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The State of Pet Ownership in the U.S.

About this report

Data Source: All data in this report comes from **Morning Consult Intelligence**.

Sample:

- The pet ownership and audience behavior data from Section 1 is based on surveys conducted from January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025 among U.S. adults. Sample sizes vary by audience segment: the dog owner audience includes 857,270 respondents and the cat owner audience includes 658,902 respondents. Sample sizes for generational cuts range from approximately 79,000 to 117,000 respondents per month.
- The brand data from Section 2 comes from surveys conducted from January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025. Purchase consideration data covers 28 pet and pet-adjacent brands tracked in the pet owner ranking section, and over 3,000 brands tracked in the standout brands analysis. Brand-level sample sizes vary by brand and audience segment. All brands included in the standout brands analysis meet a minimum threshold of 400 respondents within each reported audience segment (All Respondents, Dog Owners, and Cat Owners).

Purchase Consideration: Purchase consideration scores reflect Morning Consult's Total Purchase Consideration measure, calculated as the share of respondents who say they would consider purchasing from a brand. Higher scores indicate stronger purchase intent. Scores can be compared directly across brands and audience segments.

Audience Segments: Generational cohorts are defined as follows: Generation Z (born 1997–2012), Millennials (born 1981–1996), Generation X (born 1965–1980), and Boomers (born 1946–1964).

Key Takeaways

1. **Pet ownership is at a modern high — and cats are growing faster.** As of December 2025, 75.6% of U.S. adults live in dog-owning households and 58.6% in cat-owning households. Cat ownership has climbed roughly 8 percentage points since late 2018, outpacing dog ownership growth over the same period.

2. **Millennials are the defining generation of pet ownership.** Millennials lead all generations in both cat ownership (61%) and dog ownership (80%).

3. **Pet owners are more likely to be married, own their homes, and have children.** Compared to the general population, both cat and dog owners are meaningfully more likely to be married, own their home, and have children under 18 in the household—suggesting pets are a feature of family life, not a substitute for it.

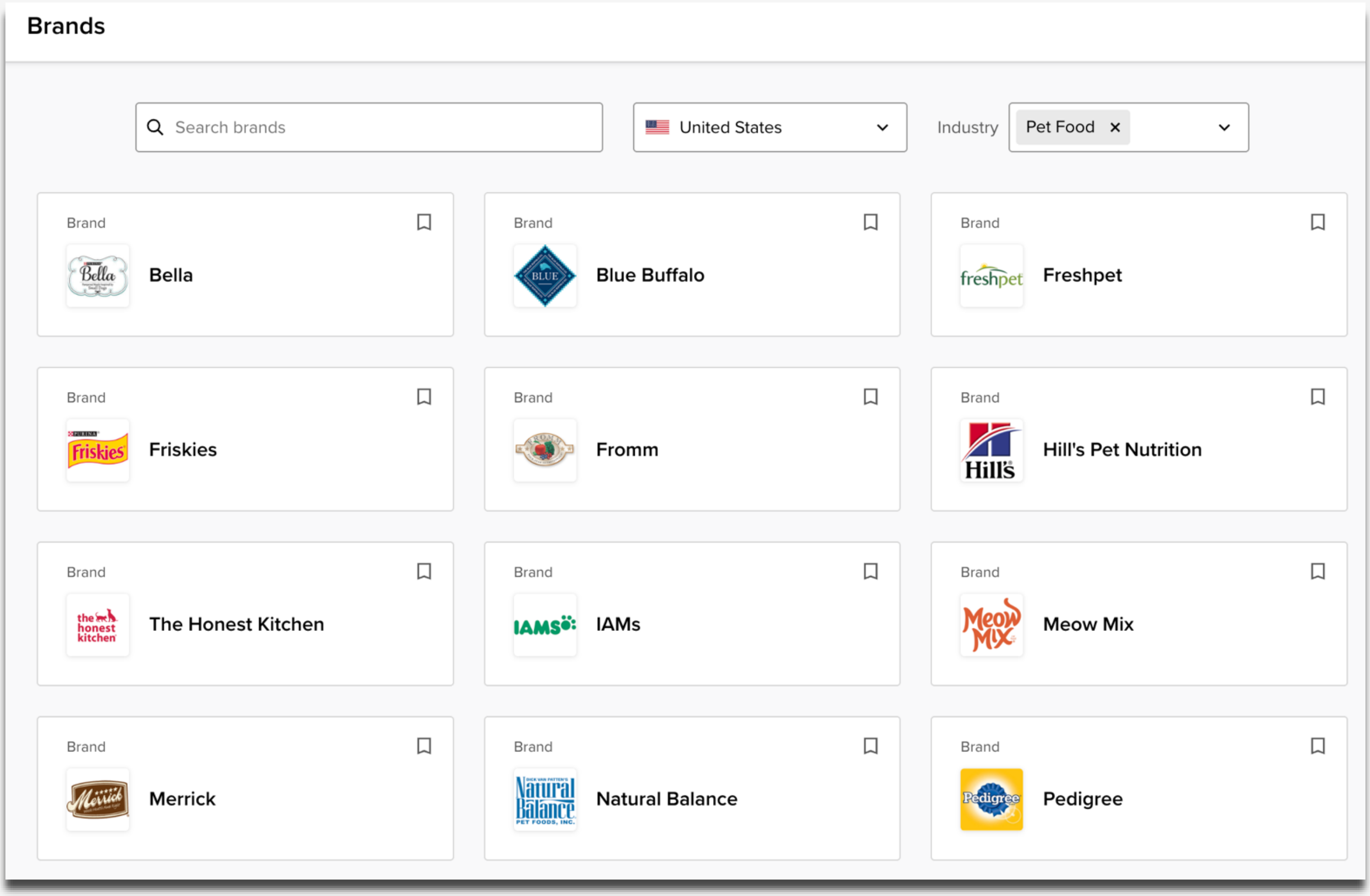
4. **Cat owners are heavier digital and social media users — particularly on niche platforms.** Cat owners over-index on Reddit (+8pp), Snapchat (+8pp), TikTok (+7pp), and Pinterest (+7pp) compared to the general population. Both groups are highly engaged online, but cat owners show stronger presence across a wider range of platforms.

