to help them desex their cats, help with behavioural strategies and training for their dog, assist with fencing and containment, subsidise vaccination or parasite treatment? Individual neighbours can't do all these things, but properly resourced neighbourhood centres could.

How would this help vets? The same way that integrated, thoughtful practices can help human doctors; by not leaving them alone with the entire load of their patients' needs.

Integrated health and welfare services should not be stigmatised and seen as only available to people in the direst of circumstances: that is to shame people, and no one chooses shame. Our councils should embrace whole-of-community centres that build social fabric, that welcome young and old, rich and poor, and pets are uniquely placed to facilitate such centres because they themselves are not judgmental. Companion animals are a proven social lubricant which is why we see friendships formed in dog parks and strangers happily sharing cat stories and photos in the pet food aisle at the supermarket.

A once-a-year microchipping day doesn't cut it, as nice as those events can be. Councils need to be funded to develop better social services that regularly and systemically recognise that humans and animals and the environment will benefit from a recognition that their lives are entwined. A recent "One Health" study in a region with a high rate of human obesity identified that being an overweight dog owner was found to be the most important factor in the occurrence of obesity of dogs.

<https://www.mdpi.com/2306-7381/9/5/243#:~:text=Dogs%20of%20overweight%20owners%20were,also%20found%20to%20have%20overweight.>

Imagine community hubs that provided health and welfare services for people and animals; which might offer everything from dog-bite prevention education, puppy preschools and yes, microchipping, to social clubs, tai chi, pop-up health clinics (eg mobile breast screening services), parents groups, language classes, Men's Sheds, pop-up pet vaccination clinics ... places that can also offer emergency services / safety in times of disaster such as bushfires or extreme weather events.

Community Veterinary Outreach is a Canadian charity providing free veterinary services to the pets of people who are homeless in a One Health model of care, offering human health and health education services: “to leverage the human-animal bond to increase human health resource uptake ... By amplifying health messaging through veterinary care (example: improved oral health is important for dogs, cats, and humans), we can engage pet owner in care for themselves.” There is no reason this innovative model cannot be adapted and adopted for a broader community (as well as people at risk of homelessness). With extremely limited funding, charities rarely have a choice but to limit their services to those in greatest need, but that process in itself can harm a person’s dignity (and thus, welfare). As stated earlier, services should not stigmatise. Integrated health and social services should embrace hospitality and inclusion.

<https://vetoutreach.org/> <https://vetoutreach.org/one-health/>

Loneliness is a public health issue. The US Surgeon General has warned that loneliness is as damaging to physical health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Social isolation is associated with increased risks to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, infectious diseases and depression among other poor health outcomes. An article in the medical journal *The Lancet* observes that urban planning, remote work, social media, racism, and poverty among other things can cause feelings of exclusion and that “Societal trends towards individualism, at the expense of collectivism and feeling of belonging, risk increasing feelings of loneliness. Attention needs to be directed at understanding how these root causes can foster loneliness and how to change or dismantle them for the better ... Loneliness affects people of all ages ... Loneliness is an issue that needs attention from all of society.”

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(23\)01411-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(23)01411-3/fulltext)

Pets are known to help alleviate loneliness. “One Welfare” in veterinary practice means the social infrastructure *exists* that can positively support the human-animal bond. It means veterinary teams don’t feel helpless when a client isn’t coping; there will be services to whom they can be referred.

It means human service providers recognise that a companion animal likely means the world to their human client, and so the human service providers include pet food in their food banks, and they have a list of local animal charities that the person can turn to for support with things like desexing, vaccination, parasite treatment and pet care advice. It means crisis accommodation facilities offer co-sheltering that keeps people and their pets together. It means hospital admissions will inquire whether the patient has a pet, and if so, is there someone looking after them?

There are preventable situations that veterinary and animal welfare workers should never have to experience but do because most human services, unlike most pet owners, don’t recognise pets as family.

Good animal welfare is a social good and good human welfare is a social good. The two cannot be unlinked, disengaged, privatised, siloed.

The ‘preparedness paradox’ sees underinvestment in activities that prevent issues from arising (when issues are averted, it can be questioned whether there was ever any risk at all, so those activities have low political reward). Separate jurisdictions,

budgets and portfolios, can mean investment in prevention comes from one arm / department of government but the economic return is delivered mainly in another – notwithstanding both cost and benefit belong to all society. This investment is also seen as yielding low political reward. These political considerations have contributed to poor policy for too long and are now compounded by a growing distrust in institutions, creating a significant threat to health, welfare and social cohesion. Approaches that continue to atomise society will contribute further harm.

Following the WHO European Region annual business meeting and technical conference 2022, the WHO European Healthy Cities Network released *Local-level policy recommendations: operationalizing a One Health approach*, stating “The One Health approach is gaining renewed traction and high political attention in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic ... there is recognition that a One Health approach can be cost-effective and highlights the benefits of health promotion, disease prevention and preparedness over cure. Well-being economies feed strongly into this approach...”

<https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2023-7060-46826-68259>

We have an opportunity to rebuild trust, to build good neighbourhoods, to address loneliness and to improve public health and wellbeing by joining animal and human health and welfare activities in positive ways. But we can only do that with government investment and a healthy and sustainable veterinary workforce.

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29 September 2023



# CAT WELFARE SURVEY 2023

## Report of Findings

August 2023

cat  
protection  
society OF NSW



Prepared for:

**Cat Protection Society of NSW | Kristina Vesk**

Prepared By: Ipsos | Bella Hwang, Steph Perry

Ipsos Ref: 23-049231-01

**GAME CHANGERS**



# Background to the research



**Cat Protection Society in NSW** has a vision of finding every cat in need, a loving and responsible home. In addition to that, they also work with the government and the community to promote socially and environmentally responsible cat ownership.



One of its strategies is to encourage cat owners to desex their cats at an early age. Research studies conducted by Ipsos in 2017, 2018 and 2019 shows that around 90% of cat owners desex their cats.



A repeat of the 2017, 2018 and 2019 studies was recently conducted to track whether more cat owners are now desexing their cats. Inputs from this study are sought to formulate plans and strategies to target communities in NSW with cat welfare communications.

# Addressing the business questions

## Business Questions

## Research Objectives

1

Who are the owners who have and who have not desexed their cat?

- Identify the profile of owners who have desexed their cats
- Identify the profile of owners who have not desexed their cats

2

Are certain type of cats more likely to be desexed than others?

- Identify the profile of cats which have been desexed
- Identify the profile of cats which have not been desexed
- Determining whether the origin of cats highly correlates with owners not knowing if their cats have been desexed

3

What are the barriers to early-age desexing?

- Investigate the barriers to desexing
- Verify whether cost is a barrier for not desexing their cats

4

Will health messaging improve the rate of cat desexing?

- Awareness of health benefits of desexing cats by each group
- Examine whether health benefits have an impact on owner/future owner's decision to desex their cats

# Study Design



## DESIGN

Quantitative online survey

Survey length: 10 mins

Fieldwork dates: 16/06/23 → 03/07/23



## WHO WE INTERVIEWED

Aged 18+ years, cat owners, living in New South Wales (NSW)

Spread across age, gender, and region (metro versus rural)

Note: Results from 2023 are compared with 2019 and highlighted if different

Sample sizes	2017	2018	2019	2023
Total respondents	519	524	516	513
• Cat owners	363	364	356	513
• <i>Non-cat owners*</i>	156	160	160	N/A
Total number of cats	554	542	582	803

*\*Excluded in 2023*



## ANALYSIS

Analysis is conducted by the following groups:

- Cat owners
  - Who have desexed all their cats
  - Who have not desexed all their cats (including 'don't know')
- Cats which have been desexed
- Cats which have not been desexed

Data was weighted by age, gender and location at total level so that it is comparable to 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Total sample analysis is not possible due to quota sampling

# Cats and their Owners

The majority of cat-owning households continue to have a single-cat, although multi-cat ownership has remained higher than in 2018. However, there has been a decrease in the ownership of dogs and fish among cat owners.

