

March 2007

Gulf Coast Pet Research Project: Phase 1



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES®**

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Purpose

- What did the hurricane devastation reveal about the status of dogs and cats in the Gulf Coast?
- Why don't people choose to adopt from shelters and spay or neuter their animals?
- How should we refine our messages and deliver them to influence spay/neuter and adoption decisions?
- With focused, aggressive investments in spay/neuter assistance and adoption outreach, what results are possible?
- Can a social marketing campaign be launched to change social behavior related to companion animal care?
- Can we develop a sound approach to social marketing that can be replicated in other regions?



Gulf Coast Pet Research Project: Phase 1

National Partners / Collaborators



Key Local Partners / Collaborators

- Louisiana SPCA
- Humane Society of South Mississippi
- Spay Louisiana
- Mississippi Spay and Neuter
- Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine
- Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine
- Southern Animal Foundation
- Humane Alliance



Strategy and Research Team

- **The HSUS – Economic Research Section** – providing economic and marketing research direction and support for HSUS programs, campaigns, litigation and legislative priorities.
- **Priority Ventures Group** – for more than 20 years helping both non-profit and for-profit organizations get better results using proven strategic planning and marketing approaches. Clients include The HSUS, the ASPCA, PetSmart Charities, United Animal Nations, Farm Sanctuary and the National Council for Animal Protection.
- **Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research** – for 25 years, helping major organizations and their leaders improve their understanding of key audiences and strengthening the effectiveness of their communications and campaigns. Clients include Campaign to Ban Landmines, Int’l Committee of the Red Cross, NRDC and NPR.



Research Planning and Implementation

Phase 1 (October – December 2006)

- Determine prevalence of pet ownership in LA and MS (telephone survey)
- Assess LA/MS baseline pet overpopulation problem (develop shelter census)
- Identify basic attitudes toward spay/neuter and adoption (telephone survey)
- Develop target audiences for qualitative research
- Review available research on adoption and spay/neuter marketing
- Engage local stakeholders including shelters, rescue & S/N orgs (interviews)



Research Planning and Implementation

Phase 2 (January – September 2007)

- Assess LA/MS baseline pet overpopulation problem (conduct shelter census)
- Lead in-depth focus groups with target audiences (in-person)
- Conduct telephone survey with targeted audiences
- Conduct targeted veterinary interviews (telephone)
- Develop and launch veterinary survey (mail/web survey)
- Develop social marketing strategy
- Create blueprint for future research efforts



Spay/Neuter: National Research

Selected Sources Reviewed

1. AVMA, *U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook* (2002)
2. APPMA, *APPMA's National Pet Owners Study* (2002-2003, 2004-2005)
3. Purina, *The State of the American Pet* (2000)
4. FIREPAW, *Sterilization and Contextual Factors of Abandonment: A Study of Pet Overpopulation*
5. FIREPAW, *Attitudes and Perceptions Regarding Pet Adoption*
6. USDA, Animal Welfare Information Center, Information Resources on Spay/Neuter Cats, Dogs and Related Wildlife, <http://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/pubs/SpayNeuter/pet.htm>
7. Spay/USA, spayusa.org
8. The Pet Savers Foundation, petsavers.org
9. National Council on Pet Population Study & Policy, petpopulation.org
10. Humane Research Council
11. HSUS, *Companion Animal Demographics in the United States: a Historical Perspective*, The State of the Animals II: 2003; The State of the Animals: 2001



Selected Sources Reviewed (continued)

12. HSUS, Overcoming Pet Over-Population, N. Peterson (unpublished)
13. HSUS survey of dog and cat owners, December 2004 (unpublished)
14. Birth and Death Rate Estimates of Cats and Dogs in U.S Households and Related Factors, JAAWS, 7 (4)
15. "Reliability of a telephone questionnaire on cat ownership patterns and pet owner demographics evaluation in a community," thesis provided by Dr. Margaret R. Slater
16. Merritt Clifton on estimating feral populations, No More Homeless Pets forum, Best Friends and Wall Street Journal forum
17. "Presentation to AHA/CFA Feral Cat Conference," Karen Johnson, National Pet Alliance, August 10, 1996
18. "The Top Ten Things We've Learned from New Hampshire's Spay / Neuter Program," Peter Mars
19. "Summary of the Attitudinal Survey for the Big Fix Rig in Mississippi" and "Summary for the Attitudinal Survey Supplement to the SPAN Voucher," IFAW



Why people do not spay/neuter

- About 30% of dogs and 15% of cats are not altered across Nat'l surveys
 - “Haven’t bothered to do it yet” leading reason per Purina survey
 - Other reasons for dogs are breeding and age. Age and cost come after “haven’t bothered” for cats.
 - Similar 27% for dogs and 14% for cats from APPMA

	Total	Dog	Cat
Haven't altered pet...	24%	34%	15%
Haven't bothered yet	29%	30%	27%
Want to breed	16%	21%	5%
It's too young	15%	13%	20%
Can't afford it	9%	5%	18%
Cruel to animal	5%	5%	5%
It's not natural	4%	3%	7%
Other	15%	16%	12%
Not sure	7%	6%	9%

Source: *The State of the American Pet*, Purina, 2000, APPMA 2004-2005



Study of Upstate New York

- Respondents who had not Spayed/Neutered pets were more likely to...
 - *Be male*
 - *Have lower level of education*
 - *Have paid less for the animal*
 - *Live in single family home*
- “Desire to breed” increased as a factor with education level
- “No need / indoor dog” increased as reason for those with high school or less education

] - *Best predictors of S/N*

Source: Sterilization and Contextual Factors of Abandonment, FIREPAW



Adoption: National Research

Gulf Coast Pet Research Project: Phase 1

Sources of Pets

- About 20% of pets are adopted from shelters and rescues, with majority taken in from other people or as strays

	DOGS National (Purina 2000)	DOGS National (APPMA 2004)	CATS National (Purina 2000)	CATS National (APPMA 2004)
Family, friend, neighbor	39%	32%	45%	43%
Breeder	25%	31%	4%	3%
Shelter	17%	21%	18%	17%
Found/stray	5%	9%	24%	34%
Pet store	8%	6%	6%	4%
Newspaper	--	13%	--	8%
From own pet	--	5%	--	15%
Other	6%	--	3%	--

Sources: *The State of the American Pet, Purina, 2000, 2004 APPMA National Pet Owners Survey (Note: APPMA allowed multiple responses so sum exceeds 100%)*



Reasons Pets “Purchased”

- Desire for specific breed dominated reasons not to adopt
 - Motivations may include predicting what dog will be like as adult and / or replacing prior pet

Why Dog “Buyers” Chose Not to Adopt

	General*	Total*
Wanted specific breeds/qualities	73%	68%
Visited a shelter, but couldn't find type wanted	13%	15%
Impulse decision	13%	15%
Aware of option, but did not consider at time of purchase	10%	12%
Visiting shelter too unpleasant	7%	11%

**“General” is sample of random residents. Total population includes larger group from dog licensing lists. “Buyer” is person who did not get dog from shelter / rescue and did not get dog for free. Other answers include convenience, don't want used dog/concerned about quality, bad experience with shelter, shelter dogs too expensive.*

Sources: Attitudes and Perceptions Regarding Pet Adoption, FIREPAW, presented 2003



Why Not Adopt?

- National HSUS survey found more disparate reasons for not adopting

If would not adopt from shelter / humane society / pound (49%)		
Breed-related	Want a purebred animal	6%
	Want a young animal	4%
	Get my pets from a breeder	4%
Concerns about the animal	Pet scarred from bad experiences, neglect	5%
	Pet violent or ill-tempered	4%
	Safety concerns for animals	3%
	They might be sick / They usually are sick	3%
	Safety concerns for my family	1%
	No information on background	6%
	Cost / They should give them away for free	5%
	Bad experience: personal, friends or relatives	3%
	Bad stories in the media	1%
	No reasons	7%
	Don't know / No response	14%

Note: Other answers included would adopt from shelter/ humane society/ pound, buy from pet store, other.

Source: HSUS survey, December 2004



Focus: Existing Gulf Region Data

Pet Ownership Rates

Above average % of homes with dogs and below average % with cats for LA and MS vs. U.S.

Ownership by Household (HH) - 2001

	% with Dogs	Avg. per HH	% with Cats	Avg. per HH
U.S.	36%	1.6	32%	2.1
East South Central	41%	1.8	30%	2.2
Mississippi	43%	1.9	26%	2.2
West South Central	44%	1.8	32%	2.2
Louisiana	43%	1.7	26%	2.2

Notes

East South Central includes MS, AL, KY and TN. West South Central includes LA, AR, TX and OK.

APPMA survey for 2004 estimates U.S. HHs with dogs as 39% and cats as 34%, average of 1.7 dogs and 2.4 cats per HH

Sources: U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook, AVMA. Based on 54,000 complete mail surveys; APPMA's National Pet Owners Study, 30,000 mail surveys



Pet Population in Homes

- About 50% more pets in homes estimated in LA vs. MS prior to Katrina due to human population

Pet Population Estimates (000) - 2001

	Dogs	Cats	Total
Mississippi 2.8 MM human population in 2000	857	601	1,458
Louisiana 4.5 MM human population in 2000	1,222	951	2,173

Sources: *U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook*, AVMA;
The State of the Animals II: 2003, HSUS;
www.easidemographics.com



Human Demographics

- Mississippi and Louisiana are the poorest states in the U.S. and have the highest concentration of African-Americans

	U.S.	LA	MS
% below poverty (state+DC rank)	13%	19% (2)	22% (1)
% black alone	11%	33% (3)	37% (2)
Bachelor's degree or higher	27%	22% (45)	20% (49)
Men per 100 women	96.3	92.4 (49)	92.2 (50)

Source: Statemaster.com



Background Research: Summary

Spay / Neuter - National

- Estimates of unaltered animals at 27-33% for dogs and 14-18% for cats in national surveys^{2,3}
- Males with lower education less likely to S/N⁴
 - Also non-white (although less likely to be pet owners overall), not current owners, live in single family homes and paid less for animal
- Large percent noting “haven’t bothered yet” in Purina survey may be response bias or may indicate opportunity to activate people with positive attitudes



Background Research: Summary (cont'd.)