5. **Both groups are highly engaged consumers.** Pet owners of both types are significantly more likely than the general population to use Amazon Prime, stream content, attend live events, and purchase through social media. Both groups show above-average spending appetite and willingness to pay for premium products.

6. **Pet brands dominate purchase consideration among owners — but Hulu is the surprise crossover.** Hulu appears in the top 12 standout brands for both dog and cat owners, underscoring that pet households are a distinctly high-value, highly engaged consumer segment well beyond the pet aisle.

Explore Brand Metrics and Audience Behaviors in the Pet Industry

Data featured in this report comes from [Morning Consult Intelligence](), the Always On Consumer Signal. The platform helps you understand your audience, brand, competitors and market in a way traditional research companies can't.



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1.

Pet Owner Demographics

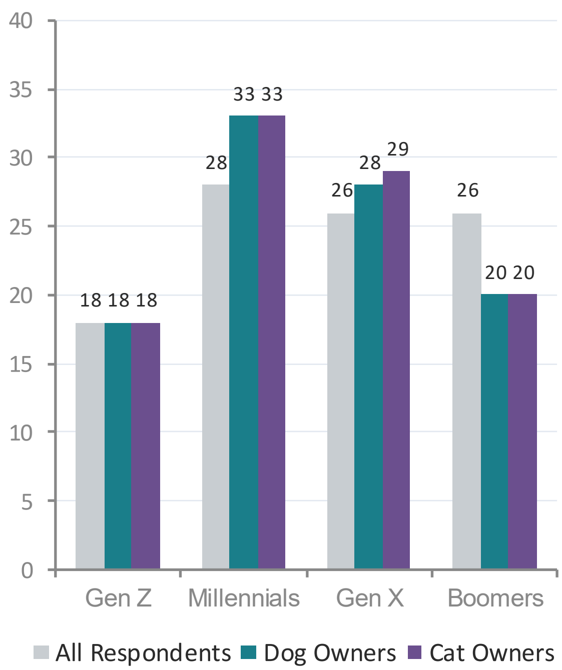
Who owns pets in America?

The Core Demographics of Pet Owners

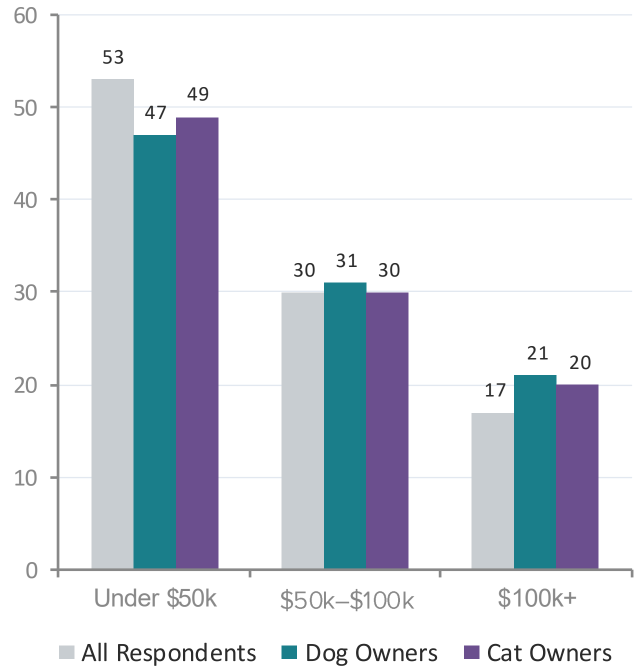
Both dog and cat owners skew younger, wealthier, and whiter than the overall U.S. adult population. Millennials are overrepresented in both groups, while Boomers lag behind. On income, both audiences over-index at $100k+.

Dog owners are slightly more income-diverse (+4pp at $100k+) while cat owners skew more heavily White (+9pp vs. avg). Gender is nearly equal for both.

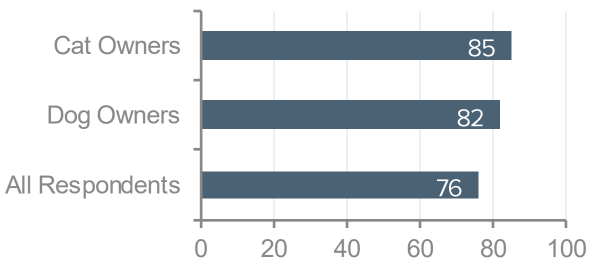
Age Distribution (% of audience)



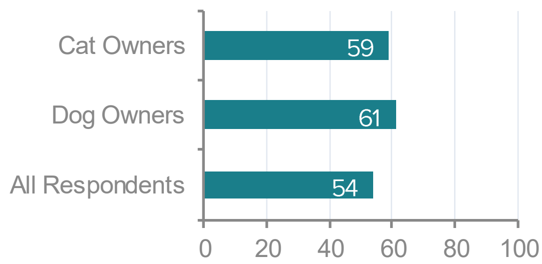
Household Income (% of audience)



Race: White (% of audience)



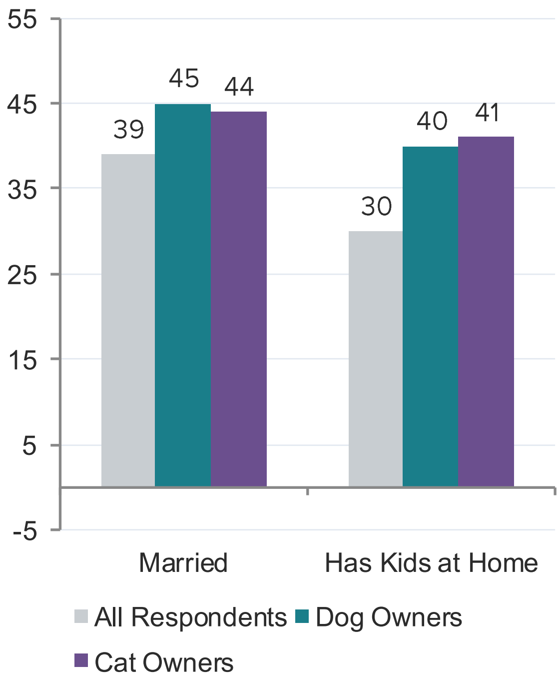
Homeowners (% of audience)