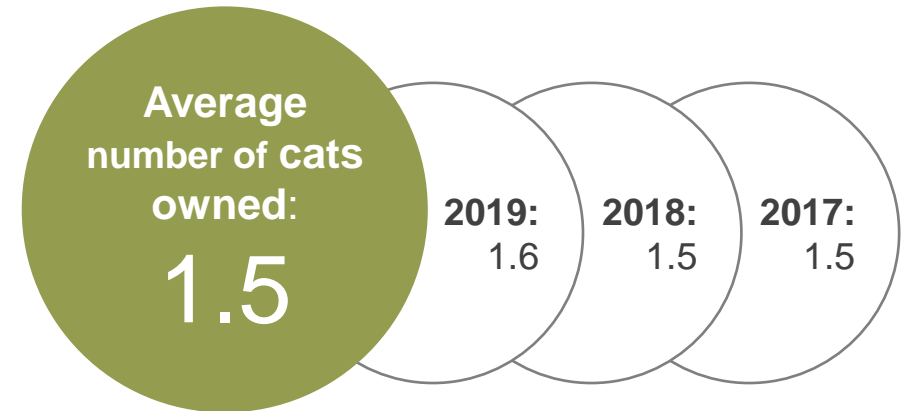
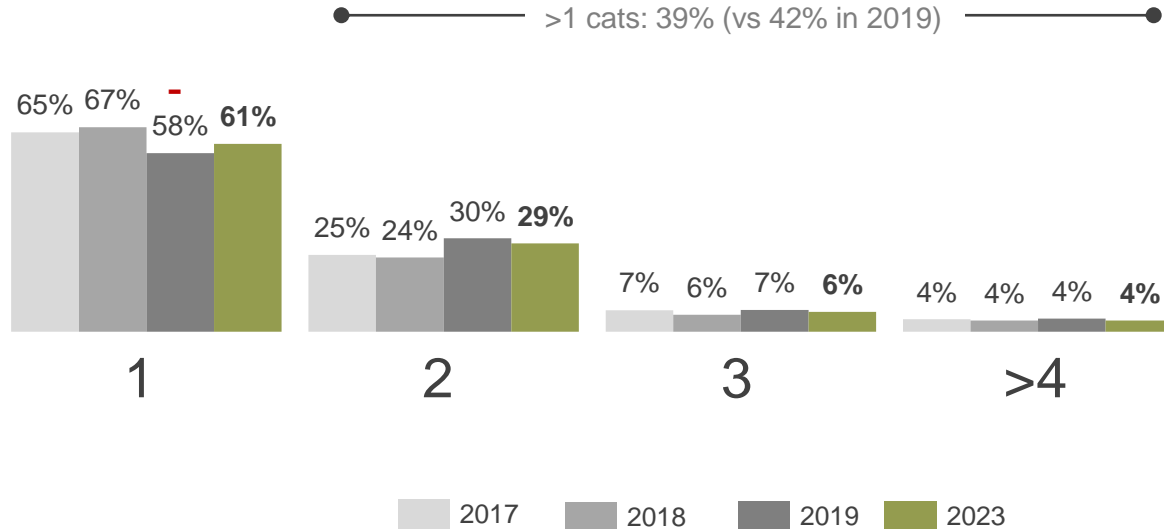
The primary sources for obtaining cats remain family/friends and animal shelters, although pet shop purchases have increased. Cat registration numbers have significantly risen since 2019, exclusively attributed to desexed cats who also exhibit greater vaccination rates than non-desexed cats.



## NUMBER OF CATS OWNED

**The majority of cat owners continue to have only one cat but multi-cat ownership is still greater than in 2018.**

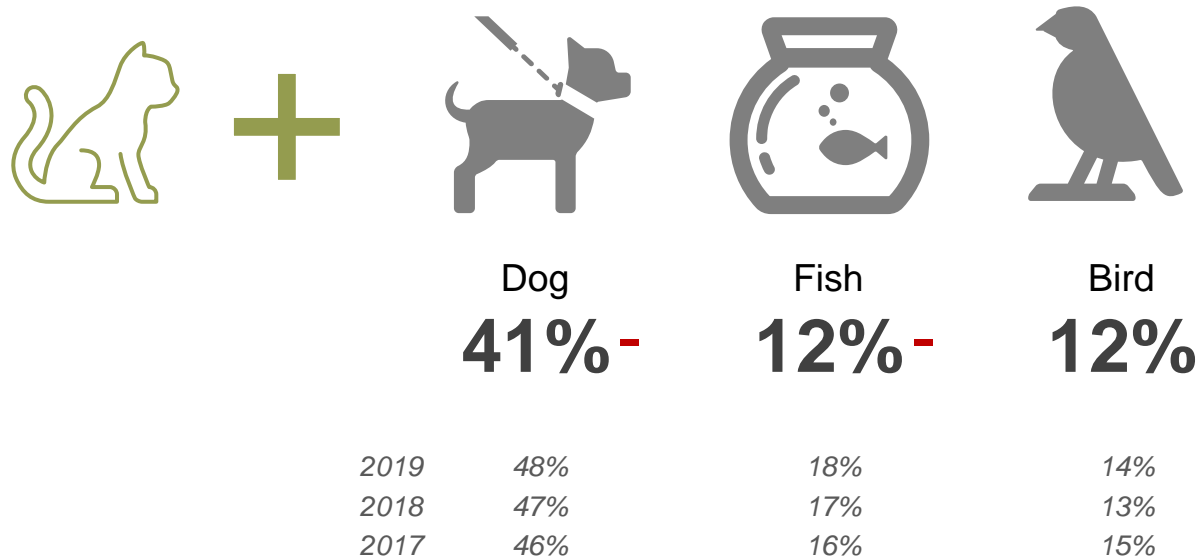
## NUMBER OF CATS OWNED PER HOUSEHOLD



# OTHER PETS CAT OWNERS HAVE

**Cat owners are less likely to own dogs, as well as fish, than in 2019.**

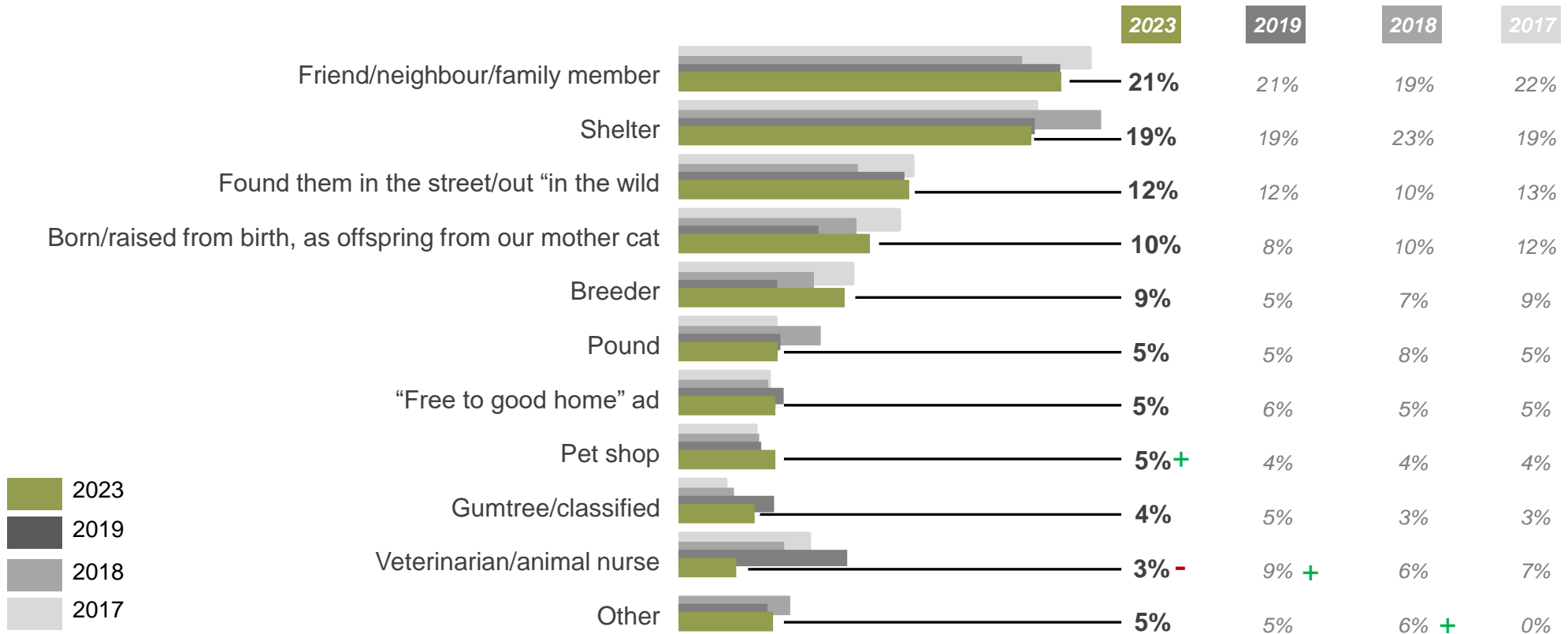
## OTHER PETS OWNED BY CAT OWNERS



## WHERE THE CATS WERE FROM

**As in 2019, the two most common place to get cats are from family & friends and animal shelters. While numbers are low, there has been a significant increase in purchasing cats from pet shops.**