Adoption - National

- Of those not looking to shelters and rescues for adoption, key reason was seeking specific types (breeds, age, etc.)⁵

Messaging

- Messaging on overpopulation and euthanasia appears to increase both adoptions and S/N ^{3,4,5}
- Main benefit from having animals in homes is companionship^{2,3,5}



Background Research: Outcomes

- ✓ Developed baseline against which to compare Gulf region results
- ✓ Worded some survey questions and responses to facilitate comparison to national benchmarks
- ✓ Added questions such as prevalence of litters, why people would not adopt from a shelter
- ✓ Surfaced potential issues to address with shelters such as perceptions on purebreds, pediatric S/N, etc.
- ✓ Identified potential issues for phase 2 public focus groups, pending confirmation after survey



Gulf State Pet Ownership Inventory

Methodology

- Survey
 - 779 Pet Owners in Louisiana and Mississippi
 - Random digit dial telephone survey
 - Additional cell phone sample in Orleans and Jefferson parish
 - 620 Dog Owners (Respondents who indicated that they have one or more dogs in their household)
 - 385 Cat Owners (Respondents who indicated that they have one or more cats in their household, are currently feeding one or more cats, or have both)



Key Findings from the Survey

Key Findings

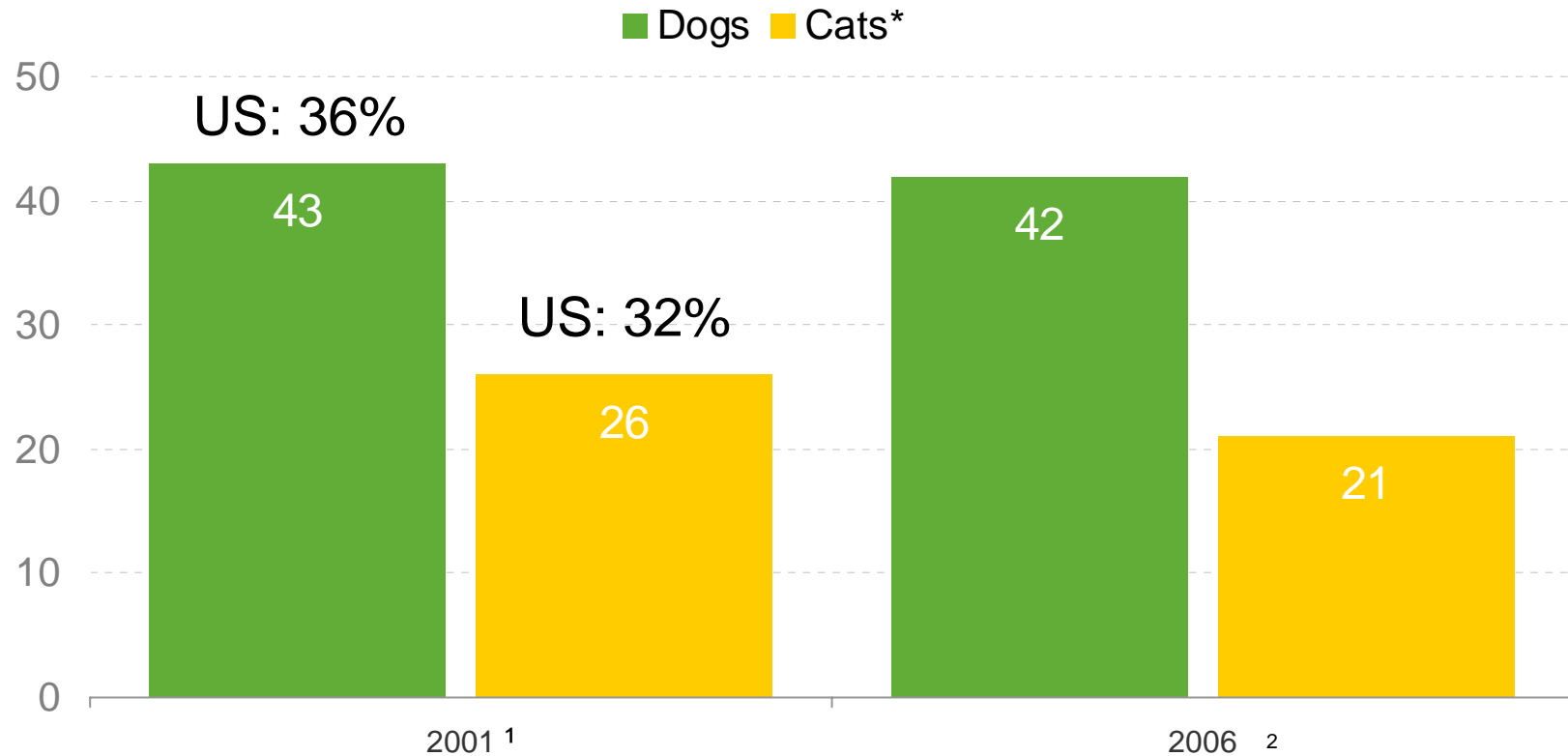
- Prevalence of dog ownership, relative to the population, is unchanged since Katrina/Rita.
- Cat ownership shows some evidence of change, with the prevalence dropping slightly.
- Gulf area residents are more likely to own dogs than cats.
- Survey results show high unaltered rates - over half of dogs in households, and about one quarter of cats, are not spayed or neutered.
- Attitudes differ somewhat toward spay/neuter in cats versus dogs.
 - Dog owners have clear intentions why they don't alter their animals (want to keep options open, want to breed).
 - Cat owners are less intentional – most simply have not done so and do not know why.
- Few people get their pets from shelters.



Prevalence and Key Demographics

Gulf Coast Pet Research Project: Phase 1

Prevalence of LA & MS household pet ownership: largely unchanged



* Includes owners with household cats

¹ U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook, AVMA; APPMA's National Pet Owners Study

² These estimates are drawn from the incidence of pet ownership derived from the survey screening process. They were not based on a census of the entire population and may not be wholly representative.



Gulf Coast Pet Research Project: Phase 1

No change in average pets in household for dogs; some evidence for cats

	2001 ¹			2006	
	U.S.	Louisiana	Mississippi	Louisiana	Mississippi
Total	-	-	-	2.3	2.5
Dogs	1.6	1.7	1.9	1.6	1.9
Cats*	2.1	2.2	2.2	1.9	1.9

* Includes owners with household cats

¹ U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook, AVMA; APPMA's National Pet Owners Study
Averages are for dog or cat owning households, i.e. if household has dogs, they have on average 1.6 dogs.



Available demographics

Among the demographics collected from telephone survey respondents:

- Gender
- Age
- Race
- Children
- Marital status
- Church attendance
- Education
- Income

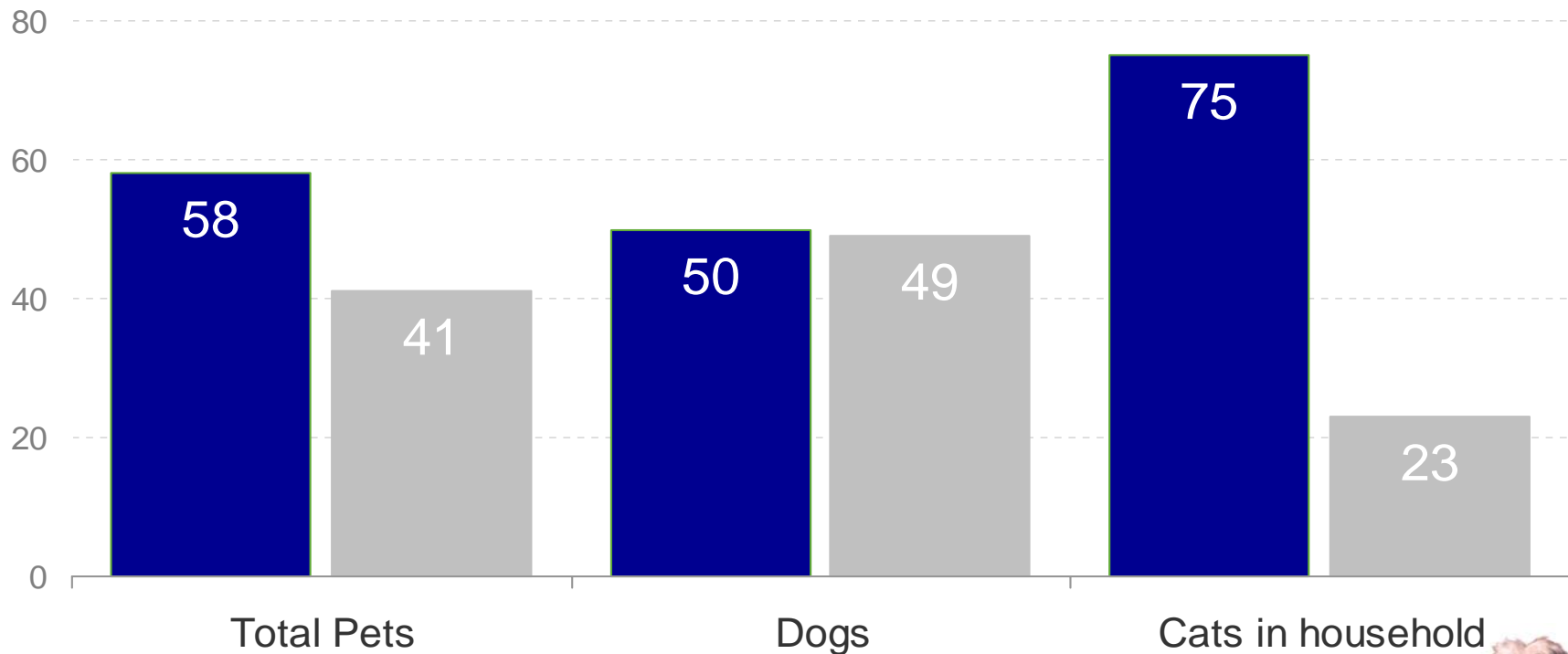


Spay/Neuter

Cats more likely to be spayed/neutered than dogs

"Is your [dog/cat] spayed, neutered, or fixed so it can't have [puppies/kittens], or are you not sure?"

■ Spayed or Neutered ■ Not Spayed or Neutered



** Percent of dogs and cats on which we collected data (i.e. up to five pets per household)*



Why household (HH) estimates?

