



Ireland's Dog Census 2024



Welcome to the results of Ireland's Dog Census 2024!

The landscape for our canine companions is constantly evolving, and to truly support them, we must evolve with it. That's why, Ireland's first-ever Dog Census is a groundbreaking piece of research, and one that marks an important step in understanding the lived experiences of dogs, their owners, and the dog-loving population across the country. For the first time, we're building a national picture of dog ownership in Ireland: the joys, the struggles, and what life really looks like for Irish dogs and their owners today.

The invaluable insights in this report will inform the support and services we offer, and help shape the roadmap for our work in the coming years, so that we can help more dogs live life to the full.

2024 was our first Ireland's Dog Census and we were delighted that 23,136 dog owners told us about over 36,973 dogs in their lives. We also saw 3,392 dog lovers (who currently don't own a dog) share their thoughts.

Sample size and methodology

Ireland's Dog Census research was run in-house by Dogs Trust Ireland between September and October 2024. Achieving a sample size of $n=3,392$ Dog Lovers (those who don't currently own a dog) and $n=23,136$ Dog Owners. The survey appeared on social media and was not quota controlled. Dogs Trust Ireland engaged Ipsos B&A to process and analyse the data as well as report the results. The data was weighted to a nationally representative survey conducted by Ipsos B&A in August 2024 for Dogs Trust to ensure the results of the Census are nationally representative.

This is only the beginning of our journey: one that has the potential to transform how dogs and their owners are supported across Ireland. We're proud to be leading the way, and we're so grateful for your support as we take this important step forward.

Thank you for joining us on this journey.



Keith and the Census Squad

are back to share the results.
Read on to find out more.

**You're
pawsome!**



Key results

From playful stats to pressing concerns and the everyday realities of dog ownership, the results are in, and they give us a powerful glimpse into what life with dogs in Ireland really looks like.

These insights will help us plan how we campaign, advocate, and support dogs and their owners across the country. And while we might not have all the answers just yet, your voice is helping us shape the path forward.

Choosing a dog

Deciding to take on a new furry family member is a big step and picking the right dog for you and your lifestyle is so important.

79%



The great news is that **79% of dog owners** who responded said they **carried out research** before getting their canine companion.

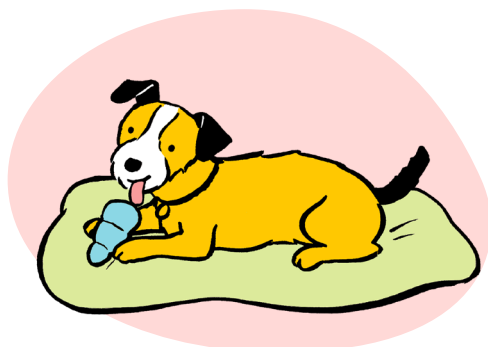
1 in 5



But worryingly, just over **one in five owners (21%)** didn't do any research before getting their dog, equally highlighting the need for more education in the space.



We want every future dog owner to feel confident and prepared. That's why we've developed our online breed checker to help people find the right match for their lifestyle.



The aspects most researched before getting a dog were:

- Exercise and activity needs (57%)
- Breed characteristics (56%)
- Temperament and behaviour (56%)

suggesting that most prospective dog owners look for a dog that aligns with their lifestyle.

What research did you do prior to getting your dog?

Exercise & activity needs

57%

Breed characteristics

56%

Temperament & behaviour

56%

Size & space considerations

49%

Average lifespan & typical health issues

45%

Training & socialisation needs

37%

Time commitment

36%

Grooming requirements

33%

Nutritional needs

30%

Cost of ownership (food, vet care, supplies)

27%

Adoption vs. breeder options & ethical considerations

22%

Dog/breed ownership laws & regulations

18%

Support & resources for new dog owners

12%

I didn't do any research

21%

Owners are most likely to research exercise and activity needs, breed characteristics, and temperament and behaviour.

Just over one in five owners didn't do any research prior to getting their dog.





Most dog owners have a single dog



Most people who have a dog have just one (just under three in four owners).

Which breed is Top Dog?

