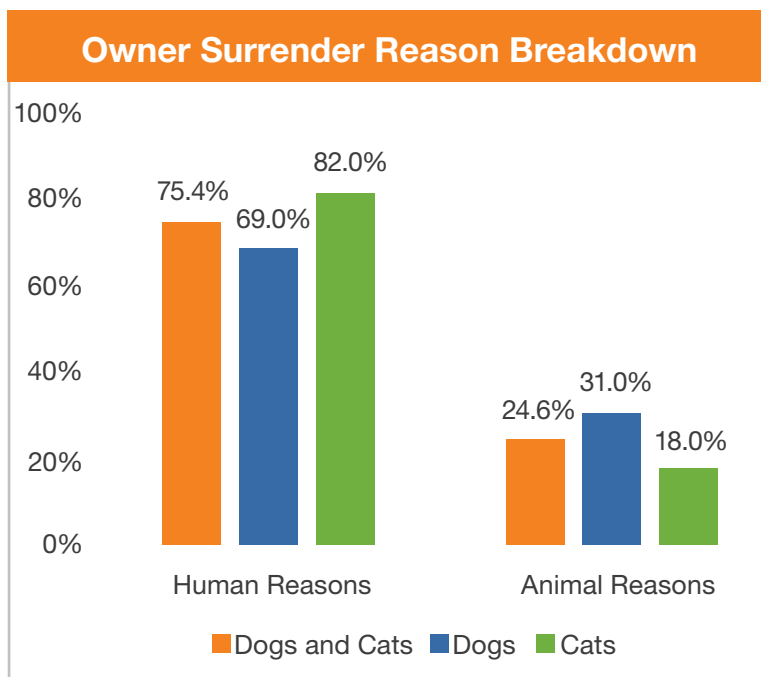


This analysis quantifies the reasons why pets are surrendered in the U.S., how these reasons changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, how they compare to the 2009 recession, and where surrendered pets are first acquired.

The basis of this analysis is 1,092,416 classifiable U.S. dog and cat owner surrenders from 24PetWatch data spanning January 2018 through September 2020. COVID-19 specific comparisons look at March through September of 2020 (181,500 surrenders) against those months of both 2018 and 2019 combined (522,112 surrenders). A separate 233,359 surrenders from March through September of 2009 are used to see what differences exist between the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2009 recession. And of the nearly 1.1 million classifiable owner surrenders from January 2018 through September 2020, 751,835 also contain the source from which the surrendered pet was first acquired by the owner. The American Pet Products Association (APPA) 2019–2020 National Pet Owners Survey is cited as general population context for pet acquisition sources.

Data Insights



January 2018 – September 2020, 24PetWatch owner surrender data

Human Reasons for Owner Surrenders During COVID-19 vs. Pre-COVID

-0.4% Points for Dogs and Cats

75.5% March to September 2020 compared to 75.9% March to September 2018 and 2019

-1.8% Points for Dogs

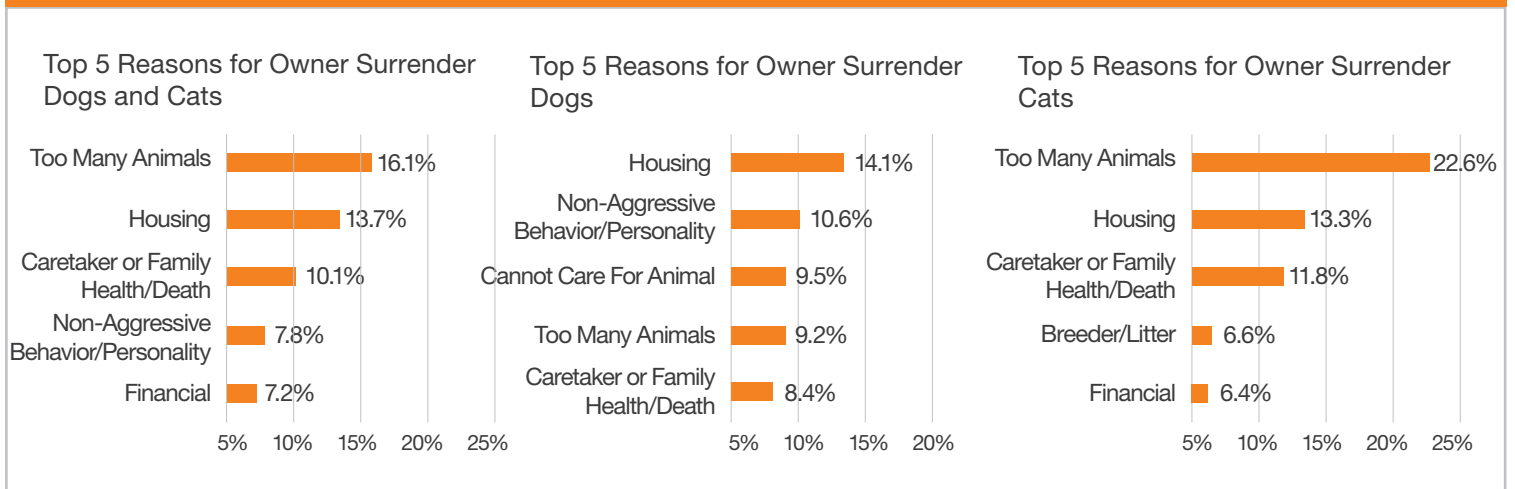
67.3% March to September 2020 compared to 69.1% March to September 2018 and 2019

+0.3% Points for Cats

82.9% March to September 2020 compared to 82.6% March to September 2018 and 2019

- People surrender both dogs and cats to shelters largely due to factors unrelated to the pet.
- Through September, COVID-19 has not led to a significant increase in the rate at which pets are surrendered due to human reasons.