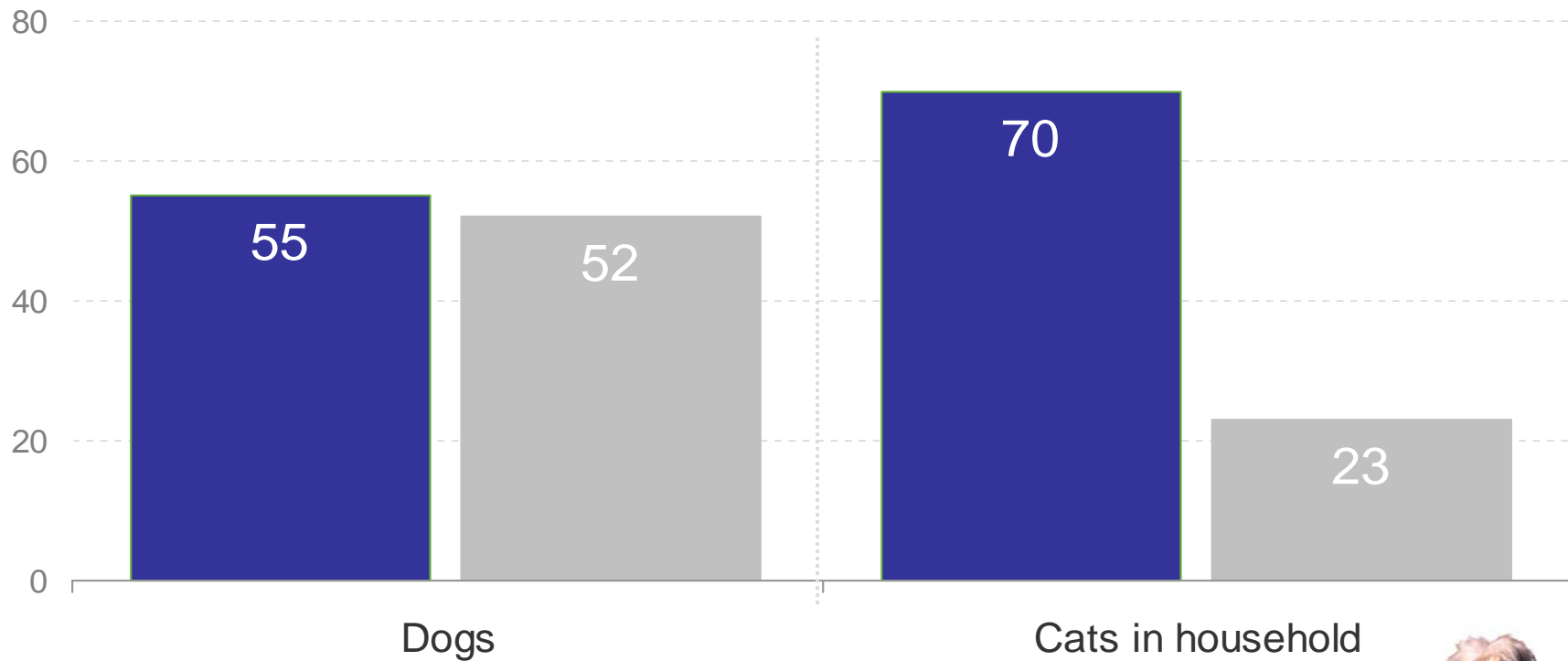
- Remaining statistics are at household level.
- Data on households with dogs presented separately from data on households with cats.
 - “Percent of dog-owning or cat-owning households with at least one pet who fits the criteria”
 - Because households may have multiple pets, some which fit the criteria, and some which do not, numbers will not sum to 100% (e.g. a household that has one spayed dog and one unaltered dog will simultaneously be a household with at least one spayed dog *and* be a household with at least one unaltered dog).
- Respondents make decisions to spay or neuter for all pets in the household.
- Attitudes toward spay/neuter held at level of respondent, rather than pet, and same set of attitudes will apply to each pet in the household.



Cats in HH more likely to be spayed/neutered than dogs in HH

Percentage of households with at least one spayed or neutered pet, by pet

■ Spayed or Neutered ■ Not Spayed or Neutered

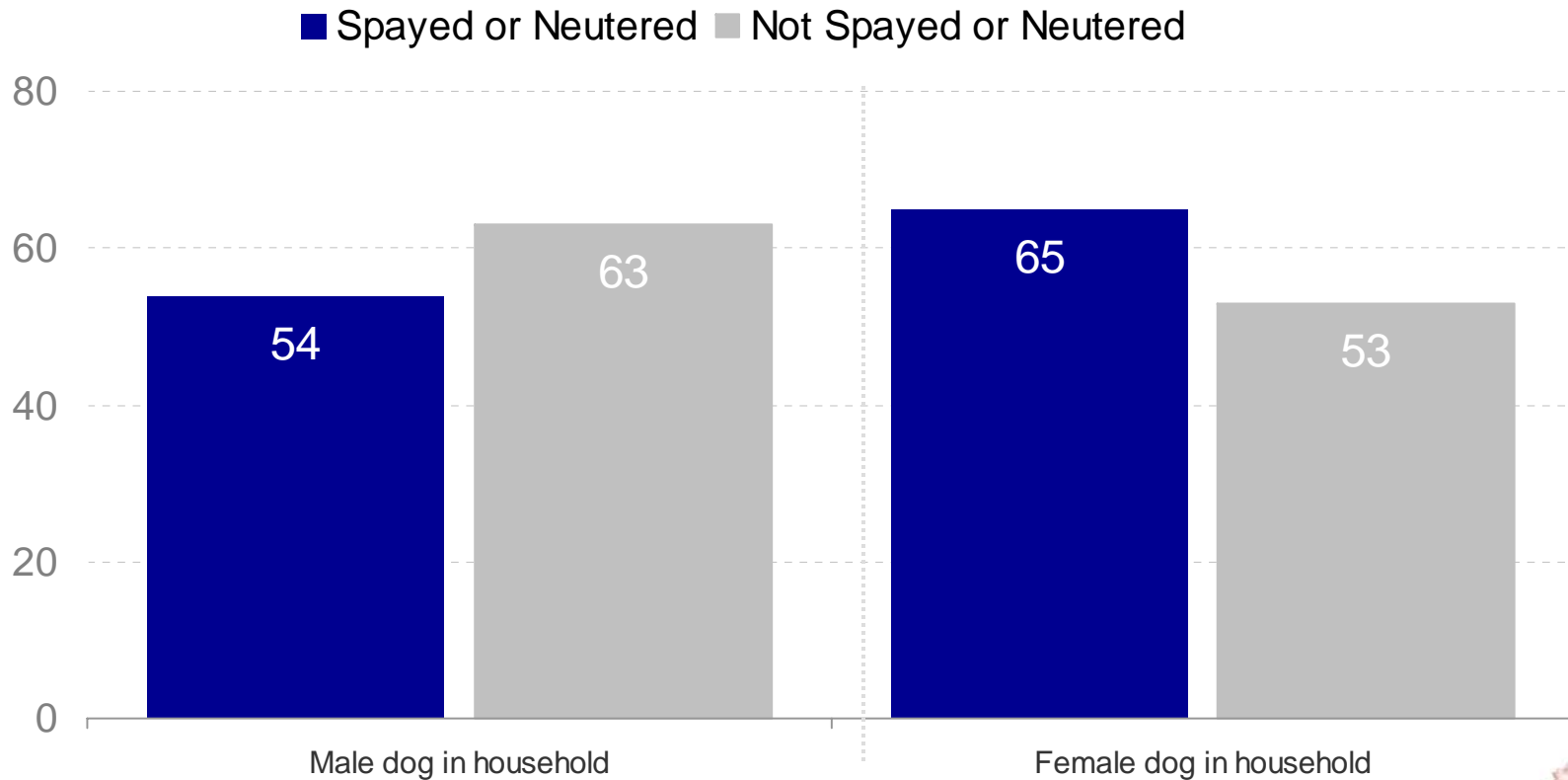


* Percent of dog-owning or cat-owning households with at least one pet who fits the criteria (will sum to more than 100%)