When it came to the most popular breeds **Jack Russells** (10%), **Labradors** (8%), and **Collies** (7%) came top. But let's face it, they're all our favourites, and there was a lot of love for multiple breeds and crossbreeds too.

Jack
Russells
for the
win!



Breed

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Terrier (Jack Russell) | 9 German Shepherd Dog |
| 2 Retriever (Labrador) | 10 Spaniel (English Springer) |
| 3 Collie (Border) | 11 Lurcher |
| 4 Spaniel (Cocker) | 12 Shih Tzu |
| 5 Retriever (Golden) | 13 Crossbreed |
| 6 Bichon Frise | 14 Beagle |
| 7 Spaniel (Cavalier King Charles) | 15 Terrier (Staffordshire Bull) |
| 8 Terrier (Yorkshire) | 16 Maltese |

10 most popular dog names

Bella, Daisy and Bailey top the charts for dog names



No Keith?
Maybe next year!



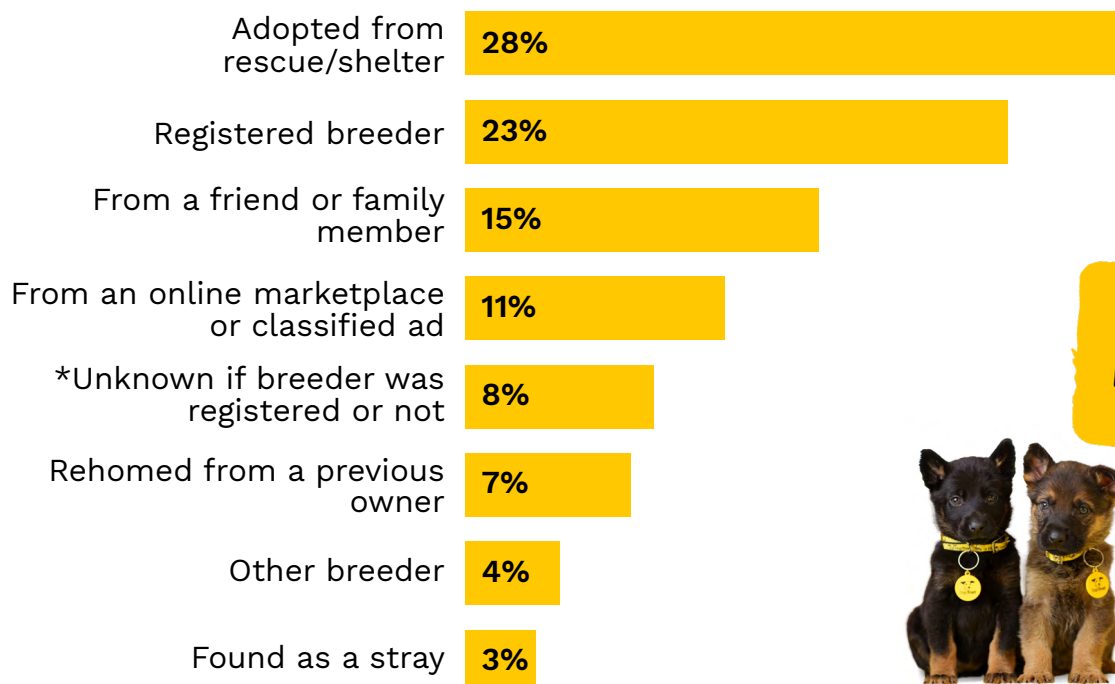
Where their dog came from

28% of people said they **adopted their dog from a rescue** or shelter.



23% bought a dog **from a registered breeder**.

It's heartening to see that the largest group of dog owners surveyed chose to adopt from a rescue or shelter, giving dogs in need a well-deserved second chance at finding a loving home!



Yay for rescues!