### CAT ADOPTION LOCATIONS

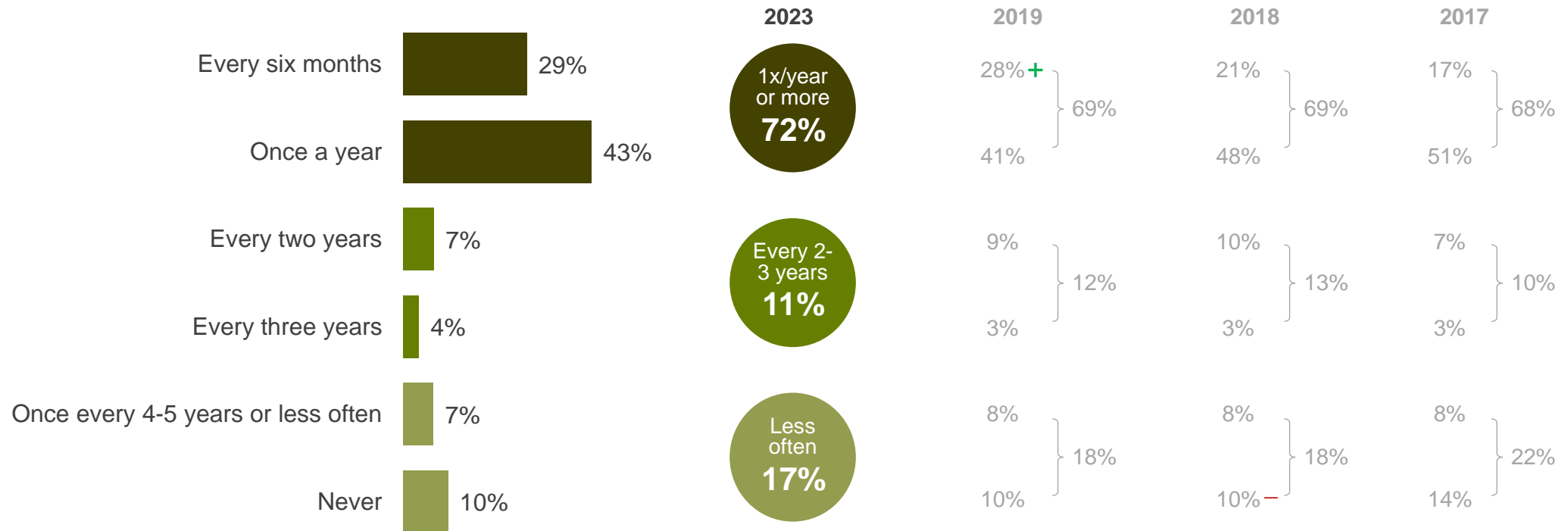




# FREQUENCY OF VISITS TO THE VET

**Visits to the vet have remained relatively unchanged from 2019.**

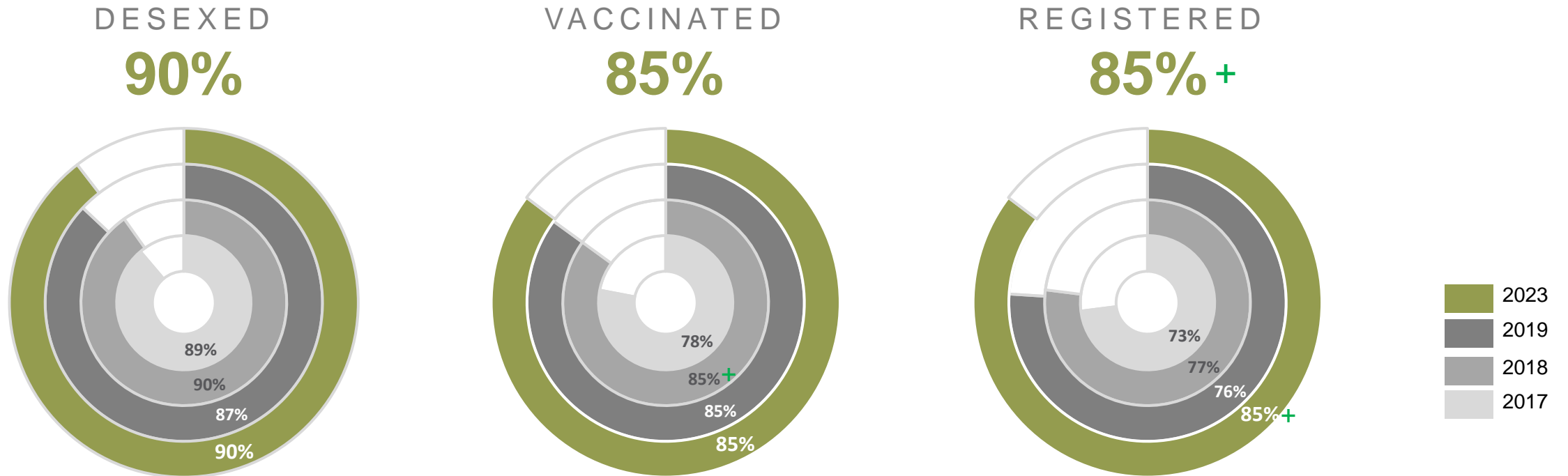
## FREQUENCY OF VET VISITS



# DESEXING, VACCINATION AND REGISTRATION INCIDENCE

**There has been a significant increase in the number of cats registered since 2019 while desexing and vaccination rates remain the same.**

## INCIDENCE AMONG TOTAL CATS



**Desexed cats continue to have higher vaccination and registration rates compared to non-desexed cats. The increase in registration is driven entirely by desexed cats.**



Have been vaccinated



Have been registered

Among cats which have been desexed

**89%** ▲

2019: 89% ▲  
2018: 87%  
2017: 83%

**91%** + ▲

2019: 82% ▲  
2018: 80%  
2017: 79%

Among cats which have NOT been desexed

**59%**

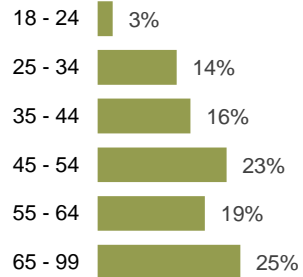
2019: 65%  
2018: 63% +  
2017: 39%

**38%**

2019: 41%  
2018: 51% +  
2017: 26%

# PROFILE: CAT OWNERS WHO HAVE DESEXED THEIR CATS

## AGE



Average: **54.4 y.o.**

(2019: 50 y.o. | 2018: 49 y.o. | 2017: 50 y.o.)

## GENDER



**48%** **51%**

(2019: 38% M, 62% F)

## HOUSEHOLD



**2.6**

Average household members

(2019: 3.0)

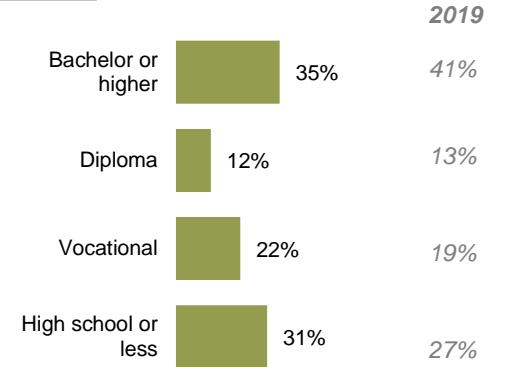


**32%**

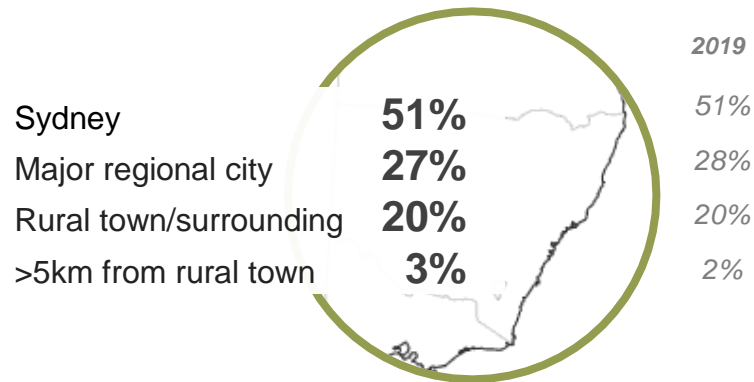
With kids <18

(2019: 43%)

## EDUCATION



## REGIONS IN NSW



## EMPLOYMENT



**60%**

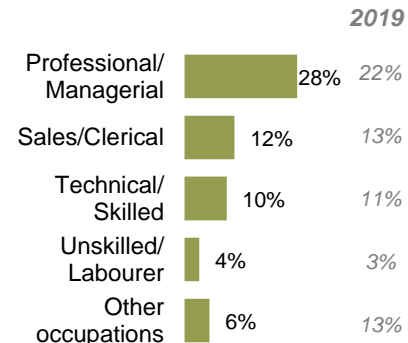
Have employment

(2019: 62%)

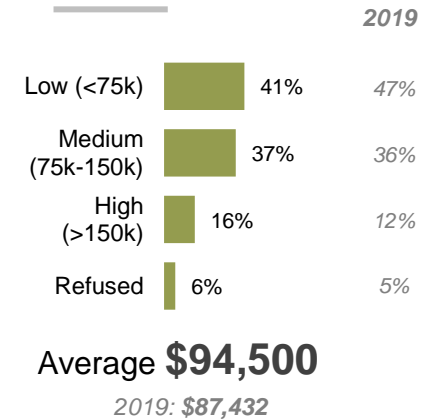
**33%**

Work from home

(2019: 18%)