Female dogs more likely to be spayed/neutered than male dogs

Percent of households with at least one dog spayed or neutered, by sex of dog

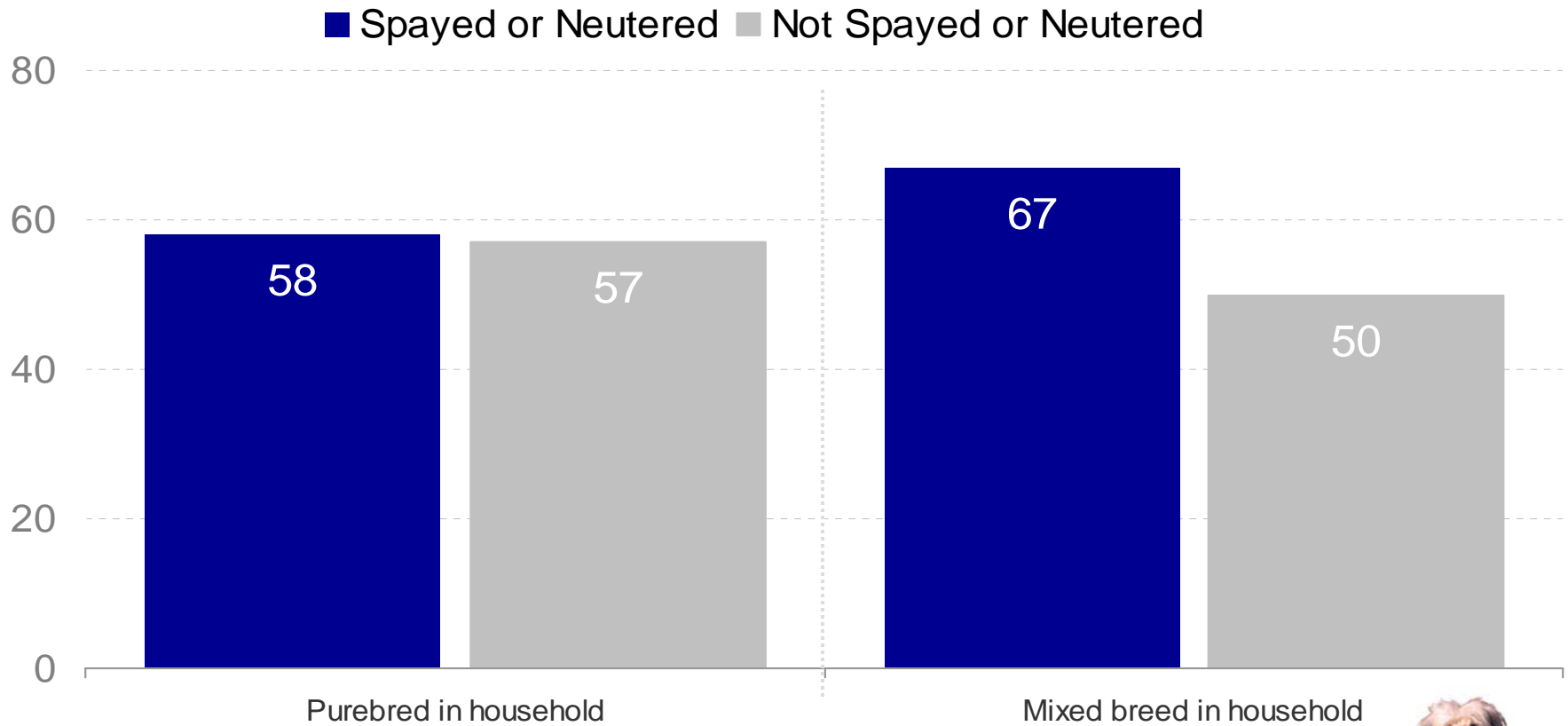


** Percent of dog-owning households with at least one dog who fits the criteria*



Mixed breed dogs more likely to be spayed/neutered than purebreds

Percent of households with at least one dog spayed or neutered, by purebred or mixed breed

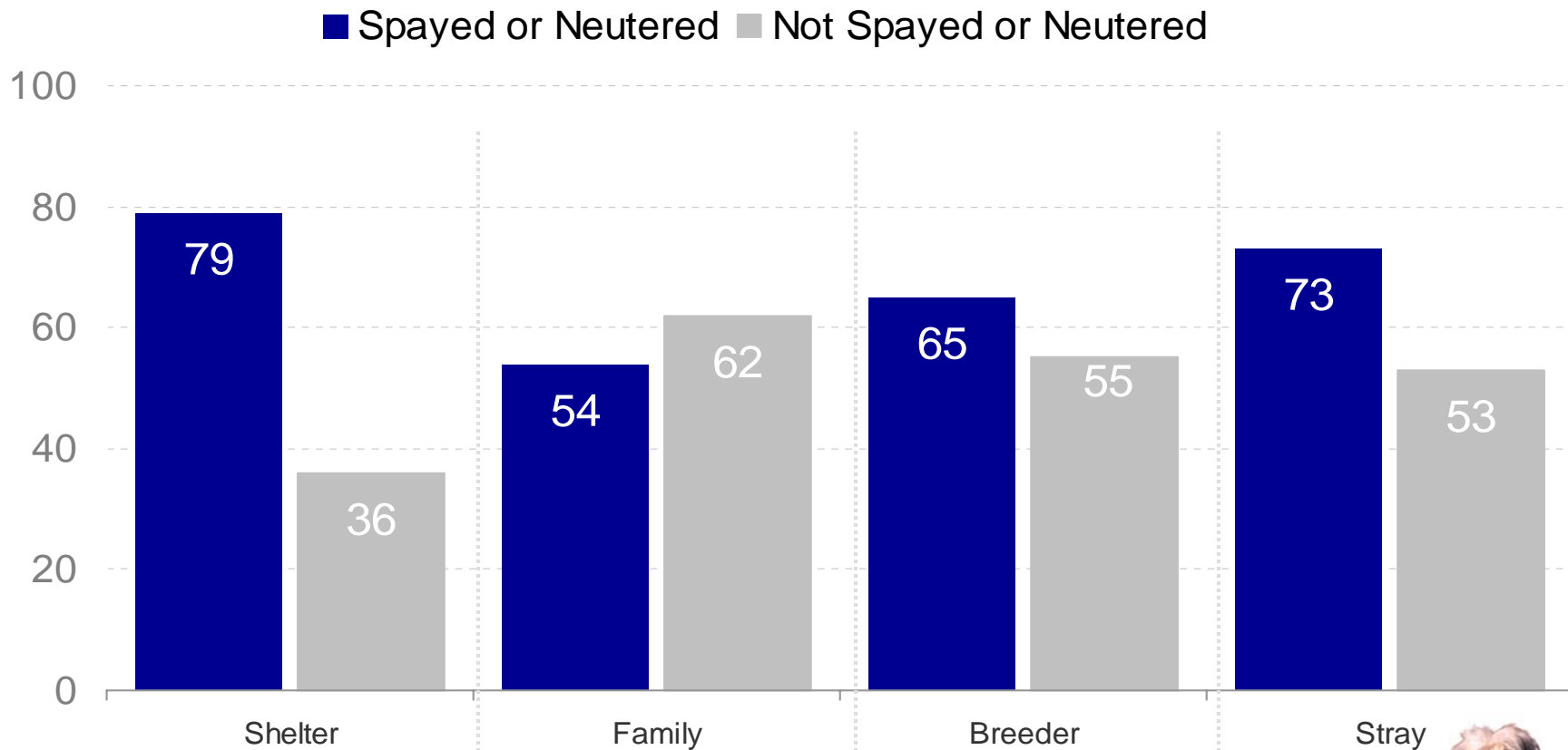


** Percent of dog-owning households with at least one dog who fits the criteria*



More dogs acquired from shelters or as strays are spayed/neutered

Percent of households with at least one dog spayed or neutered, by source of dog



* Percent of dog-owning households with at least one dog who fits the criteria



Gulf Coast Pet Research Project: Phase 1

Dogs fixed, why? *No more pets.* Why not? *Keep options open.*

“What are the reasons that you chose to spay, neuter or fix at least one of your dogs so they couldn’t have puppies?”

Don't want more pets	49
Reduce pet overpopulation	15
Improve or prevent medical problems	6
It's the right thing to do	5
Prevent “heats” or “seasons” in females	4
Improve behavior problems	3
Came that way	2
Unspayed/neutered pets are a hassle	2
Reduce the desire to roam or run off	2

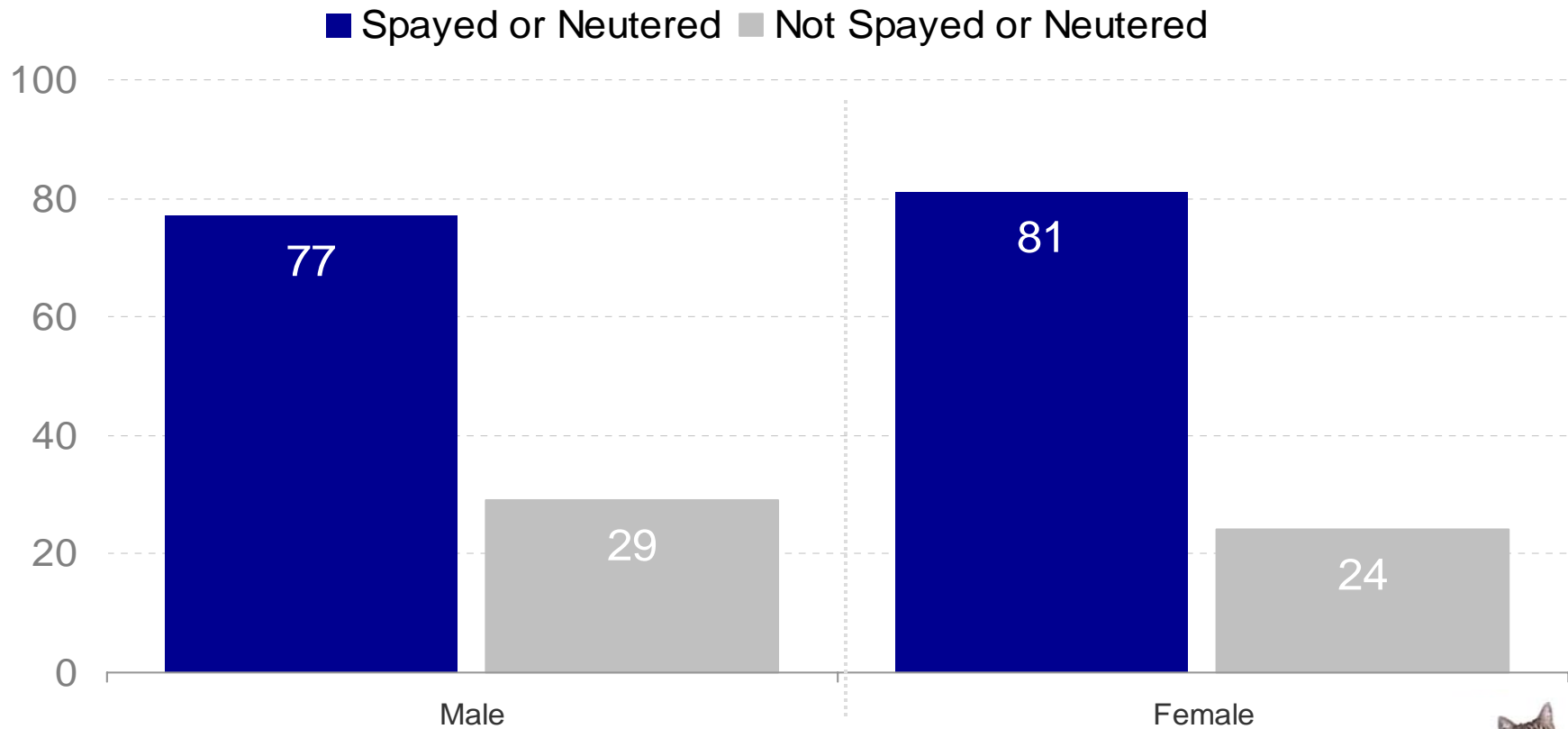
“What is the main reason you have a dog that has NOT been spayed, neutered, or fixed?”