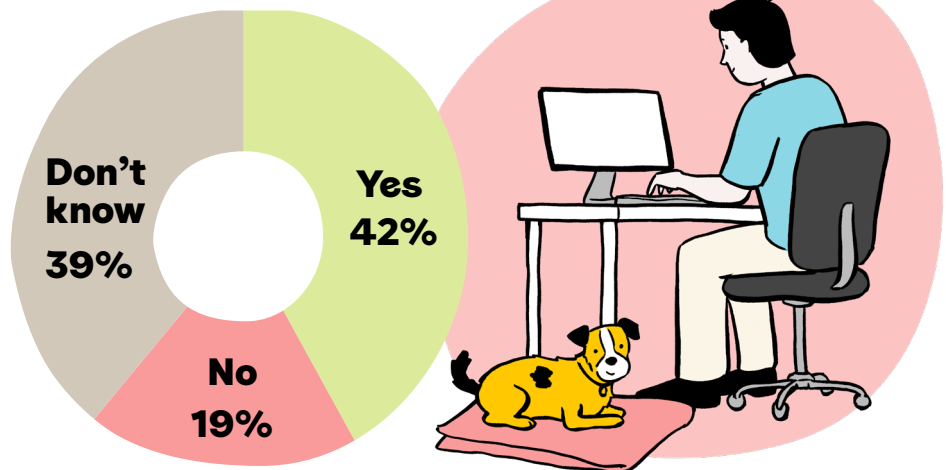


Breeder confusion

There is confusion over how to spot a legal breeder. **Just over two in five dog owners (42%) feel they can tell the difference between a licensed and an illegal breeder.** This was closely followed by 39% not being sure and 19% wouldn't be able to tell the difference.

While this isn't surprising, it is worrying. The current system isn't clear and the regulations aren't properly enforced, meaning that unscrupulous breeders can breed puppies in poor welfare conditions, duping unsuspecting owners. We want to change this.

Would you be able to spot a licensed breeder?



Insights from the Census established “ending breeding cruelty” as a key pillar of our **2024 General Election ‘Pawlitical Manifesto’**. We are calling for higher dog welfare standards, backed by properly enforced and well-resourced legislation. This will ensure negligent and abusive breeders are held accountable. We believe every prospective dog owner should feel confident that their dog has been bred humanely and be equipped with the knowledge to identify a healthy pup, empowering them to ask the right questions and expect the standards of care their dog deserves.



To find out more on how to get a puppy safely and the red flags to watch out for,



Dog owner concerns

27% said the biggest issues facing them are other dog owners not being responsible in public places and a lack of dog-friendly spaces in Ireland (24%).



This shows that dog owners' concerns are primarily within their community, rather than at home, highlighting how wider environmental factors like access to green spaces and dog-friendly businesses, or the presence of uncontrolled dogs, all play a significant role in shaping daily life.

Each year, Dogs Trust Ireland drives forward **Dog Friendly Ireland Day**, advocating for more dog-friendly spaces and policies with the goal of making Ireland the best country in the world for dogs and dog people.

The campaign highlights the small but meaningful changes that can be introduced across many areas of public life to make our country more accessible and inclusive for dogs.

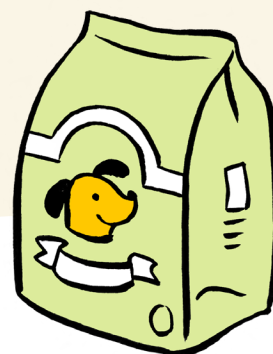
We look forward to the day when dog-friendly policies are standard practice, where dogs are welcomed in public places, reflected in progressive workplace policies, and supported in communities across the country.