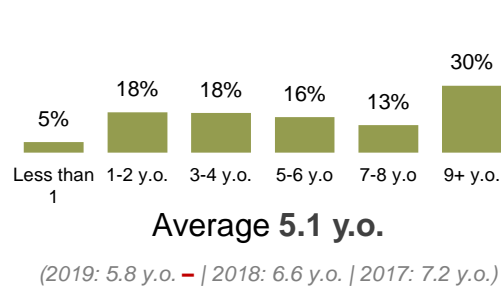


## HH INCOME

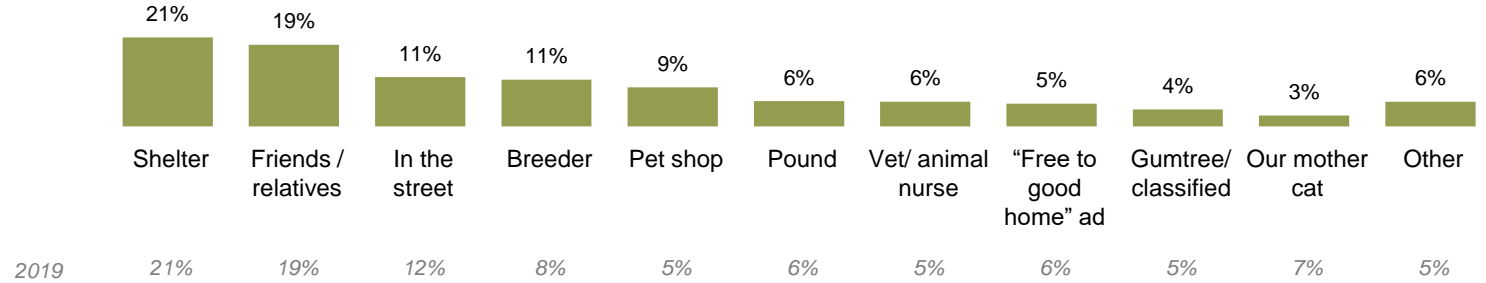


# PROFILE: CATS THAT HAVE BEEN DESEXED

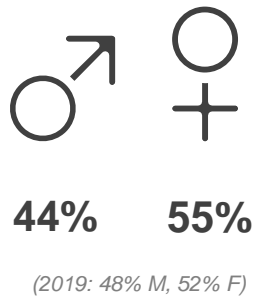
## AGE OF CAT



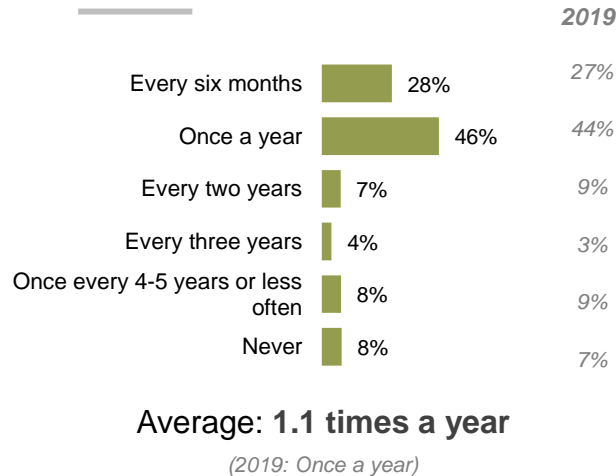
## WHERE THEY GOT THE CAT FROM



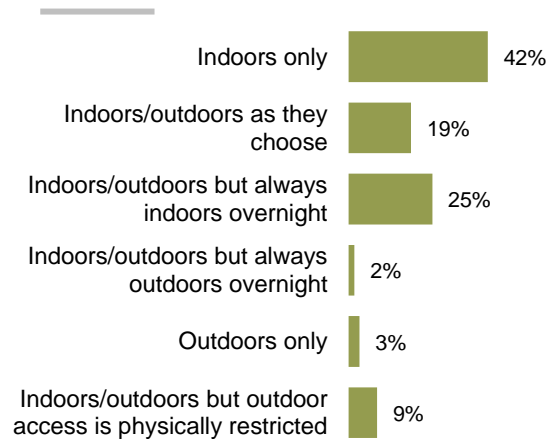
## CAT GENDER



## VISITS TO THE VET



## WHERE CAT LIVES



## VACCINATION & REGISTRATION



# Non-Desexed Cats and their Owners

The number of multi-cat households with non-desexed cats has decreased since 2019, returning to 2018 levels. Costs continue to be the primary obstacle for desexing, with those that haven't desexed their cats having a skewed perspective on the investment required.

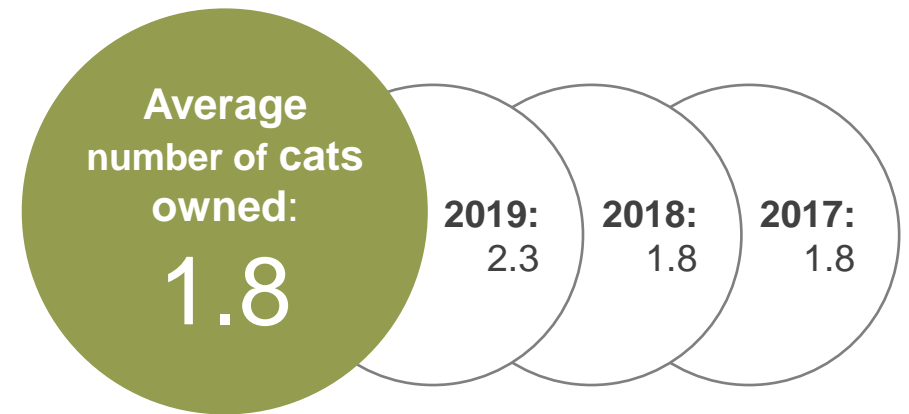
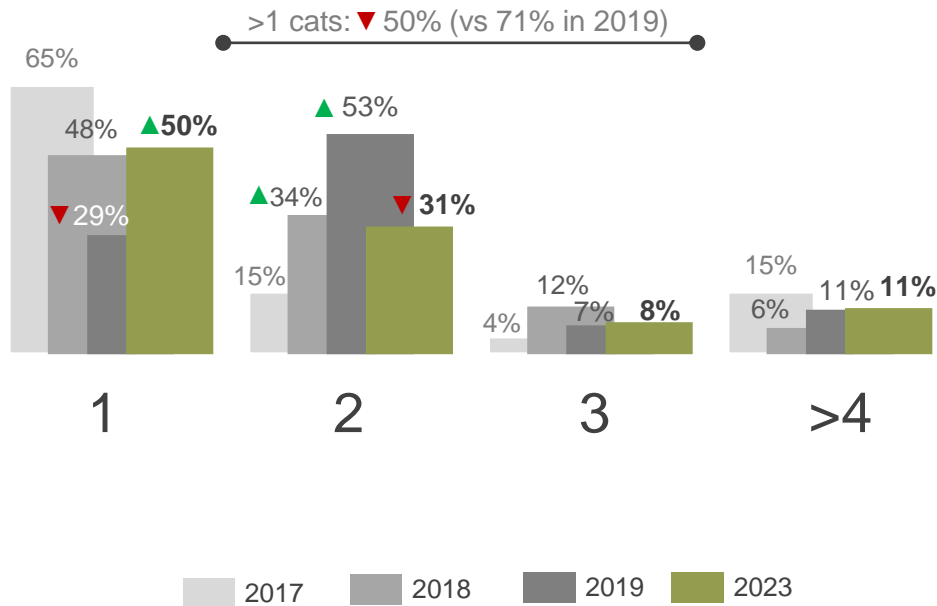
Plans for cat desexing have nearly doubled since 2019, yet many are delaying due to concerns about cost and time commitments.



# NUMBER OF CATS OWNED AMONG OWNERS NOT DESEXED ALL CATS

**There is a significant decrease in multi-cat households that have not desexed all their cats compared to 2019.**

## NUMBER OF CATS OWNED PER HOUSEHOLD (AMONG OWNERS WHO HAVE NOT DESEXED ALL THEIR CATS)



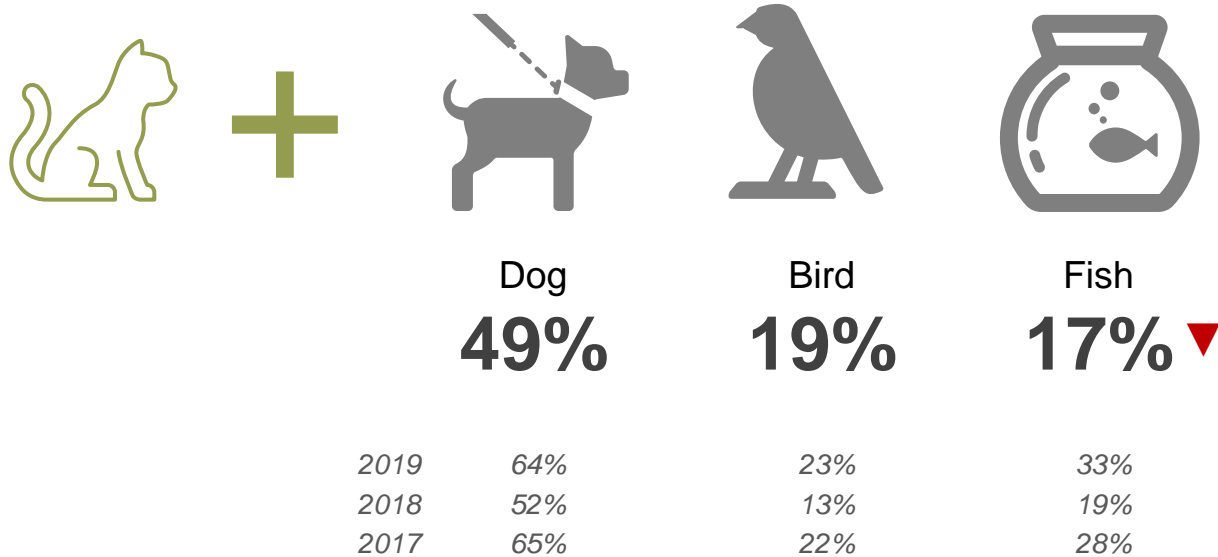
▲/▼ significantly higher/lower than previous year @ 90% confidence level

OTHER PETS NON-DESEXED CAT OWNERS HAVE

**Similar to total cat owners, the number of owners of desexed cats who also own fish has decreased, along with a directional decrease in dog ownership.**

OTHER PETS OWNED

(AMONG OWNERS WHO HAVE NOT DESEXED ALL THEIR CATS)