Want to breed dog/keep options open	26
Just haven't done it/no reason	19
Do not need to	11
Can't afford/No time/can't bring to vet	10
Dog not able to be spayed/neutered	9
Dislike the practice of spaying/neutering	6
Other	17



Female/male cats equally likely to be spayed/neutered

Percent households with at least one cat spayed or neutered, by sex of cat

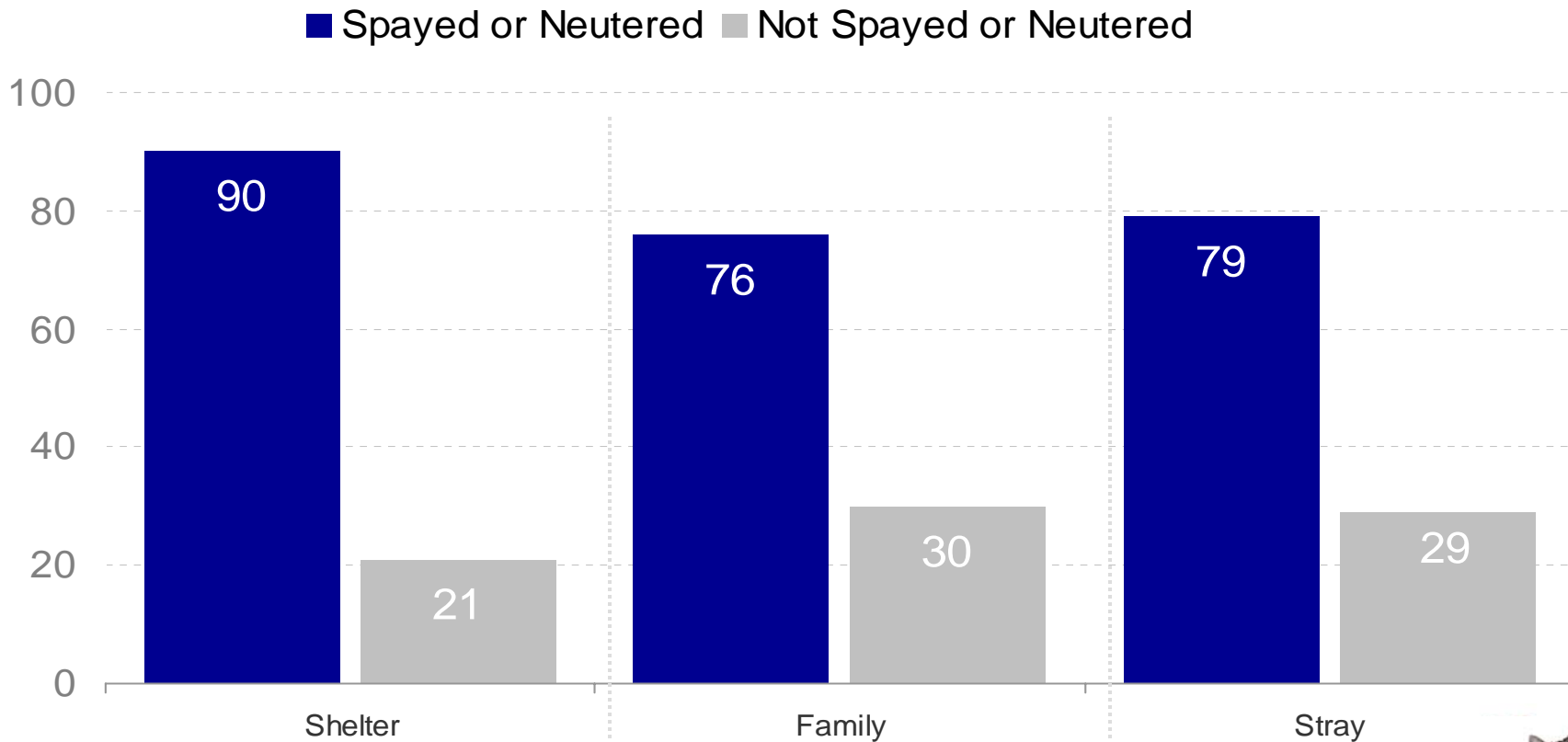


** Percent of cat-owning households with at least one cat who fits the criteria*



Cat spay/neuter is high regardless of source, but highest from shelter

Percent of households with at least one cat spayed or neutered, by source of cat



* Percent of cat-owning households with at least one cat who fits the criteria



Gulf Coast Pet Research Project: Phase 1

Cats – why fixed? *No more pets.* Why not? *Just haven't done it.*

“What are the reasons that you chose to spay, neuter or fix at least one of your cats so they couldn't have kittens?”

Don't want more pets	54
Reduce pet overpopulation	19
It's the right thing to do	6
Reduce desire to roam or run off	5
Improve or prevent medical problems	3
Prevent “heats” or “seasons” in females	3
Unspayed/neutered pets are a hassle	3
Decrease urine marking	2
Improve behavior problems	2

“What is the main reason you have a cat that has NOT been spayed, neutered, or fixed?”

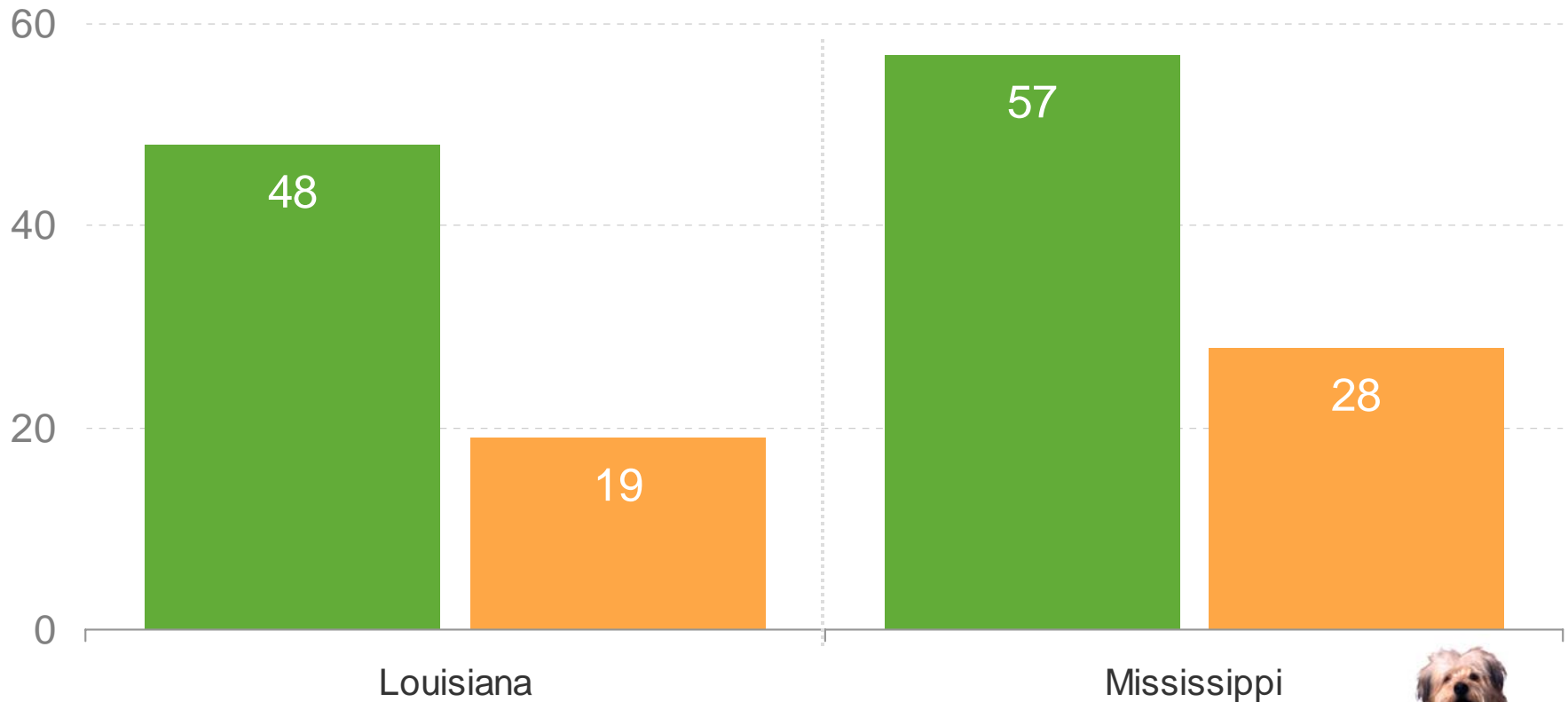
Just haven't done it	20
Cat not able to be spayed/neutered	19
Practical obstacles to spaying/neutering	15
Want to breed/keep option open	6
Dislike the practice of spaying/neutering	4
Do not need to	4
Other	31