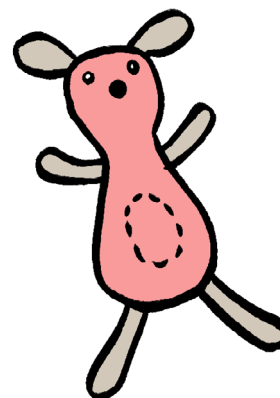
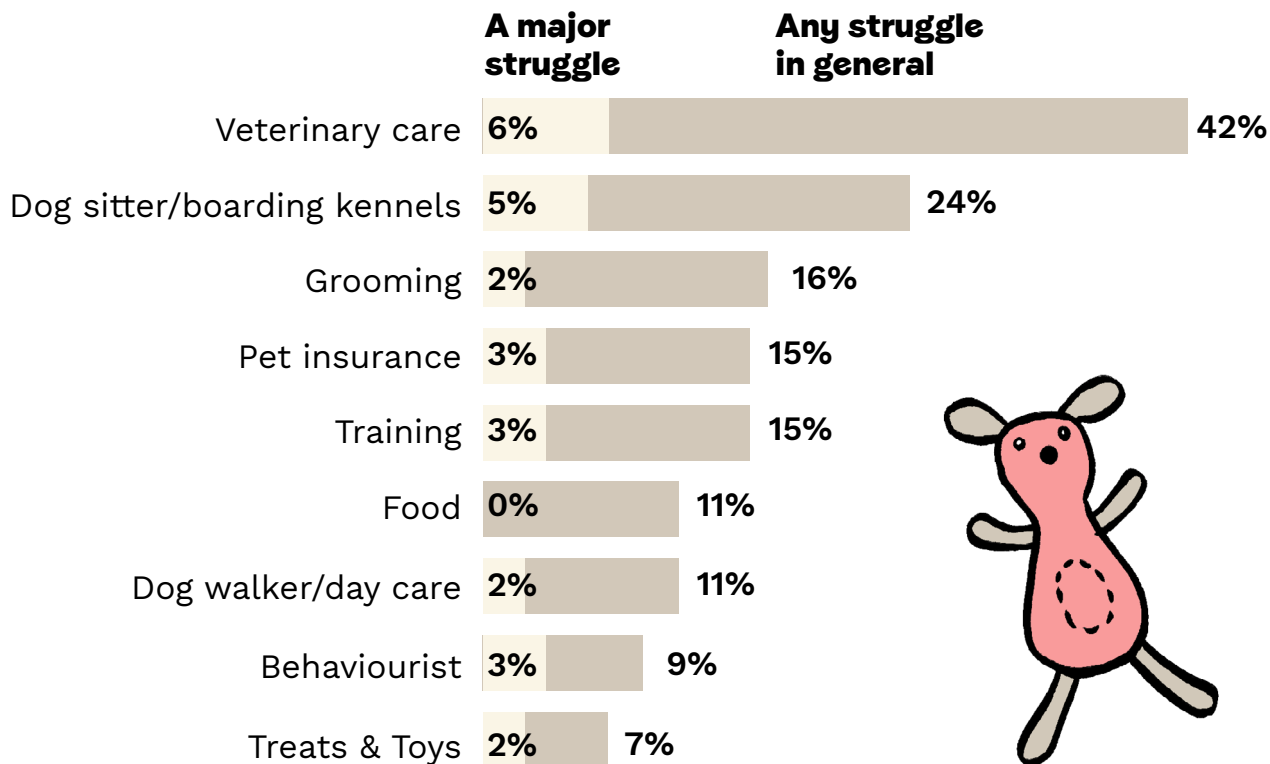


The dog owners surveyed also highlighted some **financial challenges**. **42% of owners are finding veterinary care the biggest financial struggle.** Followed by dog sitting and kennel costs.

At Dogs Trust, we know that unexpected vet bills can place a huge strain on dog owners, which is why we offer a veterinary voucher fund to support a limited number of people whose dogs need emergency treatment but who are unable to cover the full cost.

11% of dog owners, worryingly, struggle to pay for food for their dog.