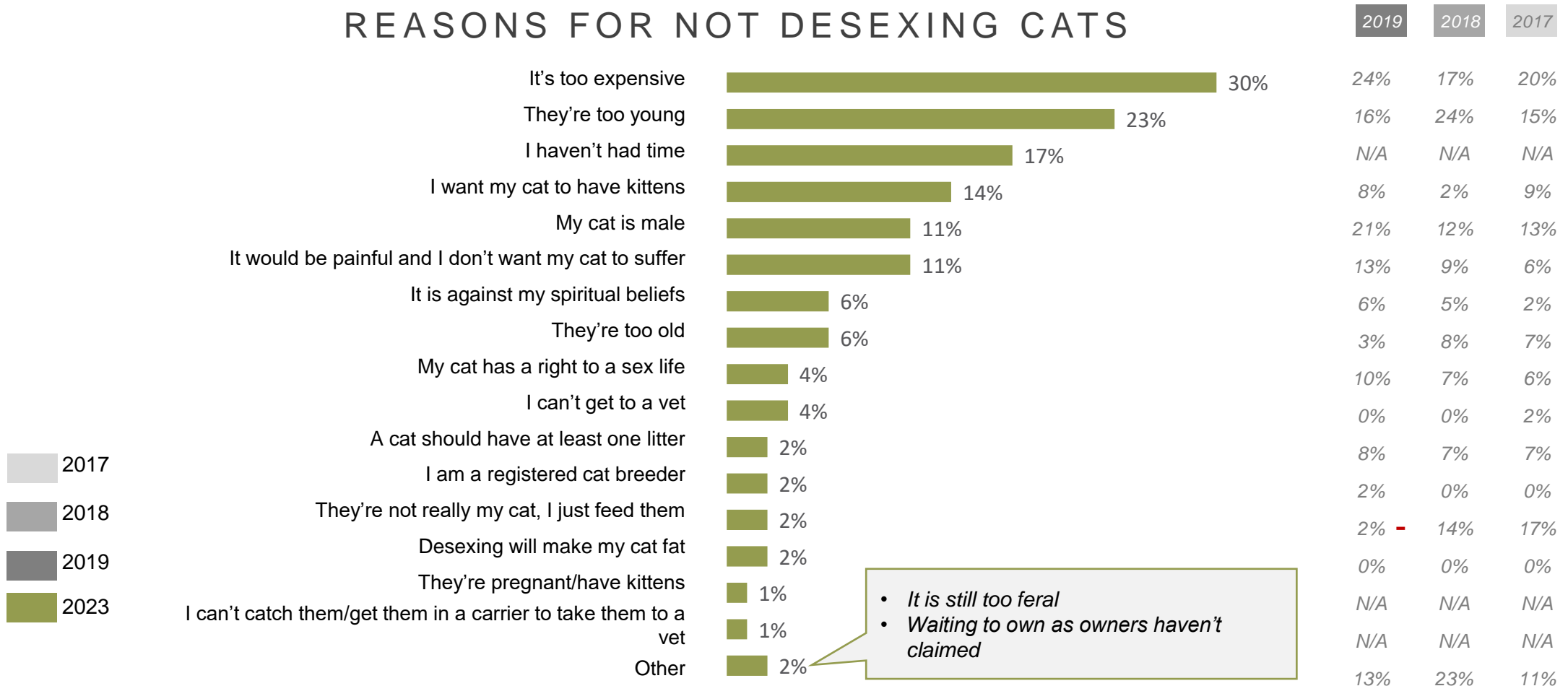




# REASONS FOR NOT DESEXING ALL THEIR CATS

**The cost of desexing is the primary barrier for not desexing cats. The cat age and time requirement are also top barriers.**

## REASONS FOR NOT DESEXING CATS

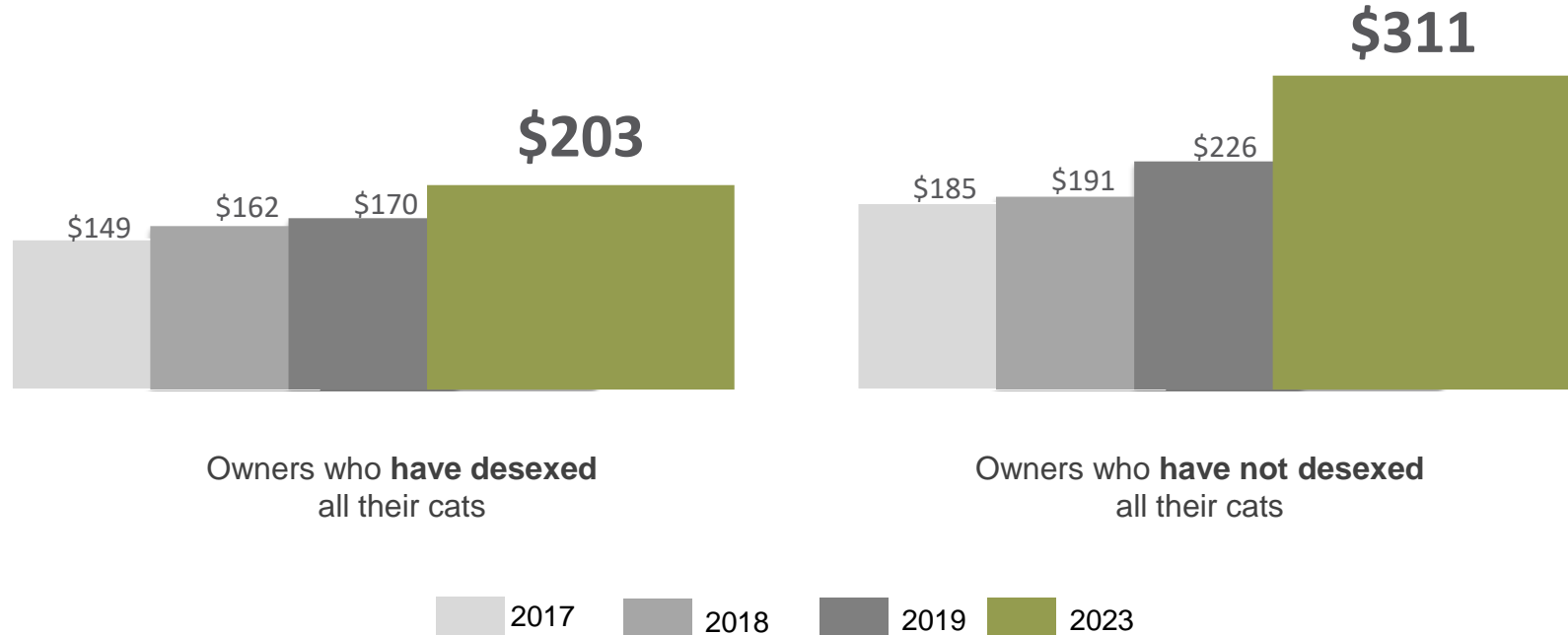


+/- significantly higher/lower than previous year @ 90% confidence level

## PERCIEVED COST TO HAVE A CAT / KITTEN DESEXED

**Those who have not desexed their cats perceive the cost to do so to be notably higher than those that have. The perceived cost has increased considerably since 2019.**

### PERCEIVED COST OF DESEXING

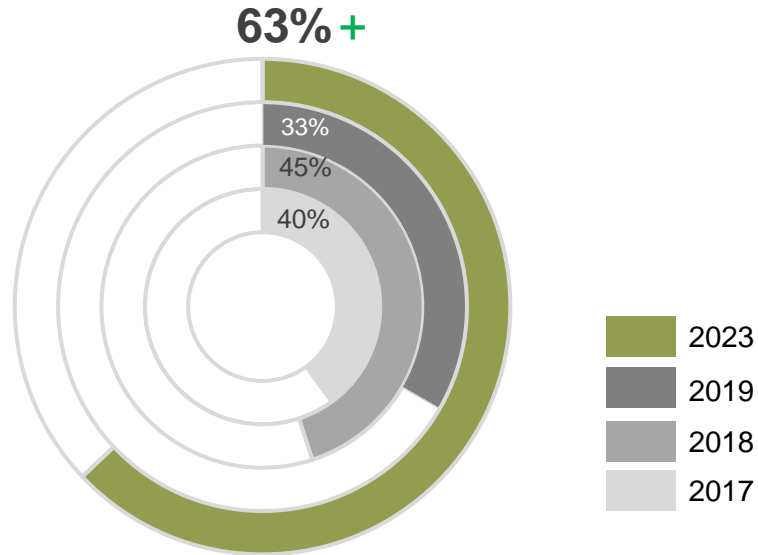


# PLANS TO DESEX CATS

## Plans to desex cats have almost doubled since 2019. However many delay due to perceived cost and time implications.

DO THEY PLAN TO DESEX THEIR CATS?  
(AMONG THOSE WHO HAVEN'T)

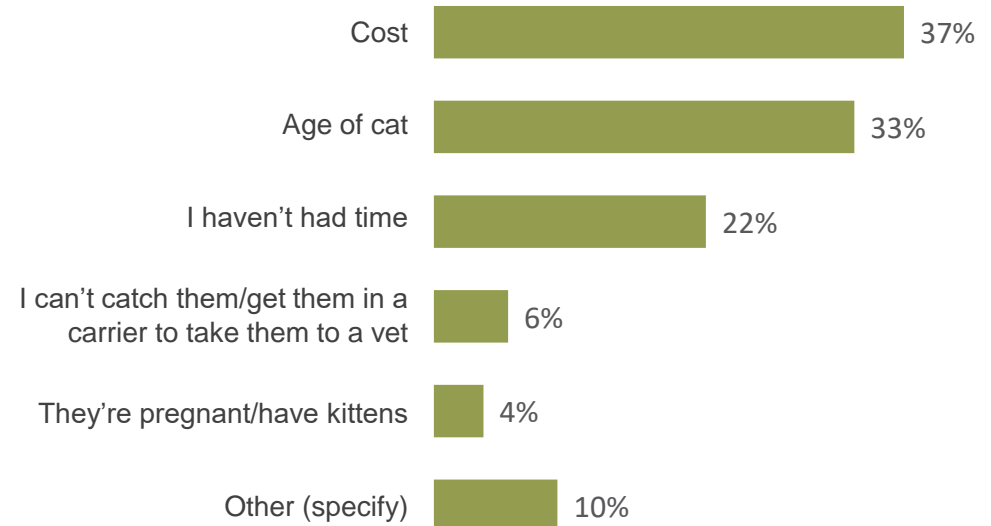
Percentage % Yes



(23% of these cats will never get desexed and 16% the owners are not sure)  
Vs. 2019: 54% will never and 13% not sure