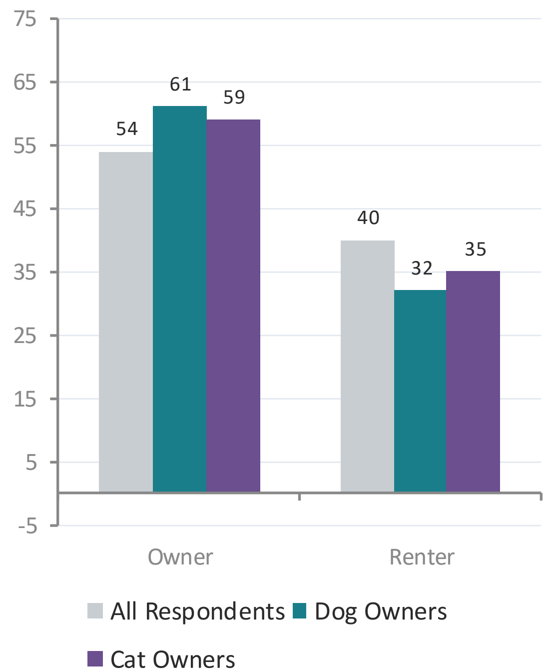
The Core Demographics of Pet Owners, Cont.

Both dog and cat owners are more likely to be married, own their homes, and have children than the general U.S. population. The data challenges the popular image of pet ownership as a substitute for family — it appears more often to be an extension of it. Dog owners skew slightly more toward homeownership and rural communities, while cat owners are modestly more urban.

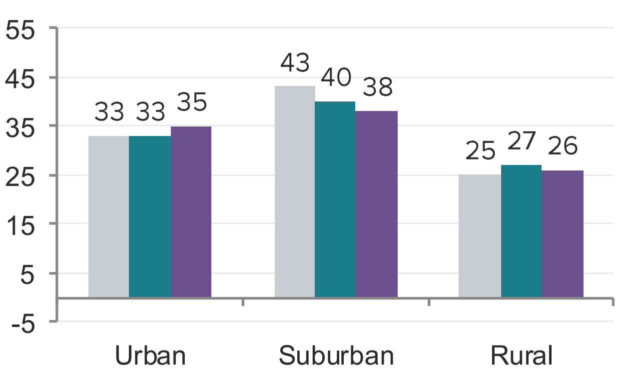
Family & Household Status (%)



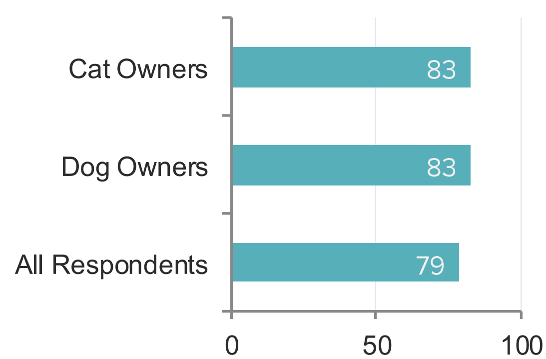
Housing Type (%)



Community Type (%)



Employed Full-Time (%)