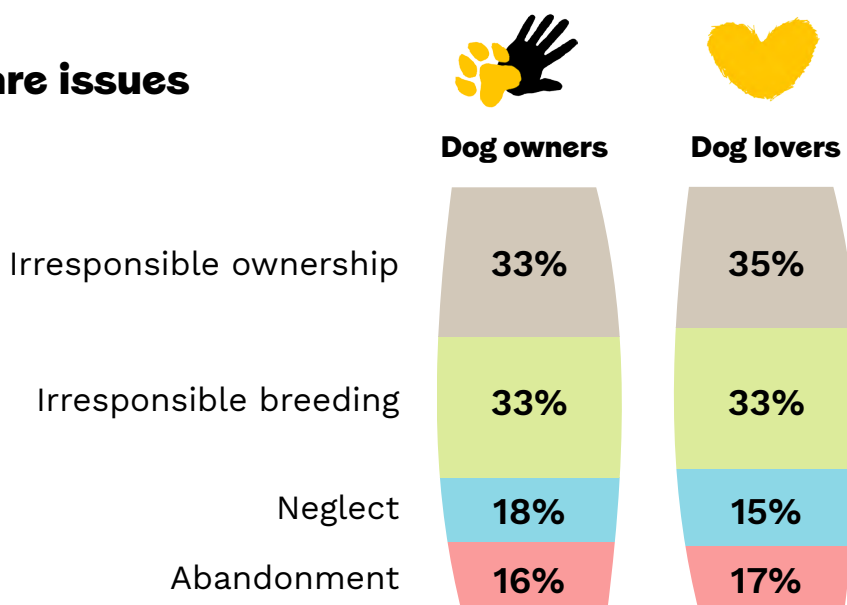


Dog welfare concerns

Both dog owners and dog lovers identify **irresponsible ownership** and **poor breeding practices** as the most pressing welfare issues in Ireland. This is a significant and telling insight. It demonstrates widespread public awareness, but also deep concern about the consequences: from neglect or abandonment, to chronic health issues linked to unethical breeding practices. Just as importantly, it reflects a strong, shared public appetite for meaningful change.

Accordingly, we are taking a holistic approach; promoting responsible ownership through education and support, while advocating for stronger breeding regulations and more effective enforcement. By tackling these issues at their root, we can create lasting change and build a better future for dogs across Ireland.

What do you see as the biggest dog welfare issues in Ireland currently?



Creating a better future for dogs - your insights in action

The Census was key in helping us uncover vital insights - from the public's top concerns about the enforcement of current dog welfare legislation, to attitudes around various aspects of dog ownership, and where you believe change is needed most. These findings are already making a difference, having informed our advocacy strategy and recent campaigns, and shaping the roadmap for our work in the months and years ahead.

Some of the key findings include:

- 97%** **97% of dog owners** (96% of dog lovers) agree that Ireland already has **laws to help crack down on irresponsible breeding** and there should be stronger enforcement.
- 94%** **94% of dog owners** (95% of dog lovers) agree that **current regulations** allowing full traceability and accountability of dogs, their owners, and breeders **are ineffective and need to be updated** and enforced.
- 81%** **81% of dog owners** (88% of dog lovers) agree that dog owners **should have the right to have a pet in rental accommodation**.



Currently, the responsibility for dog control and dog welfare issues is split between several government departments.

85% of dog owners (82% of dog lovers) agree that a dedicated Junior Minister with responsibility for dog welfare and control would provide a more coordinated response.



Thanks to your insights, we could bring these issues to the attention of the government through our 2024 General Election 'Pawlitical Manifesto' - and we're already seeing (paw)sitive change!

I vote for a
Junior
Minister!



The Greatest Gift: A Voice for Dogs in Government

In November 2024, we launched our 'Greatest Gift' petition calling for a dedicated Junior Minister. This was prompted by **85% of dog owners** (82% of dog lovers) agreeing that a Junior Minister would provide a more coordinated response to dog welfare issues and control. The petition gained 35,217 signatures, resulting in a government promise to centralise all dog welfare and control policies under the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. While we are making progress, Dogs Trust Ireland still believes a Junior Minister is needed. Someone at the heart of government that cares as much as you do and who will have central oversight.



Good Boy, Not Goodbye: Because No One Should Have to Choose

In May 2025, we also launched our 'Good Boy, Not Goodbye' campaign to end blanket bans on dogs in rental agreements. **81% of dog owners** (88% of dog lovers) agreed that dog owners should have the right to have a pet in rental accommodation, yet the number of people contacting us needing to give up their dog because their move to a new home won't allow their four-legged family member has increased by 112% in the last five years.

A dog is part of the family, and no one should be forced into the impossible situation of having to choose between keeping their dog or keeping their home. Sadly, far too many renters in Ireland are being forced to do just that because of 'blanket bans' on dogs in tenancy agreements. We launched a petition to encourage the government to change the law which resulted in 24,300 signatures. We will present the petition to government and continue to lobby for change.

Training and obedience



63% of dog owners have done **some sort of training** with their dog, with most doing it themselves.