Mississippi HH less likely to spay/neuter than Louisiana HH

Percent of households with at least one pet **NOT** spayed or neutered, by state

■ Dogs ■ Cats in household



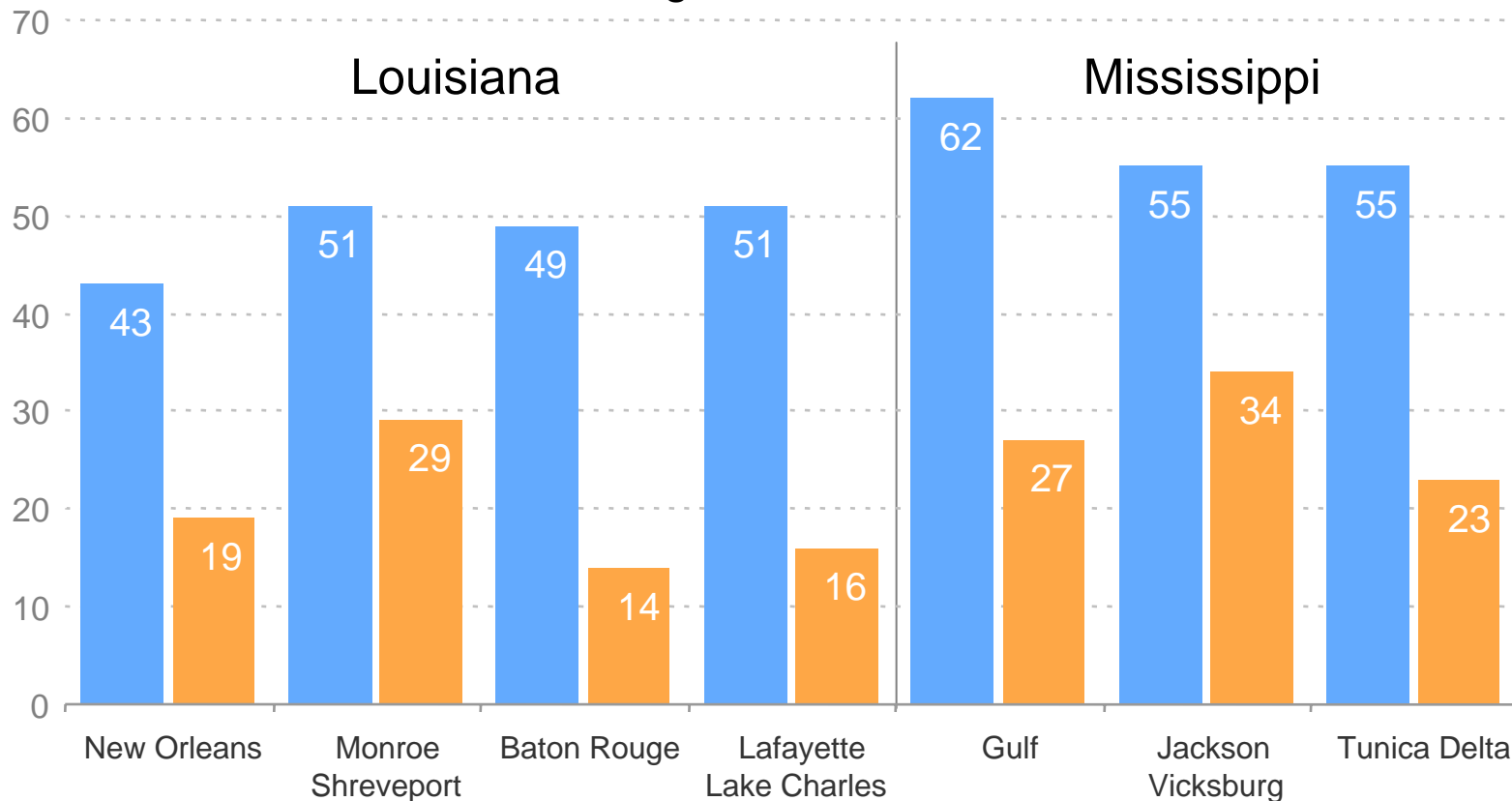
* Percent of dog-owning or cat-owning households with at least one pet who fits the criteria



Mississippi HH less likely to spay/neuter than Louisiana HH

Percent of households with at least one pet **NOT** spayed or neutered, by state region

■ Dogs ■ Cats in household

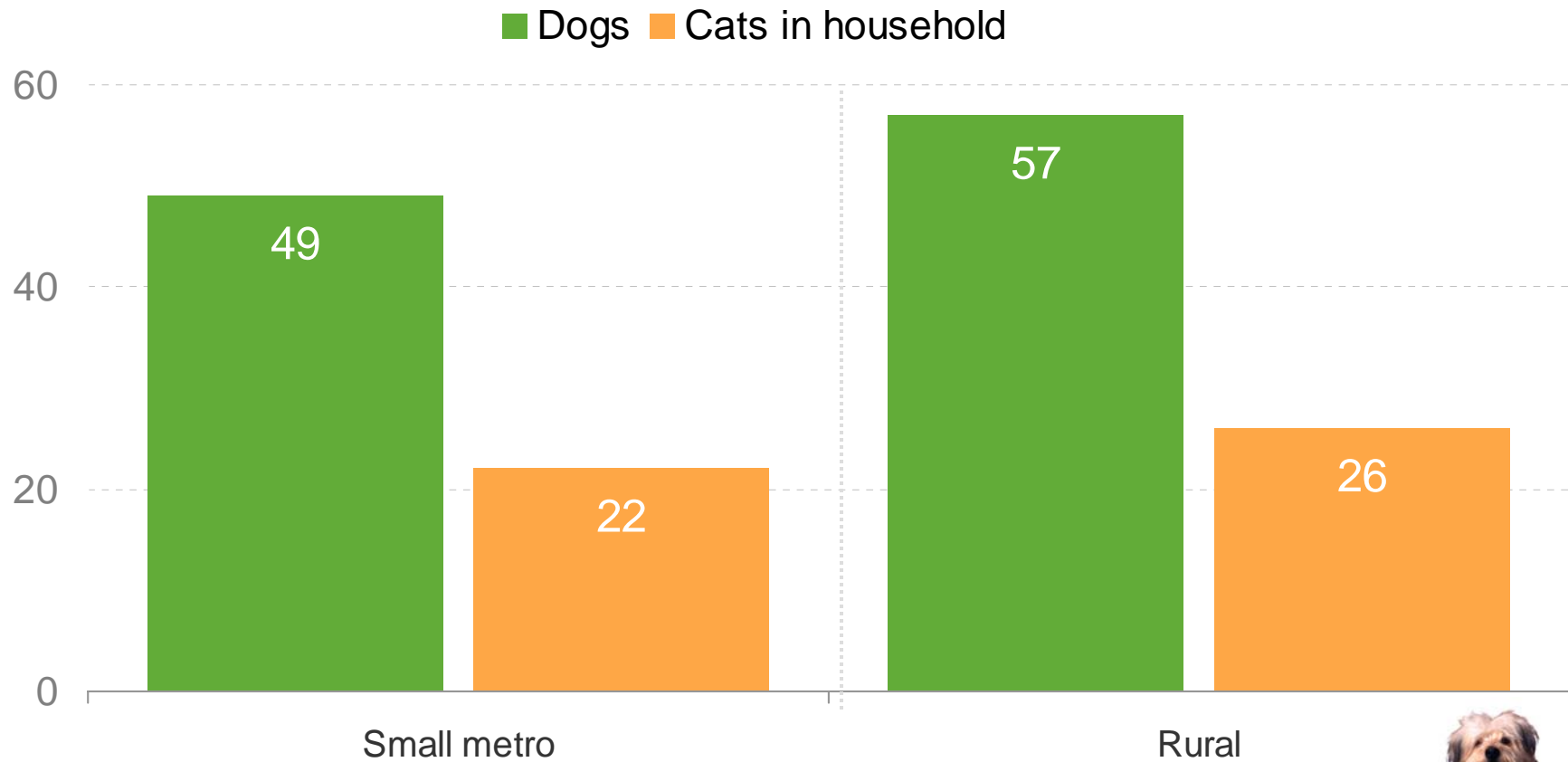


* Percent of dog-owning or cat-owning households with at least one pet not spayed or neutered



Rural HHs less likely than small metro areas to spay/neuter

Percent of households with at least one pet **NOT** spayed or neutered, by rural/small metro

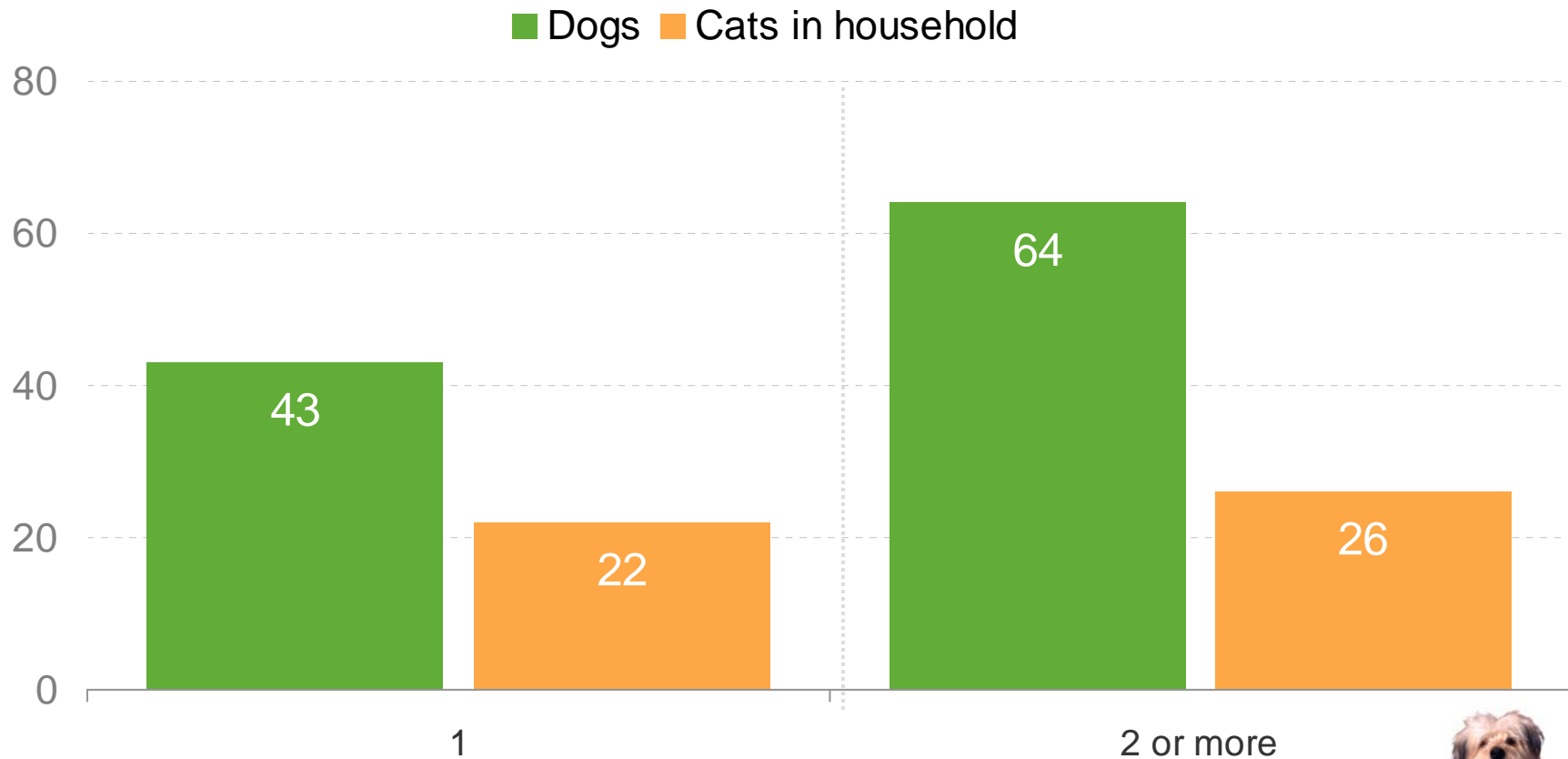


* Percent of dog-owning or cat-owning households with at least one pet not spayed or neutered