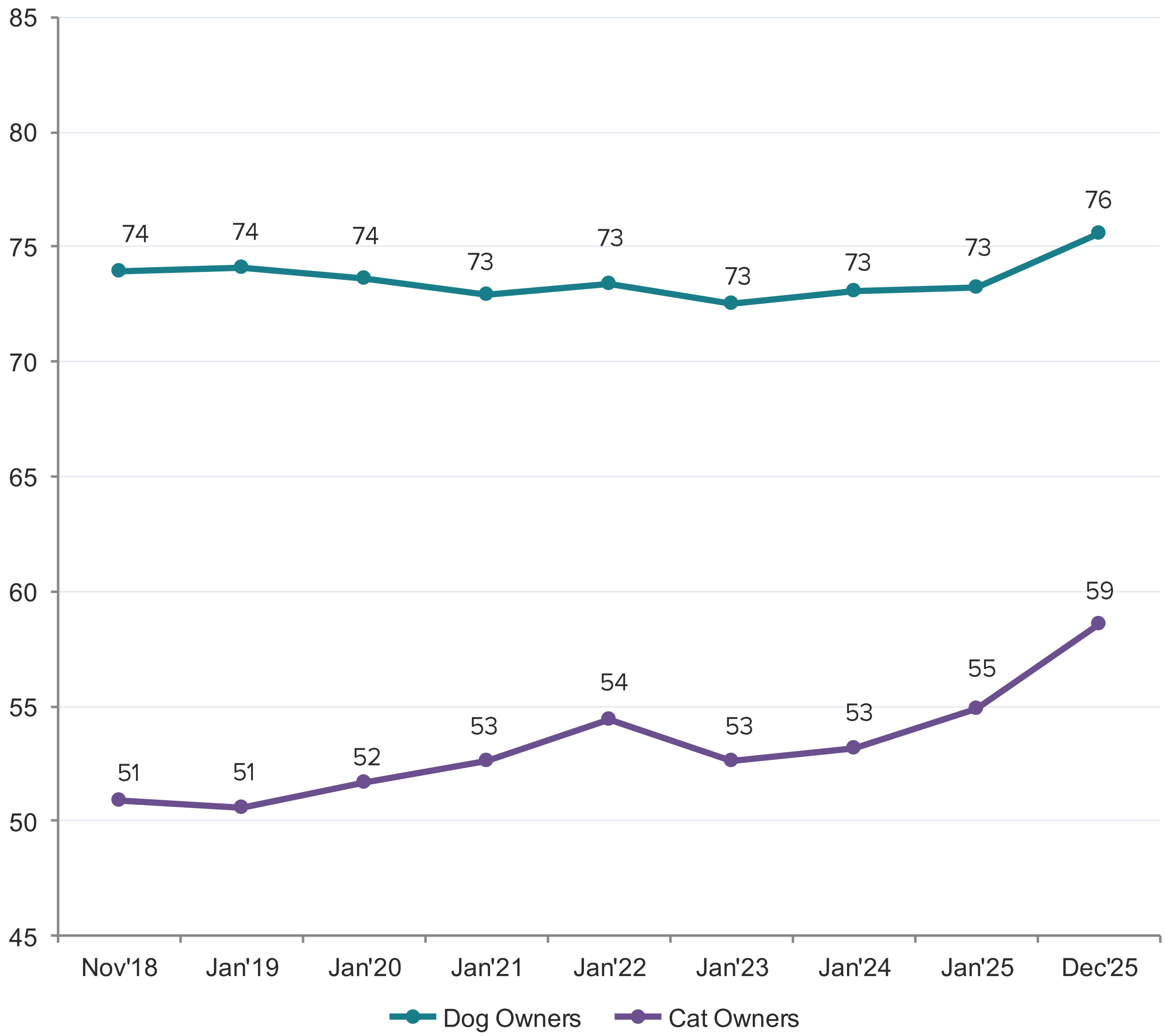


Pet Ownership Trends, 2018-2025

Dog ownership has remained remarkably stable since 2018, hovering in the low-to-mid 70s throughout. Cat ownership tells a different story: it has climbed nearly 8 percentage points — from 51% in late 2018 to 59% by year-end 2025 — reaching its highest recorded level.

Cat ownership surged during and after COVID (2020–2022), dipped slightly in 2023, then resumed a strong upward trend through 2025. Dog ownership has been more anchored — ranging only from ~72% to ~76% over 7 years.

Pet Ownership Rate: % of U.S. Adults (Annual)

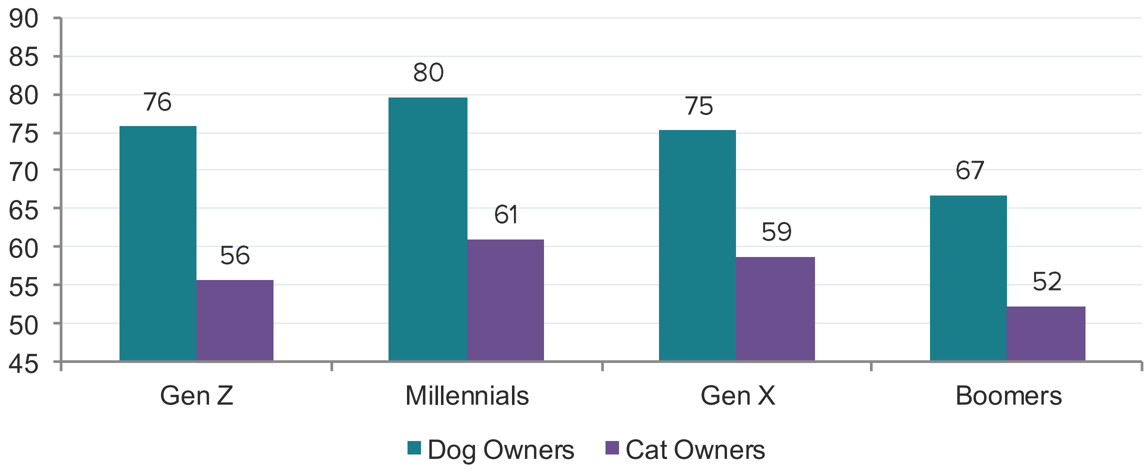


Generational Pet Ownership Patterns

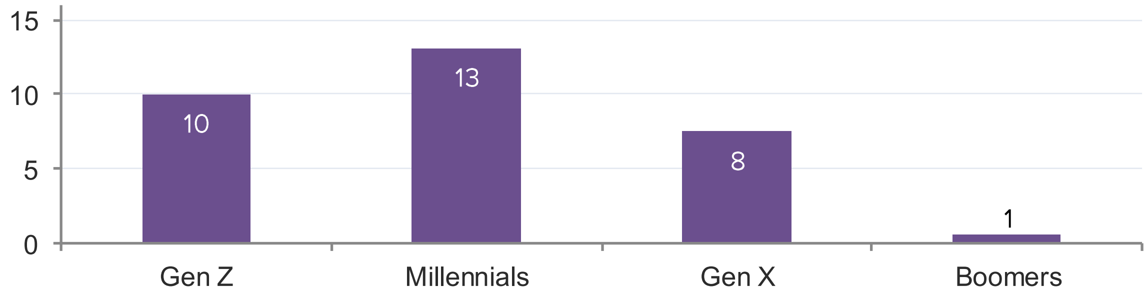
Millennials are the dominant pet-owning generation across both species, but the generational gap is noteworthy: Boomers own dogs at a rate roughly 12 points lower than Millennials, and their cat ownership lags by about 10 points. Notably, the dog-cat gap remains consistent across generations (~16–18pp), suggesting that the preference for dogs over cats is generationally stable — what differs is the overall level of pet ownership.

Cat ownership has grown the fastest among Gen Z (+10pp since 2018, from 47% to 57%) and Millennials (+13pp, from 49% to 63%). Among Boomers, dog ownership actually declined slightly (-3pp) over the same period. Dogs generally require more day-to-day care than cats, so this might be a reflection of boomers' lifestyles shifting as they age.