REASONS FOR THE DELAY IN DESEXING THEIR CATS  
(AMONG THOSE THAT PLAN TO DESEX)

Base: 51 cats



- Too feral to handle
- Don't yet officially own
- Own by my son

+/- significantly higher/lower than previous year @ 90% confidence level

+/- significantly higher/lower than previous year @ 90% confidence level

# DON'T KNOW IF DESEXED

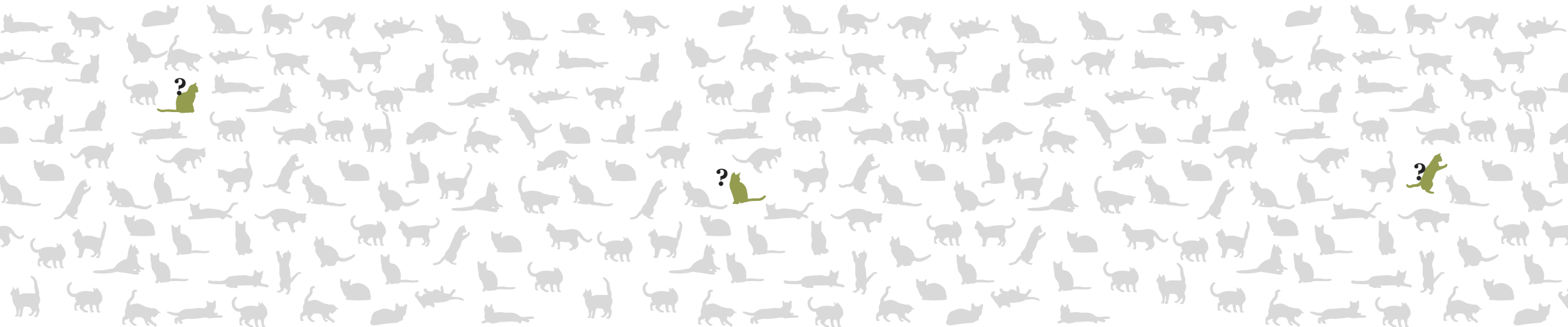
**Nearly all owners know if their cats are desexed or not. The 3 cats that are unknown are largely adopted from the wild.**

## HOW MANY ARE UNSURE

For **3** cats out of a total of 803, owners are unsure if they have been desexed or not  
*(2019: 10 from 582)*

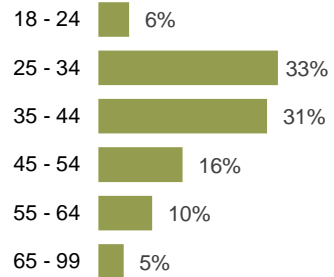
## WHERE THE CATS WERE FROM

- 2 Found them in the street/out "in the wild"
- 1 Friend/neighbour/family member



# PROFILE: CAT OWNERS WHO HAVE NOT DESEXED THEIR CATS

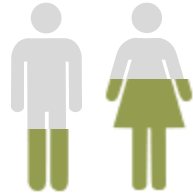
## AGE



Average: **40.6 y.o.**

(2019: 46 y.o. | 2018: 42 y.o. | 2017: 41 y.o.)

## GENDER



**37%** **63%**

(2019: 30% M, 70% F)

## HOUSEHOLD



**3.3**

Average household members

(2019: 3.3)

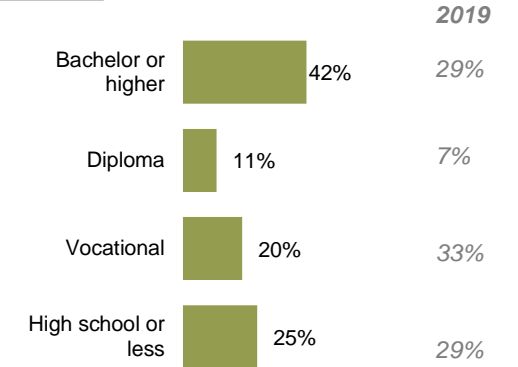


**59%**

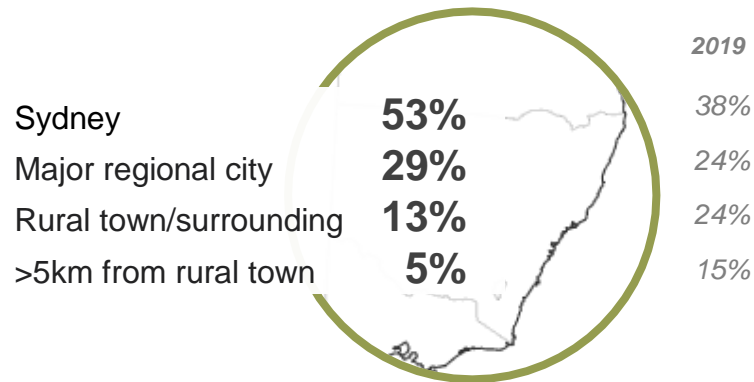
With kids <18

(2019: 52%)

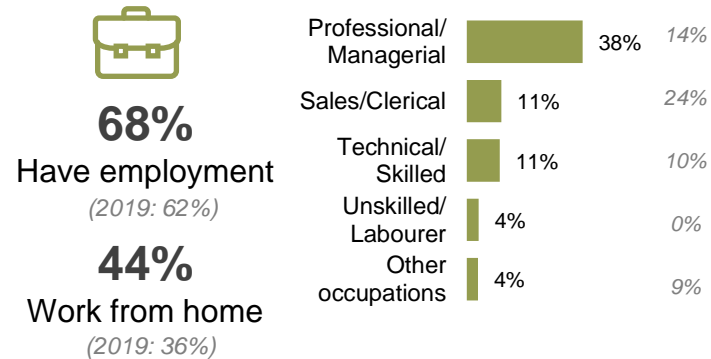
## EDUCATION



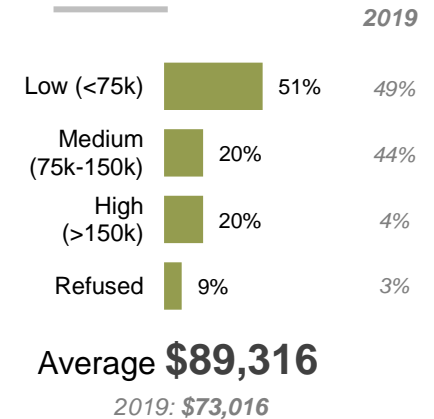
## REGIONS IN NSW



## EMPLOYMENT



## HH INCOME

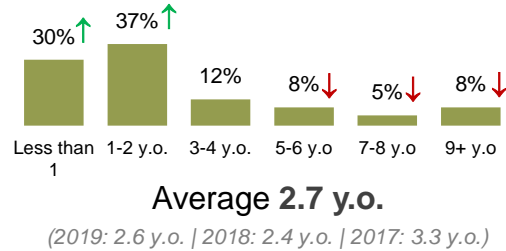


Base: Cat owners who have not desexed all their cats, 2019 n=49, 2023 n=66.

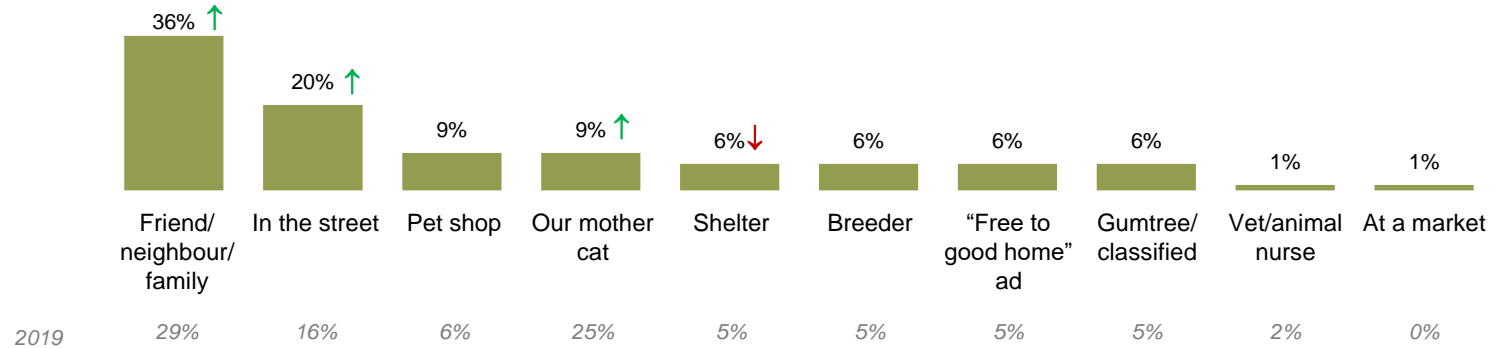
D2 (age), D3 (gender), Q5D (marital status), Q6D (number of people in HH), Q7D (with kids <18), Q4D (highest education level), Q11D (area), Q8D (working status), Q9D (occupation), Q10D (household income)