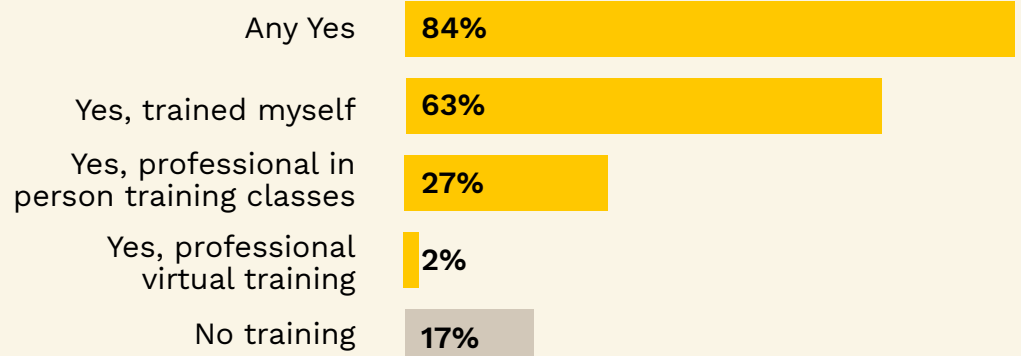
This shows a strong appetite to build stronger bonds with dogs and set them up for success, a great sign of responsible dog ownership! With so many owners taking a “DIY approach”, there’s also a clear need for accessible, reliable, and evidence-based training resources.



Our new online puppy management course launched in January. You can find out more and explore upcoming resources for dog owners [here](#).

By supporting owners with the right tools and guidance, we can help prevent behavioural issues from developing and keep more dogs happy in their homes.

Has your dog ever received any form of training?



77% of dog owners rate their dog’s obedience as **excellent or good**. Only 2% rate their dog’s obedience as poor.



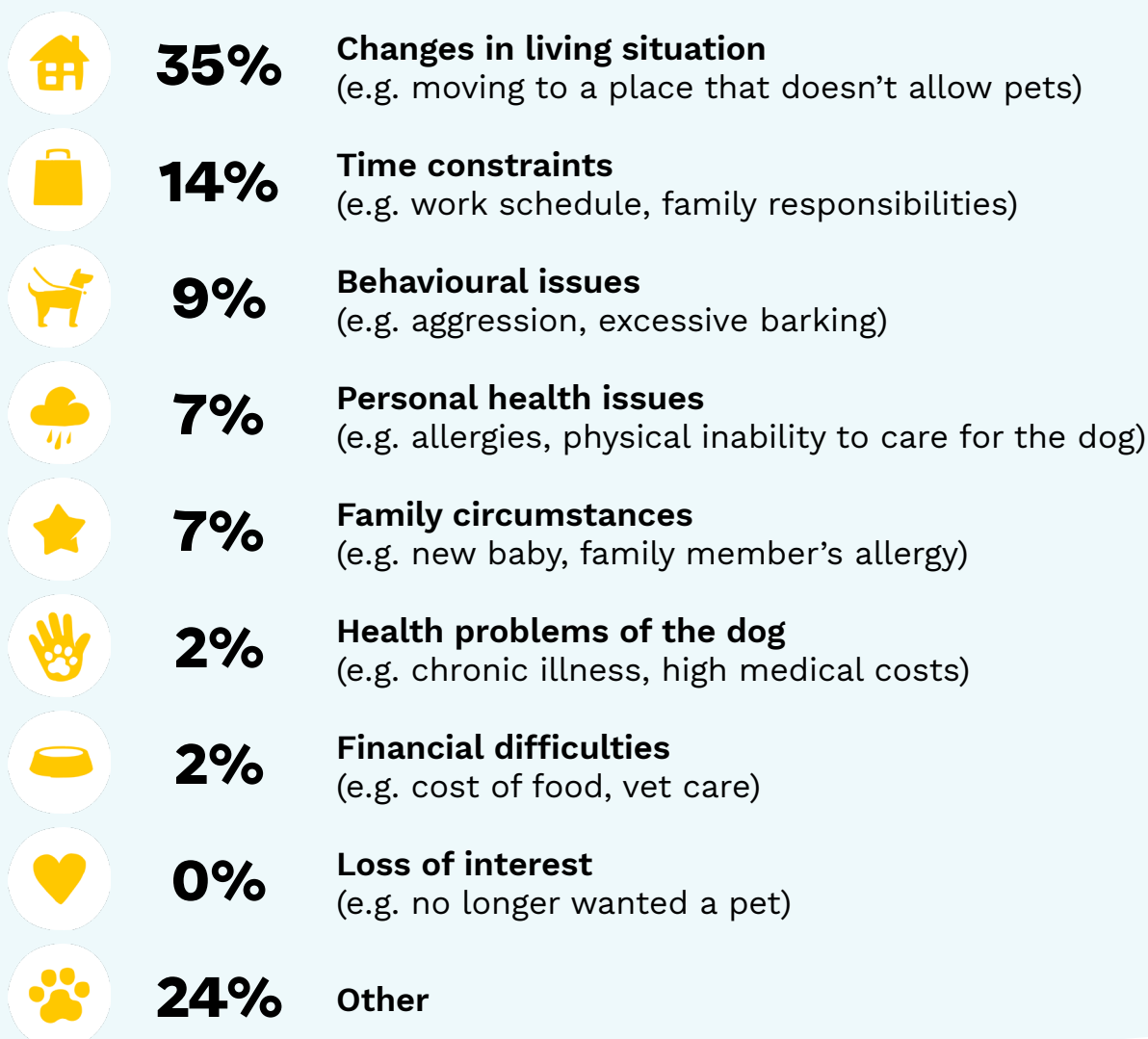
**Training =
treats.
What's not to
love?**