Ownership Rate by Generation, 2025 Full-Year Avg (%)



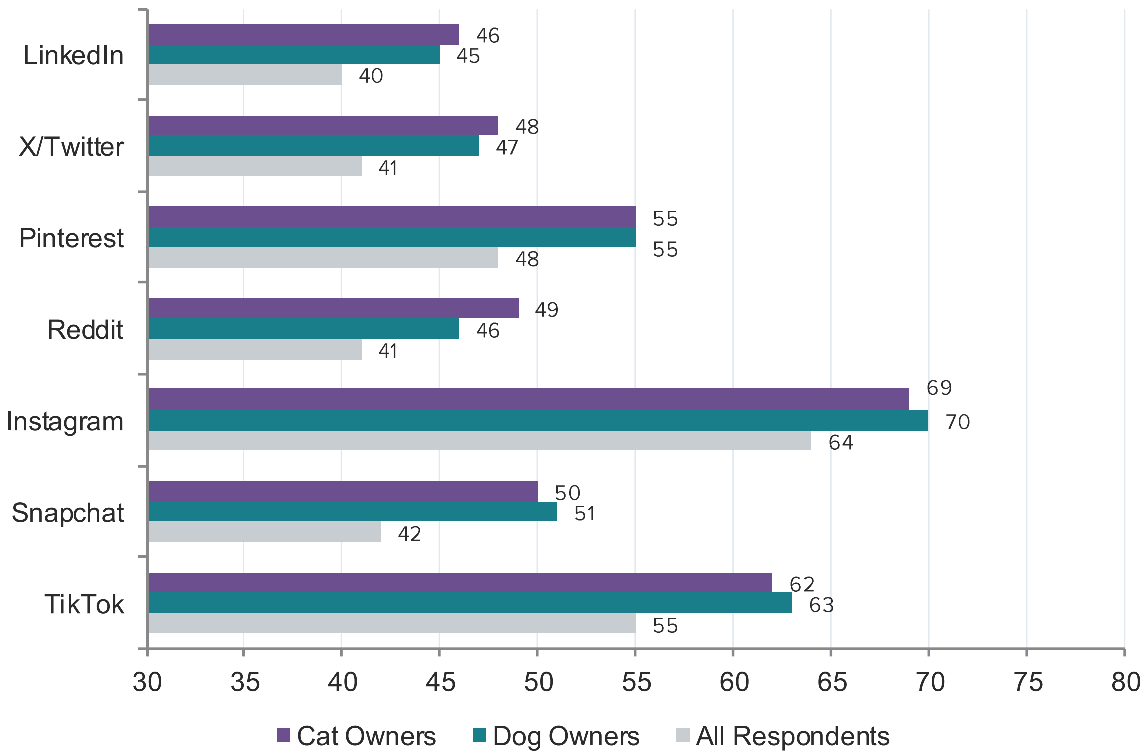
Change in Cat Ownership Since 2018 (pp)



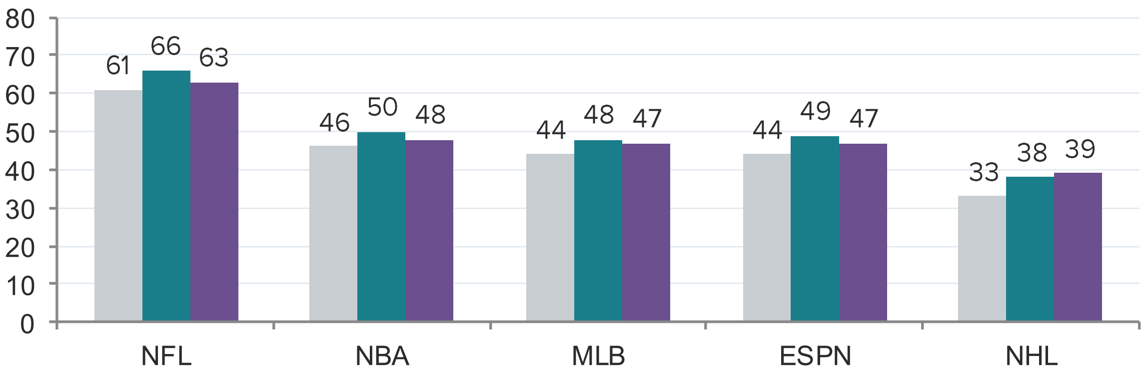
Media Habits: Cat Owners vs. Dog Owners

Both cat and dog owners are meaningfully more engaged across virtually all media channels than the average U.S. adult — making pet owners a highly attractive audience. The clearest differentiator: cat owners over-index more heavily on Reddit (+8pp) and X (+7pp), suggesting a stronger affinity for text-based, community-driven platforms. Dog owners lead on sports media, especially NFL and ESPN.

Social Media Platform Usage (% who use, 2025)



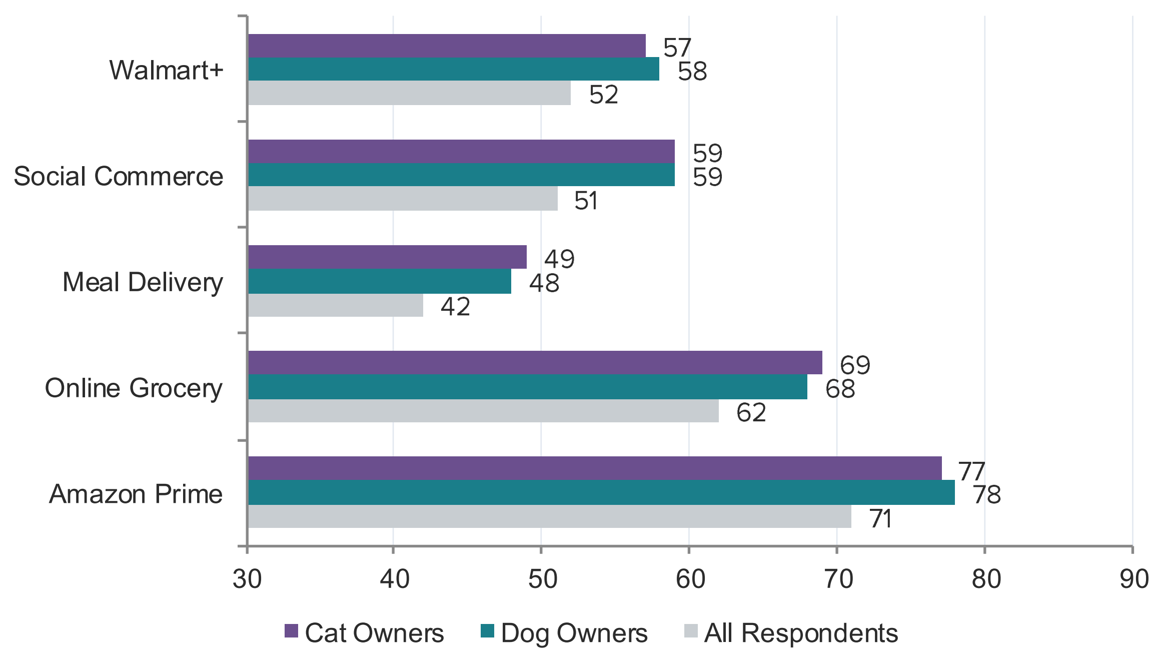
Sports Media Usage (% who watch, 2025)