More pets, more chance of a non-S/N animal in the household

Percent of households with at least one pet NOT spayed or neutered, by number of dogs/cats in household

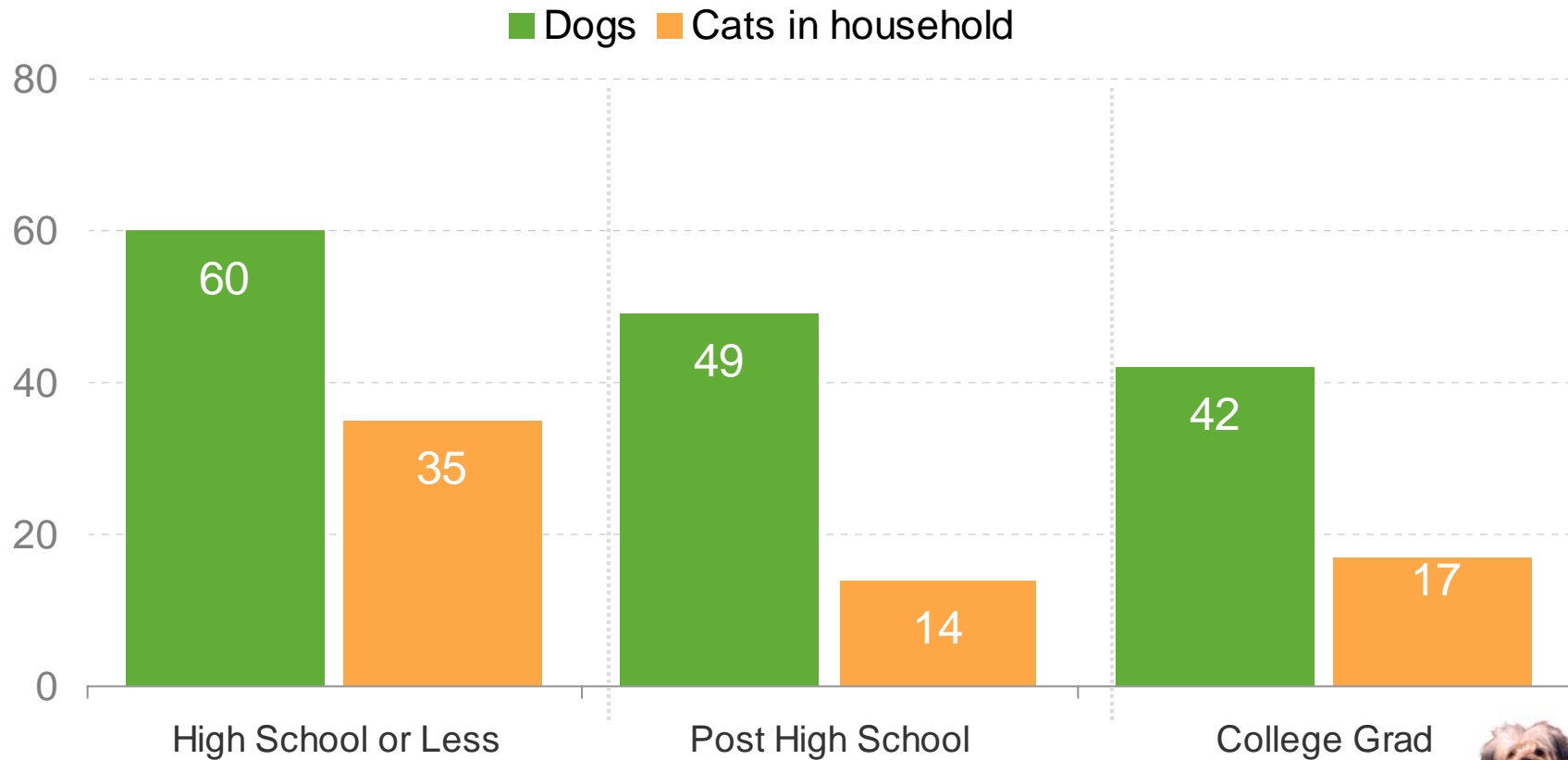


** Percent of dog-owning or cat-owning households with at least one pet not spayed or neutered*



Owners with high school education less likely to spay/neuter

Percent of households with at least one pet **NOT** spayed or neutered, by education

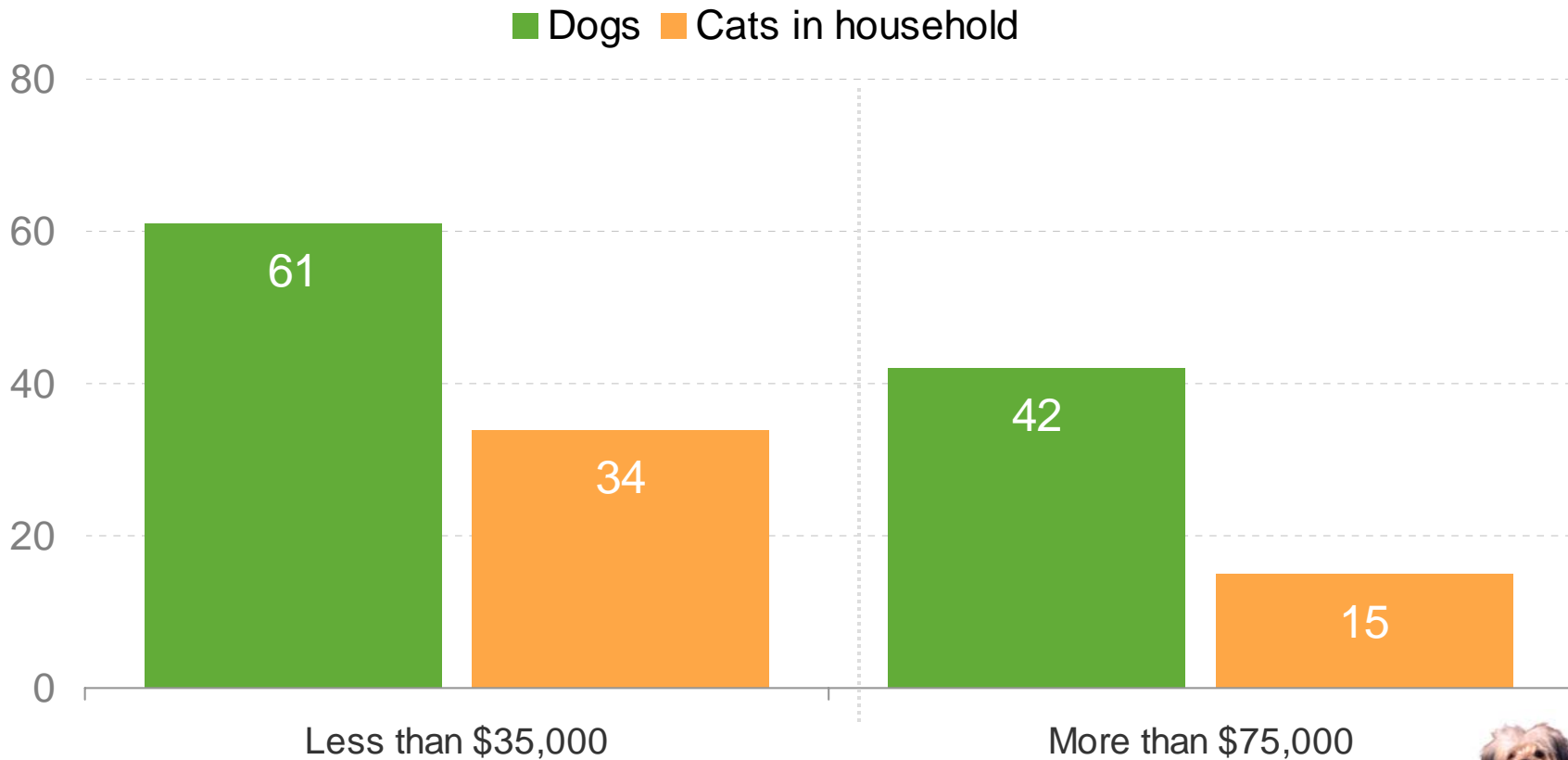


* Percent of dog-owning or cat-owning households with at least one pet not spayed or neutered



Low income HH less likely to have spayed/neutered pets

Percent of households with at least one pet **NOT** spayed or neutered, by income