Dog lovers' insights

For the Census, we asked people who love dogs but don't currently have one to take part, so we could gather the widest range of perspectives possible.

35% of dog lovers who **had to give up their dog** said it was **due to changes in their living situation**, for instance moving to a place that doesn't allow pets. Another compelling insight that highlighted the critical need for our 'Good Boy, Not Goodbye' campaign (see pg. 10).

What was the primary reason **you gave up your dog?**



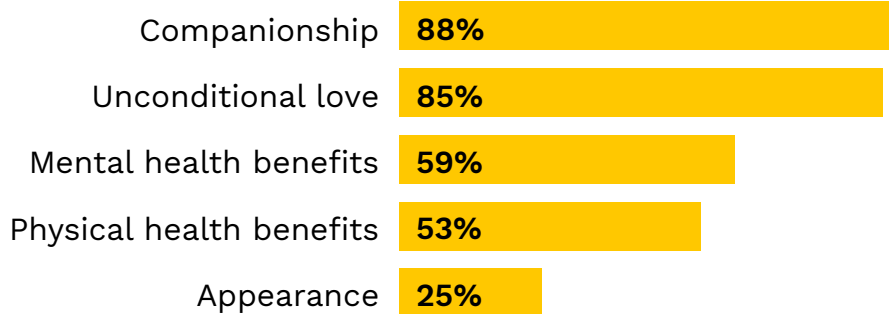
What do you **love about dogs?**

88% of dog lovers appreciate the companionship dogs provide. **85% value the unconditional love.**

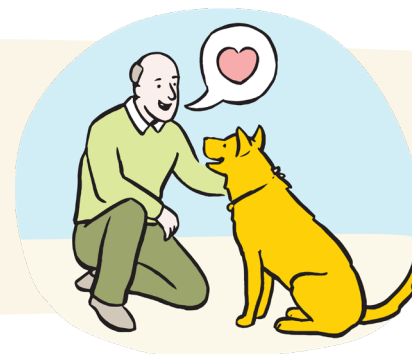
These high percentages underscore the emotional bond between humans and dogs. Mental and physical health benefits are close behind.



Aww we love you too!



72% of dog lovers intend to get a dog when their situation allows it, and **12% are actively looking** for a dog.



Barriers to dog ownership

Lack of time is the main barrier to future dog ownership, and continues to be one of the top reasons behind people choosing to give up their dog.