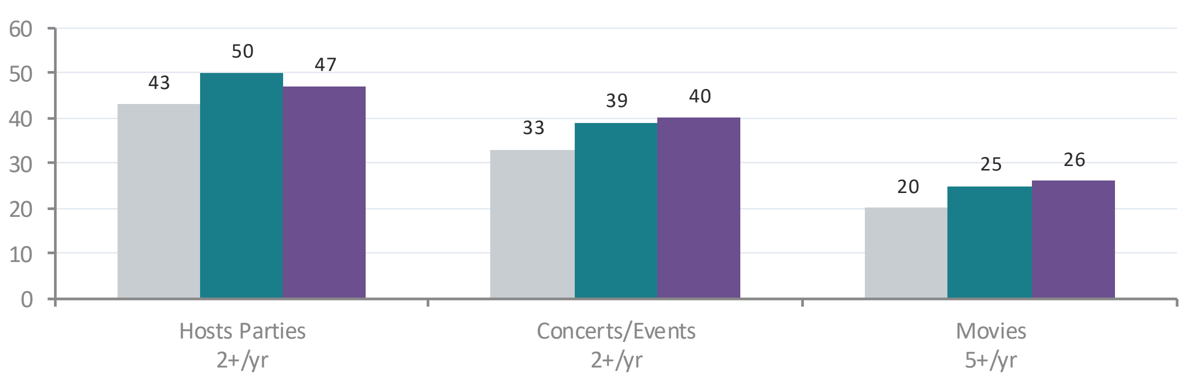
Behavioral Profile: Cat Owners vs. Dog Owners

The clearest behavioral story is not cat vs. dog — it's pet owner vs. non-owner. Both groups substantially out-pace the general population on shopping, digital commerce, and leisure spending. Dog owners show the strongest edge on hosting social gatherings (+7pp), while cat owners lead slightly on meal delivery and grocery apps. Dog owners are the most socially active group: half (50%) host parties or events at home 2+ times a year vs. 43% of all adults. Cat owners are the most frequent moviegoers — 26% attend 5+ times a year vs. 20% of the general population.

Shopping & Digital Commerce (% who engage, 2025)



Entertainment & Leisure (varied thresholds, 2025)



2.

Brand Data on Pet Owners

Total Purchase Consideration scores across pet brands

among dog owners, cat owners, and key generational segments

Pet Brand Purchase Consideration Rankings by Audience Segment

#	All Respondents	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers	Dog Owners	Cat Owners
1	#1 PetSmart 41.8	#1 PetSmart 40.3	#1 PetSmart 47.4	#1 PetSmart 45.6	#1 Purina 34.5	#1 PetSmart 55.3	#1 PetSmart 53.1
2	#2 Petco 38.9	#2 Petco 37.7	#2 Petco 44.4	#2 Petco 43.6	#2 PetSmart 34.0	#2 Petco 50.4	#2 Purina 50.2
3	#3 Chewy.com 36.0	#3 Chewy.com 32.3	#3 Chewy.com 40.1	#3 Purina 41.3	#3 Chewy.com 31.6	#3 Chewy.com 47.7	#3 Petco 49.9
4	#4 Purina 34.9	#4 Purina 24.0	#4 Purina 37.0	#4 Chewy.com 39.7	#4 Petco 30.6	#4 Purina 45.0	#4 Friskies 48.2
5	#5 Purina ONE 30.5	#5 Pet Supplies Plus 23.7	#5 Purina ONE 34.7	#5 Purina ONE 35.9	#5 Milk-Bone 27.9	#5 Milk-Bone 43.1	#5 Chewy.com 47.9
6	#6 Milk-Bone 28.5	#6 Purina ONE 21.9	#6 Pedigree 33.4	#6 Milk-Bone 33.3	#6 Purina ONE 27.4	#6 Purina ONE 40.8	#6 Meow Mix 46.4
7	#7 Friskies 26.7	#7 Meow Mix 21.8	#7 Milk-Bone 30.7	#7 Pedigree 32.6	#7 Friskies 24.4	#7 Pedigree 38.6	#7 Purina ONE 44.2
8	#8 Pedigree 26.4	#8 Milk-Bone 20.6	#8 Friskies 30.1	#8 Friskies 31.1	#8 Meow Mix 20.2	#8 Blue Buffalo 32.2	#8 Milk-Bone 33.2
9	#9 Meow Mix 25.4	#9 Pedigree 20.2	#9 Pet Supplies Plus 29.8	#9 Meow Mix 29.6	#9 Blue Buffalo 18.6	#9 Pet Supplies Plus 30.1	#9 Pedigree 33.0
10	#10 Blue Buffalo 23.4	#10 Friskies 19.5	#10 Meow Mix 29.4	#10 Freshpet 26.5	#10 Pedigree 17.6	#10 Friskies 29.9	#10 Sheba Cat Food 32.3