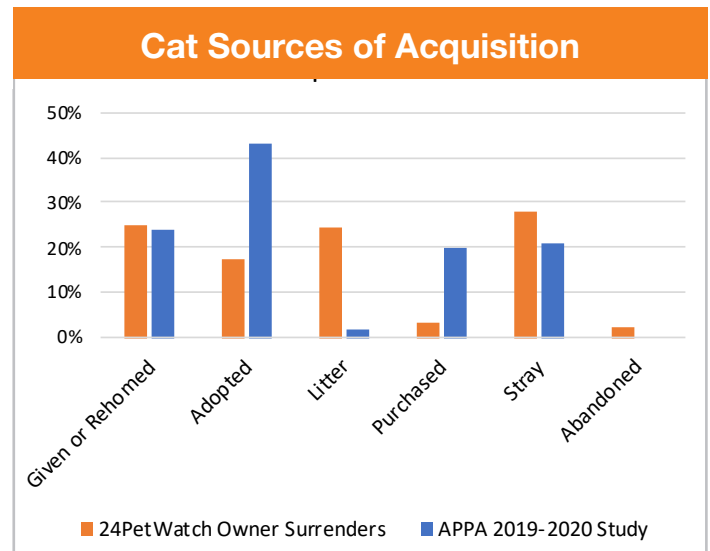
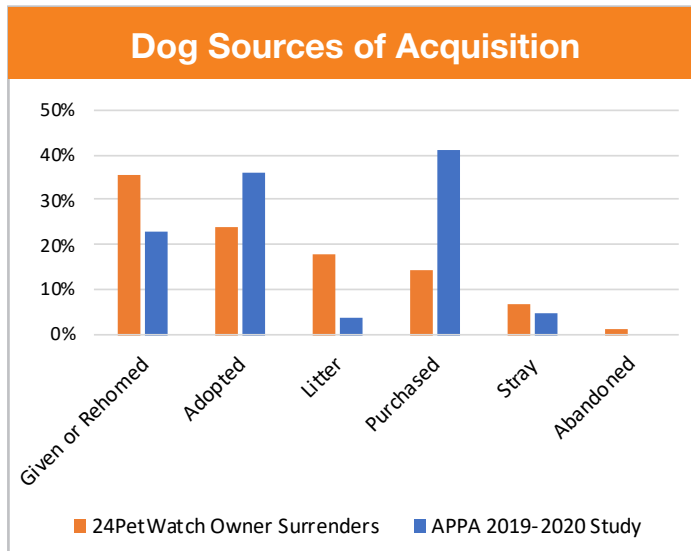
Top Five Reasons for Owner Surrender



January 2018 – September 2020, 24PetWatch owner surrender data

- Notably, euthanasia is the ninth most-cited surrender reason (5.5%) and is higher for dogs (seventh, 7.4%) than cats (tenth, 3.7%).
- The top reasons for surrendering a pet are largely consistent both prior to COVID-19 and during the pandemic. This is based on comparisons of March to September 2020 with March to September of both 2018 and 2019 combined.
 - Too many animals: 16.5% prior vs. 18.0% during
 - Housing: 14.4% prior vs. 11.3% during (may be due to eviction moratoriums)
 - Caretaker or family health/death: 9.7% prior vs. 10.2% during
 - Non-aggressive behavior/personality: 7.7% prior vs. 7.5% during
 - Financial: 7.0% prior vs. 7.6% during
- The 2009 recession had higher surrender rates due to housing and finances compared to COVID-19, while the pandemic has had more of an impact on surrenders related to human health. This is based on comparisons of March to September 2020 with March to September 2009.
 - Too many animals: 18.5% in 2009 vs. 18.0% during COVID-19
 - Housing: 14.7% in 2009 vs. 11.3% during COVID-19
 - Caretaker or family health/death: 7.3% in 2009 vs. 10.2% during COVID-19
 - Non-aggressive behavior/personality: 6.4% in 2009 vs. 7.5% during COVID-19
 - Financial: 10.8% in 2009 vs. 7.6% during COVID-19

Sources of Acquisition for Surrendered Pets



January 2018 – September 2020, 24PetWatch owner surrender data

Note: APPA general acquisition data does not evenly align with these categories and is based on pet owners who may have multiple pets and provide multiple sources.

- Dogs who are given or rehomed to someone are most likely to be surrendered to a shelter (35.7%) compared to the 23% rate (APPA) at which dogs are generally acquired this way. This suggests that additional community support may be needed to help those with rehomed pets avoid having to surrender them to a shelter.
 - Pets from litters are disproportionately more likely to be surrendered, making up 17.8% of dog surrenders (4% general acquisition per APPA) and 24.4% of cat surrenders (2% per APPA).
 - Stray (27.8%) is the most common source of acquisition for cats who end up surrendered.
 - The rate at which adopted or purchased pets are surrendered is significantly lower than the rate at which such pets are generally acquired.
-
- 32% of dogs are acquired without potential resources and support from a shelter or rescue group or even a breeder, but they comprise 61.8% of all dog surrenders.
 - 47% of cats are acquired without potential resources and support from a shelter or rescue group or even a breeder, but they comprise 79.4% of all cat surrenders.