# PROFILE: CATS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN DESEXED

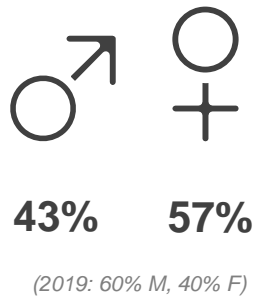
## AGE OF CAT



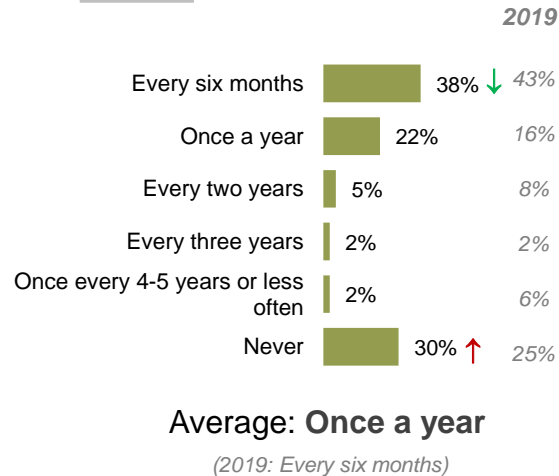
## WHERE THEY GOT THE CAT FROM



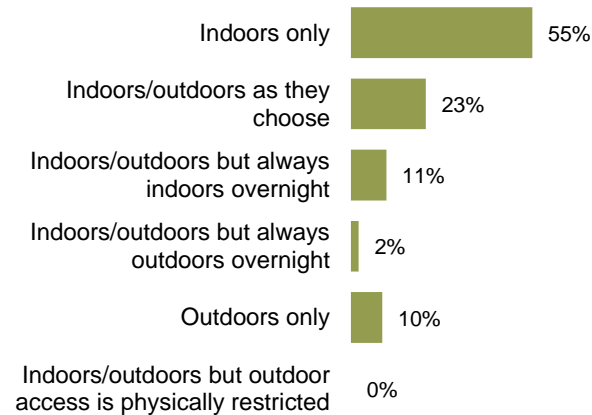
## CAT GENDER



## VISITS TO THE VET



## WHERE CAT LIVES



## VACCINATION & REGISTRATION



**59% ↓**  
Have been vaccinated  
(2019: 65%)



**38% ↓**  
Have been registered  
(2019: 41%)

# Communicating the Benefits of Desexing

The number of cat owners accurately recalling the age at which cats can undergo desexing has increased in the past few years. However, awareness of conception age has notably decreased among non-desexed cat owners.

Educating owners about desexing benefits could decrease non-desexed households by over 20%, or 1% of total cat owners.



# AWARENESS OF FACTS ABOUT DESEXING

**The number of cat owners who correctly recall the age that cats can be desexed has increased. However, there has been a significant decrease in the awareness of the age that cats can conceive among cat owners who have not desexed their cat.**



	<i>% aware</i>	Cat owners (n=356)	Cat owners who have desexed all cats (n=307)	Cat owners who have not desexed all cats (n=49)
Cats can be safely desexed from about 8-10 weeks of age		<b>76% ↑</b> 69%   67%   67%	<b>79% ↑</b> 72%   70%   71%	<b>53%</b> 44%   43%   43%
Female kitten can get pregnant from as young as 4-5 months old		<b>65%</b> 63%   62%   65%	<b>66%</b> 62%   64%   68%	<b>56% ↓</b> 73%   44%   48%
Early age desexing provides health benefits such as reducing the risk of various feline cancers, and behavioural benefits such as less wandering, fewer cat fights and also cats are less likely to 'spray' (urine)		<b>69%</b> 68%   60%   64%	<b>71%</b> 69%   61%   67%	<b>50%</b> 63%   48%   46%

Base: All cats owners n=513, Cat owners who have desexed their all their cats n=447, Cat owners who have not desexed all their cats n=66  
Q17 Desexed 8-10 weeks, Q18 Pregnant 4-5 months, Q19 Health benefits

smaller font, light grey  
2019 | 2018 | 2017

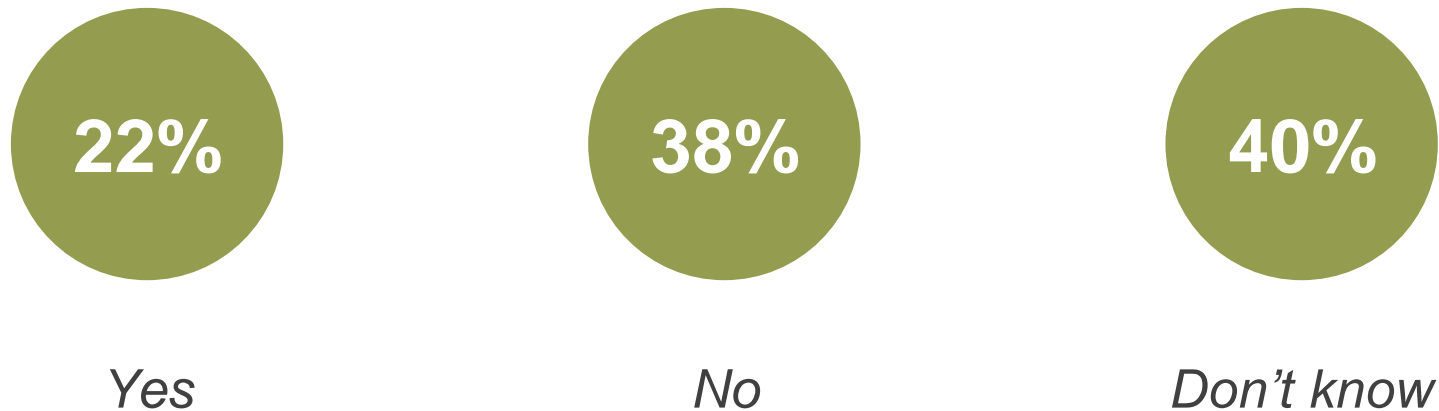
↓ ↑ Increase from 2019 significant @ 90% ci



## EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO BENEFITS OF DESEXING

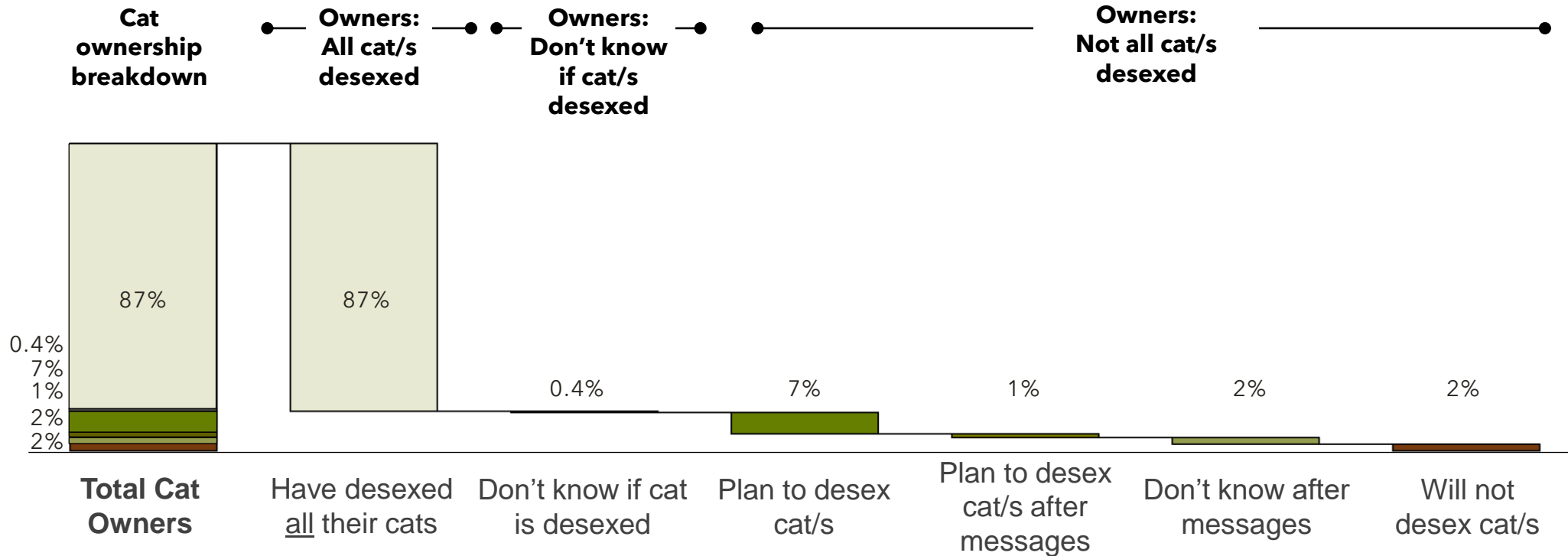
**Education/exposing owners to the benefits of desexing would decrease the number of non-desexed households by a fifth. However two in five are still unsure if they would.**

### DECISION TO DESEX AFTER EDUCATION



# CAT OWNERSHIP BREAKDOWN

**Further education on desexing will influence an additional 1% of cat owners, overall. The vast majority already have or plan to desex their cats.**



# Sources of Information

The utilization of various information sources remains consistent, with vet clinics and internet searches being the most commonly used methods.



# TOP 6 SOURCES OF INFORMATION/ADVICE ON CAT CARE

**There is no change in the usage of different information sources with vet clinic and internet search remaining most prevalent.**

## TOP SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON CAT CARE



**80%**

Veterinary  
clinic

2019: 88%  
2018: 86%



**65%**

Internet  
search

2019: 76%  
2018: 73%



**51%**

Cat/animal  
welfare  
charity

2019: 44%  
2018: 43%



**31%**

Pet Shop

2019: 29%  
2018: 29%



**26%**

Friends/  
Family

2019: 26%  
2018: 26%



**19%**

Cat  
Breeder

2019: 17%  
2018: 19%

Base: Cat owners, n=513

Source: Q23 (If you were looking for information or advice on cat care, what would be the three most likely sources you would choose for that information? Please rank your top three choices where 1 = 'most likely', 2 = 'second most likely', 3 = 'third most likely')

# Relationships with Stray Cats

In 2023, there is a notable decline in the number of cat owners tending to strays. About 70% are willing to have their local stray cat desexed if the cost is low or free.