Pet Retailer   Cat-Specific Food Brand   Cross-Species Brand

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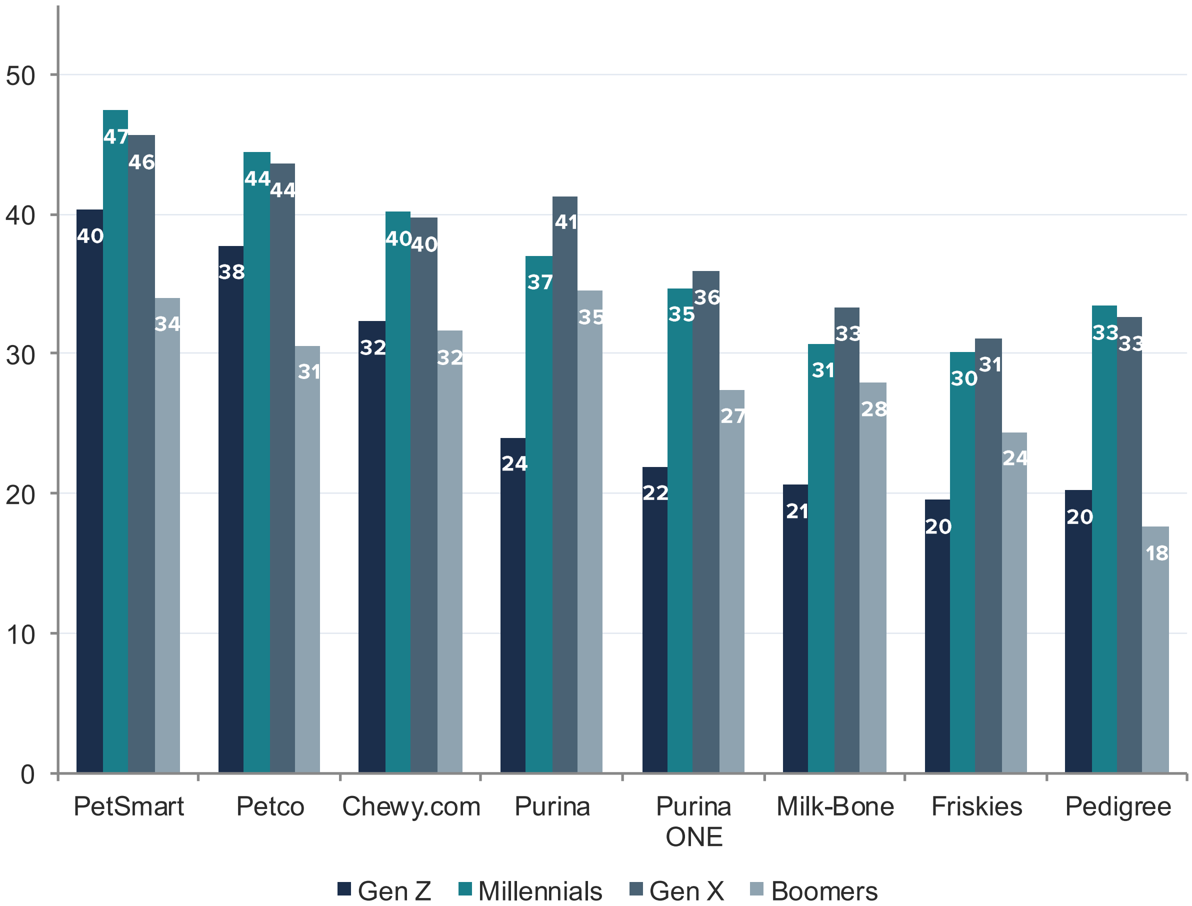
Millennials Lead on Purchase Consideration Across Major Pet Brands

Gen Z scores lower than all other generations on almost every pet brand — reflecting a combination of lower purchasing power and less established brand relationships. Millennials are the most engaged generation, leading or tying for the top across every brand. Boomers punch above their weight on food staples like Purina and Chewy, but trail badly on newer retail formats.

Pedigree has the sharpest generational drop: Boomers score it 17.6, while Millennials score it 33.4 — a 16pp gap. Purina also splits sharply: Gen Z (24.0) vs. Gen X (41.3), a 17pp gap likely reflecting Purina's legacy positioning that resonates more with older buyers.