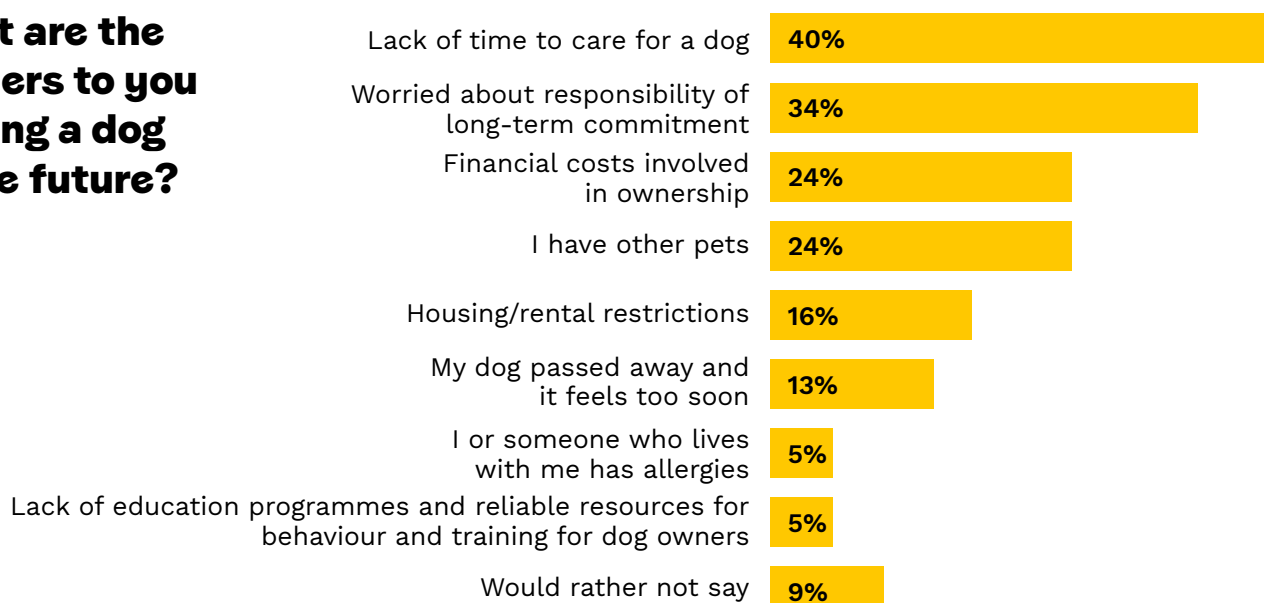


Thinking of getting a dog? Before welcoming a canine companion into your life, take a moment to reflect: Am I truly ready? **Click [here](#) to explore 10 thoughtful questions to consider before bringing home your new best friend.**



85% of dog lovers who are **actively looking for a dog or planning to get one** in the future state they **will adopt from a rescue.**

What are the barriers to you owning a dog in the future?



Coping with pet grief

According to the Census, over half of dog lovers have, as adults, owned a dog that had sadly passed away.

This underscores the widespread and visceral experience of pet bereavement, and suggests many might have chosen not to have another dog due to the intensity of the loss.

Our previous research revealed that **half of dog owners (51%) felt the grief they experienced after losing their dog was similar to or worse than the loss of a family member**, with a further 38% stating they were surprised by how deeply they were affected.

We first launched the poignant **‘Not Just a Dog’** campaign, and following its success, we introduced **‘The Big Paws’** - a unique initiative to celebrate the lives of dogs who have passed away. Both campaigns highlight the profound impact a dog’s death can have on their owners and include an appeal to employers to consider offering compassionate leave to employees grieving the loss of a beloved pet.



As Ireland’s largest dog welfare charity, we understand the impact the loss of a dog can have.
Please click [here](#) to access our grief supports.

Located at our Rehoming Centre in Dublin, the Dogs Trust Legacy Garden is a peaceful place to remember your beloved dog. You can honour them with a specially engraved tag, which hangs on our commissioned sculpture as a lasting tribute, and receive a certificate to commemorate the pawprint they’ve left on your heart. Please [click here](#) to find out more about our Memorial tags.



Thank you to everyone who took part in Ireland's Dog Census 2024 and for coming on this journey of understanding more about the nation's dogs with us.

The answers you gave us will help shape our future work and provide advice and support where it matters most.

Don't forget to take part in Ireland's Dog Census 2025.

**click
here** 

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