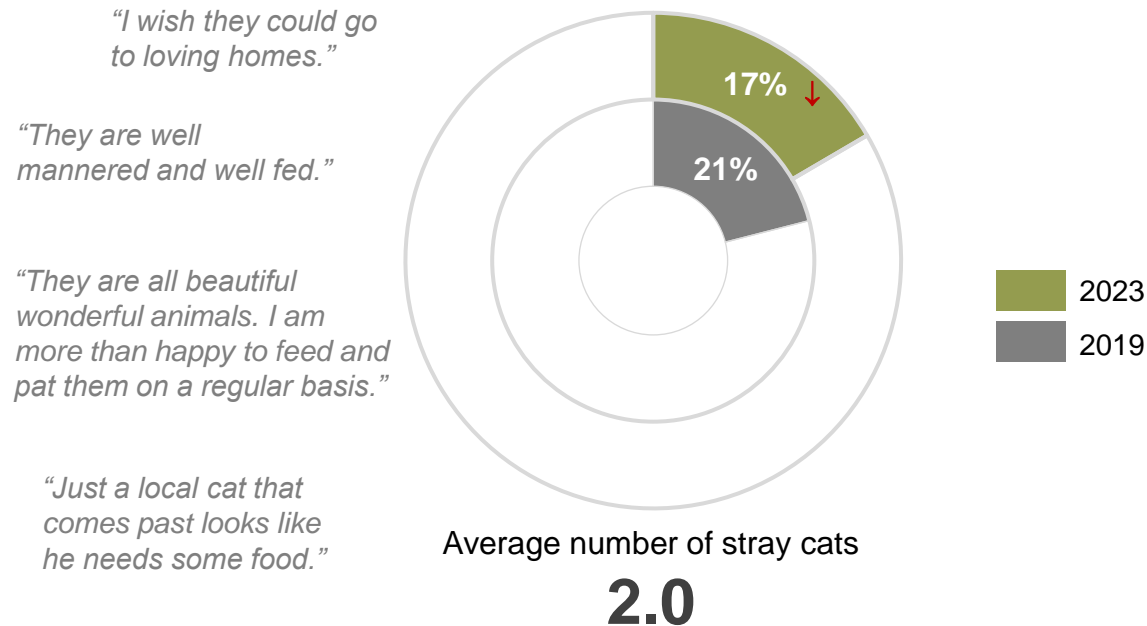


# CARE OF STRAY CATS

**There are significantly fewer cat owners who care for strays in 2023 with 7 in 10 happy to desex their local friend if it is cheap or free.**

## FEED OR CARE FOR STRAY CATS

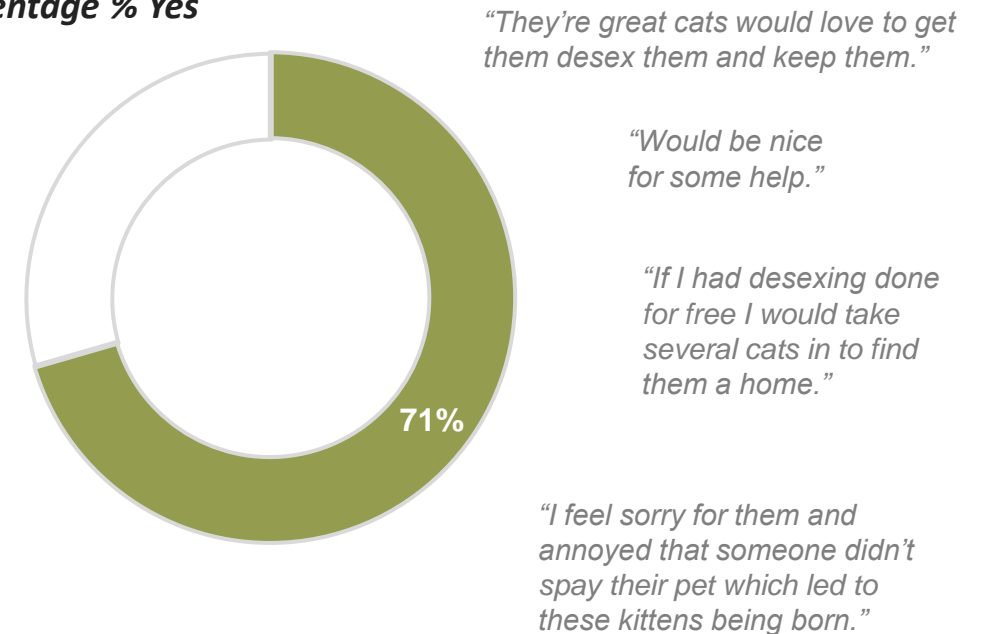
Percentage % Yes



## DESEX STRAY CATS IF FREE/CHEAP (AMONG CAT OWNERS WHO CARE FOR STRAYS)

Base: N=101

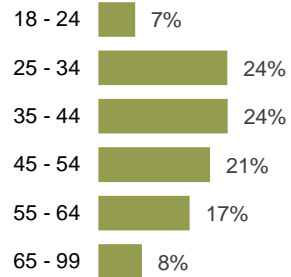
Percentage % Yes



Base: All cat owners n=513, All cat owners who care for strays n=101  
 Source: Q16. Do you feed or care for a stray cat or cats? | Q16B. How many stray cats do you feed/care for? | Q16C. If it were provided free of charge or very cheaply, would you have [this stray cat / these stray cats] desexed? Q16D. Are there any comments you would like to make about the stray cat(s) that you feed?

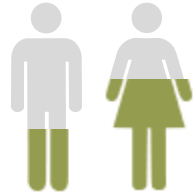
# PROFILE: CAT OWNERS WHO CARE/FEED STRAY CATS

## AGE



Average: **44.7 y.o.**  
(2019: 44 y.o.)

## GENDER



**40% 60%**  
(2019: 37% M, 63% F)

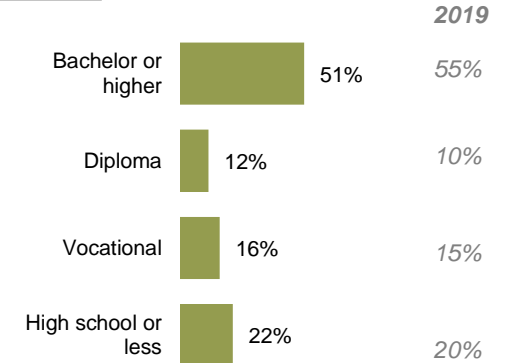
## HOUSEHOLD



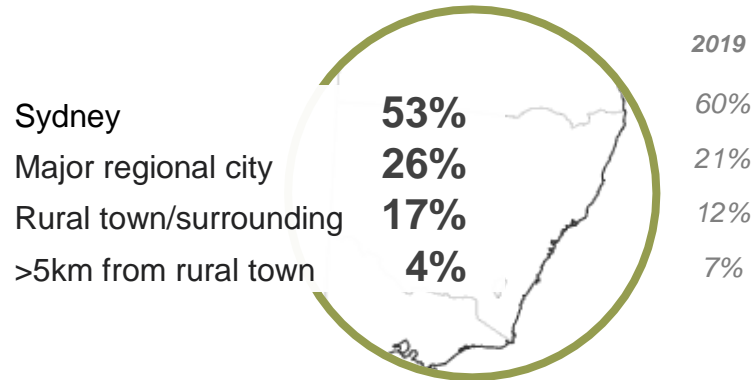
**2.8**  
Average household members  
(2019: 3.1)

**45%**  
With kids <18  
(2019: 53%)

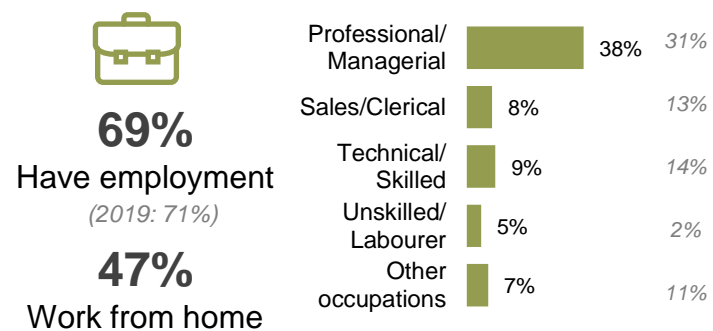
## EDUCATION



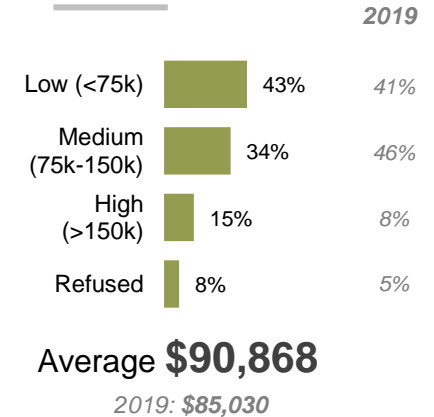
## REGIONS IN NSW



## EMPLOYMENT



## HH INCOME



Base: Cat owners who care / feed stray cats, 2019 n=122, 2023 n=101.

D2 (age), D3 (gender), Q5D (marital status), Q6D (number of people in HH), Q7D (with kids <18), Q4D (highest education level), Q11D (area), Q8D (working status), Q9D (occupation), Q10D (household income)

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YOU**

**GAME CHANGERS**