Total Purchase Consideration by Generation — Top 8 Brands

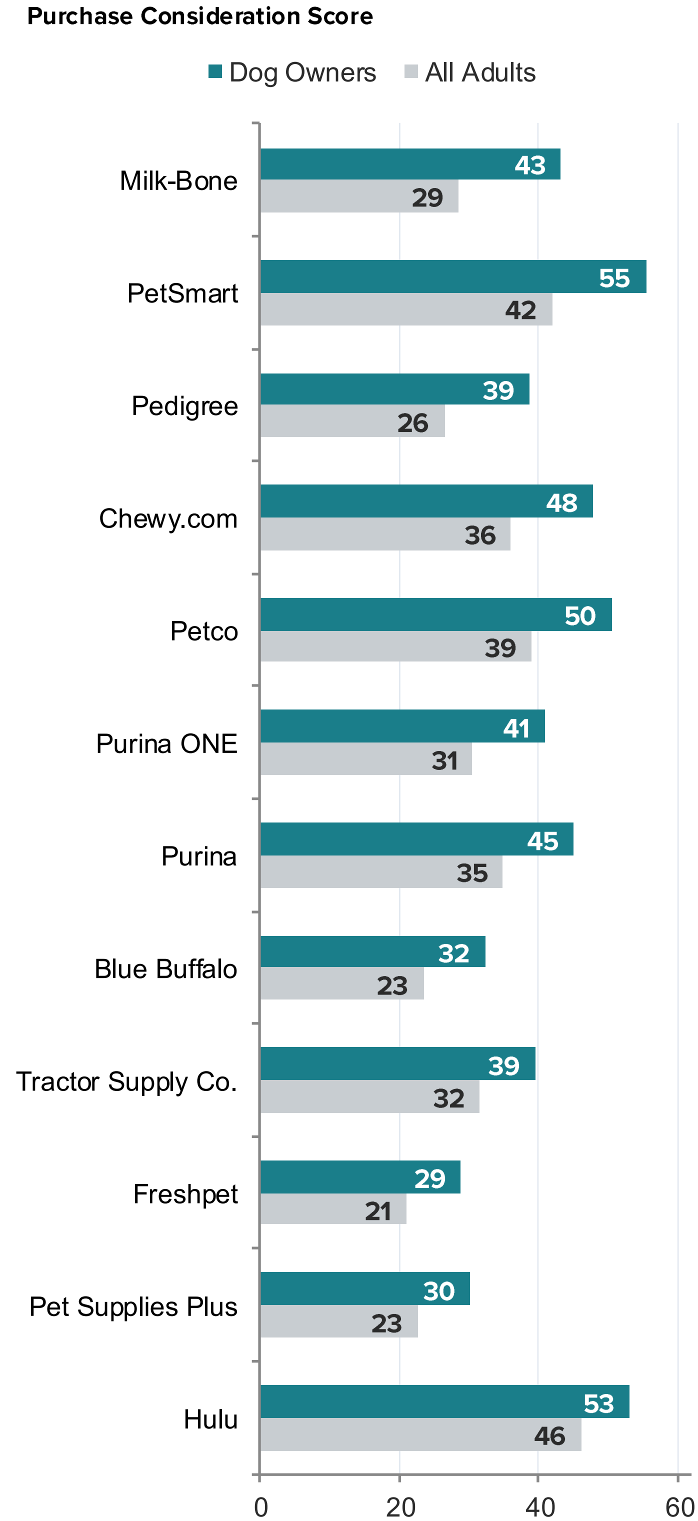


Standout Brands for Dog Owners

This slide ranks the brands with the highest purchasing consideration amongst dog owners relative to the general population.

Dog owners show meaningfully higher purchase consideration across all major pet retail and food brands compared to the general population. Milk-Bone leads with the largest lift at +14.6pp, reflecting its tight association with dog ownership. Notably, Hulu and Tractor Supply Company make the top 12 — revealing crossover affinity beyond the pet category.

The top 7 dog standouts are all dedicated pet brands or retailers. Hulu (+7.0pp) is the highest-ranking non-pet brand — suggesting dog owners are significantly more active streaming consumers. Tractor Supply Company (+7.9pp) reflects the strong rural/suburban skew among dog owners.

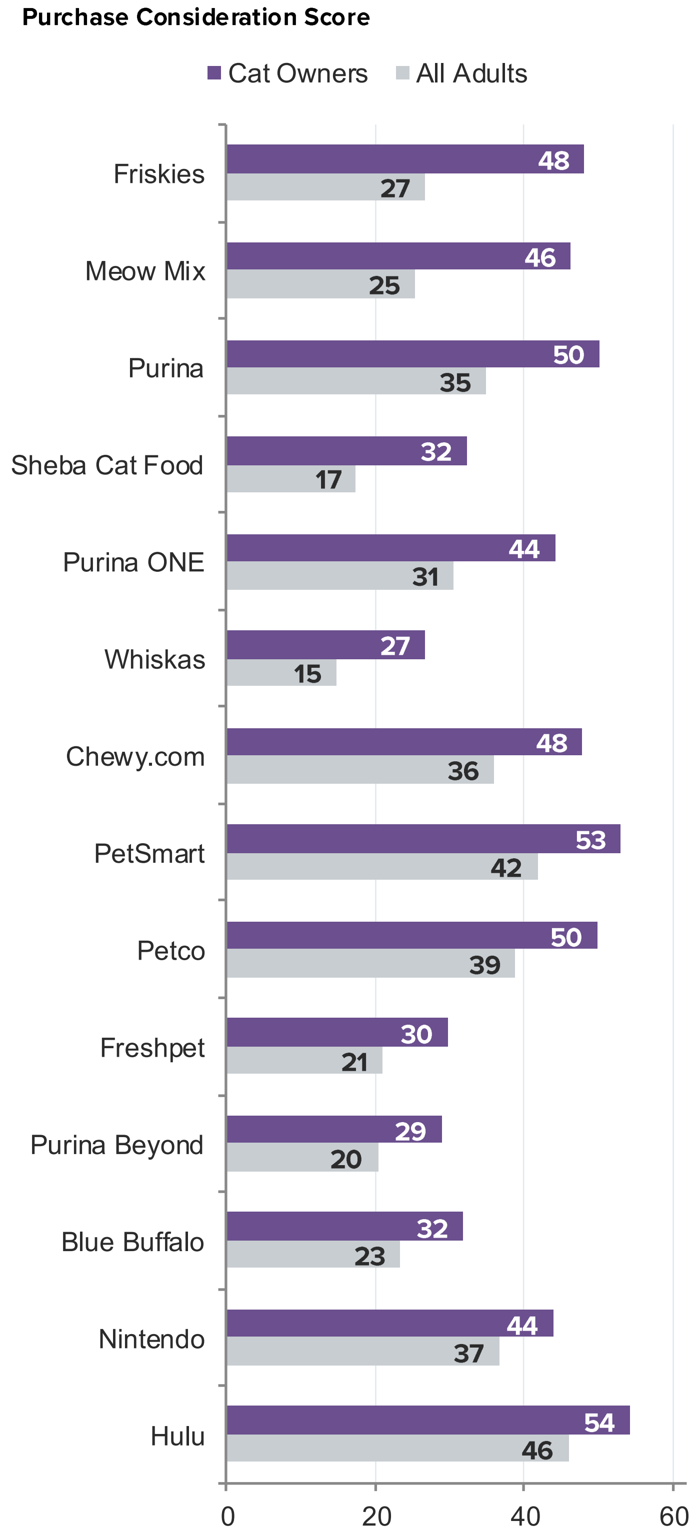


Standout Brands for Cat Owners

This slide ranks the brands with the highest purchasing consideration amongst cat owners relative to the general population.

Cat owners show even more dramatic brand lift for species-specific food brands. Friskies and Meow Mix each jump more than 21pp above the general population — the two biggest lifts in the entire dataset. Hulu again makes the top 12, alongside Nintendo, suggesting cat owners over-index on entertainment and gaming.

The cat-specific lift story is more concentrated than dogs — Friskies (+21.5pp) and Meow Mix (+21.0pp) dwarf every other brand in the dataset. These brands are essentially invisible to non-cat owners, then leap to near-top-10 status with cat households. Hulu (+8.3pp) is the top non-pet crossover, beating even Netflix and Amazon Prime.



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