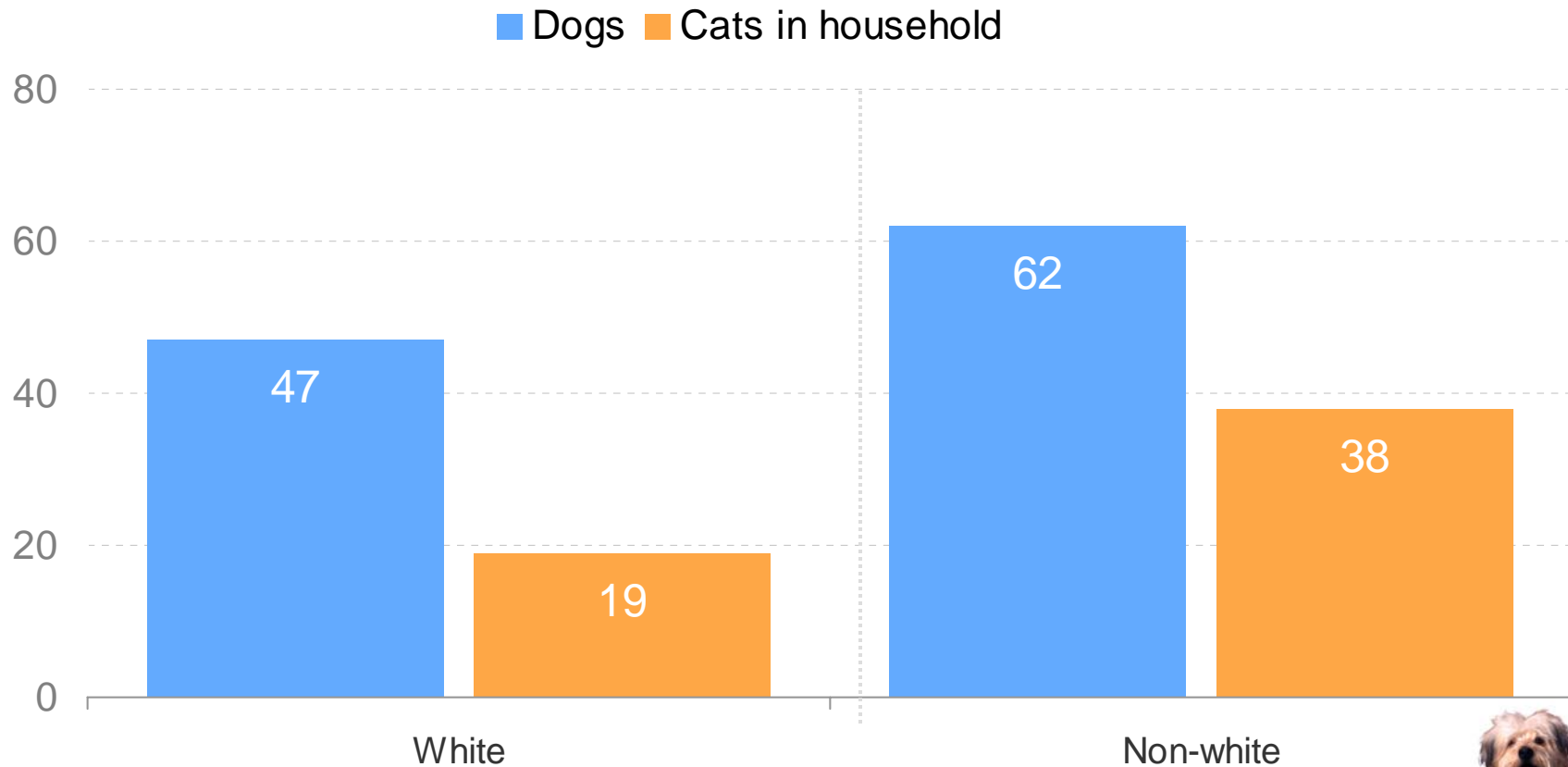


* Percent of dog-owning or cat-owning households with at least one pet not spayed or neutered



Minorities less likely to have spayed/neutered pets

Percent of households with at least one pet **NOT** spayed or neutered, by race

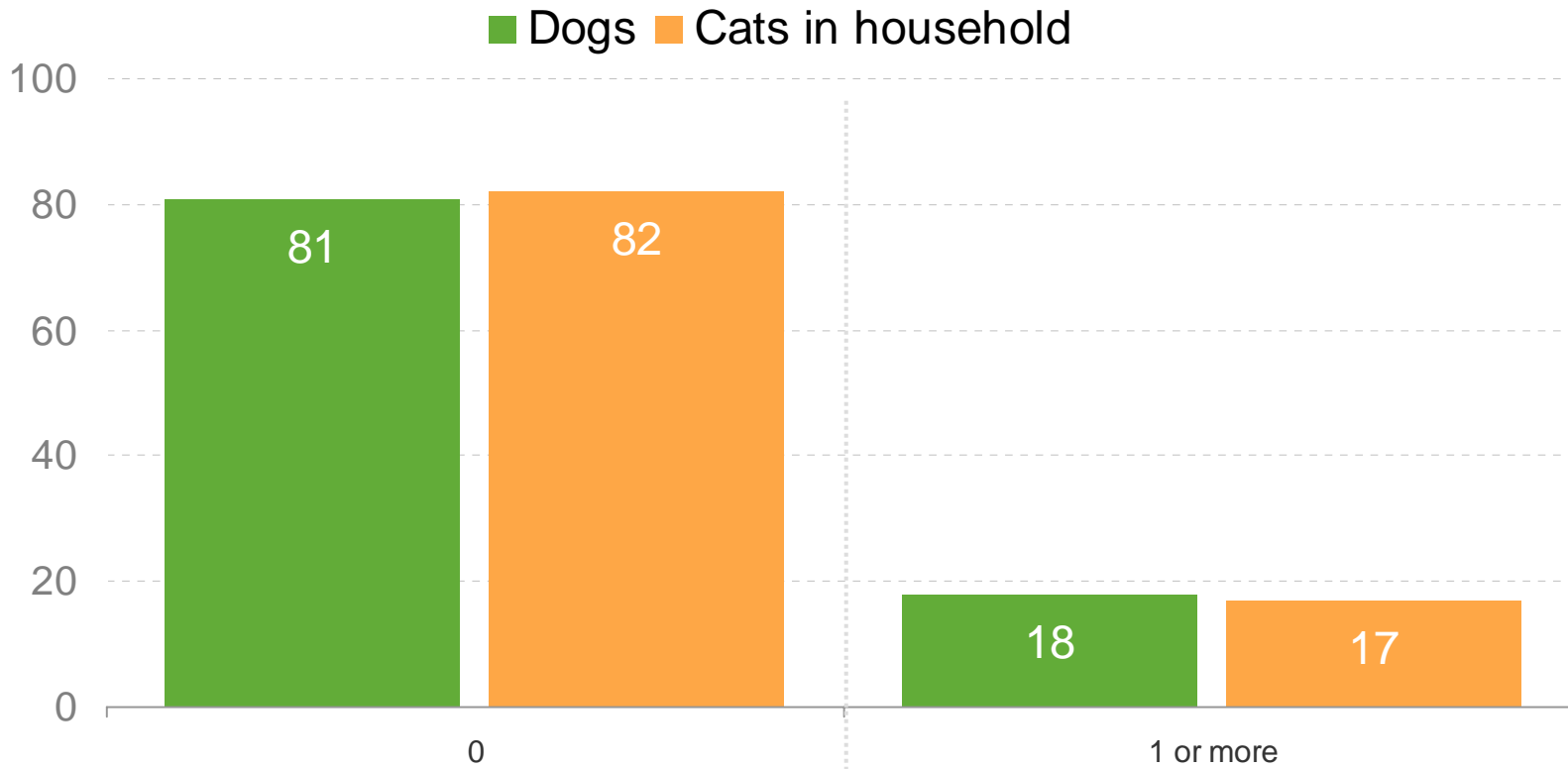


* Percent of dog-owning or cat-owning households with at least one pet not spayed or neutered



Nearly one in five households with pets have had litters

“How many litters of [puppies/kittens] have been born to [dogs/cats] in your household in the last 5 years?”

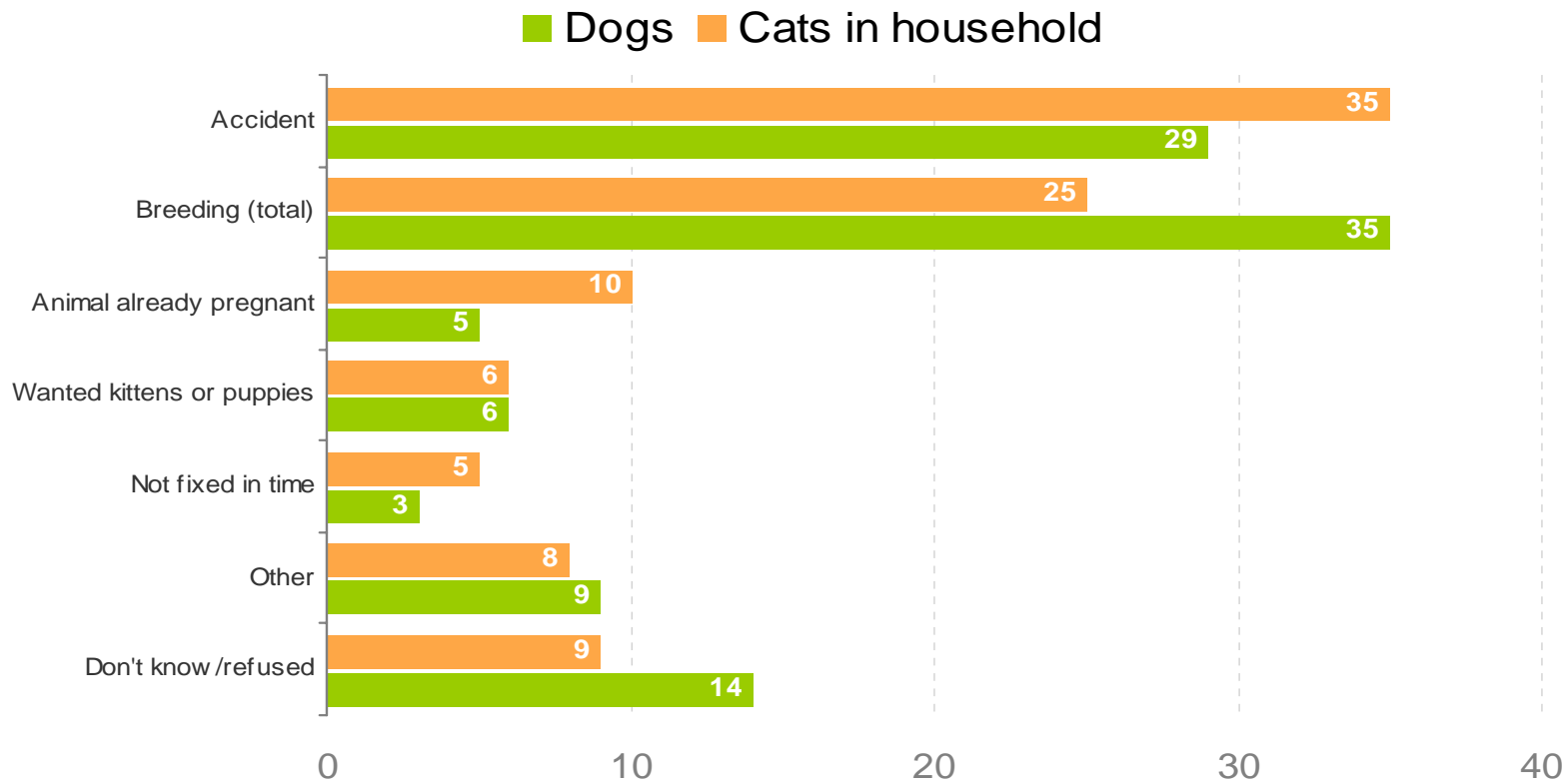


Percent of pet-owning households



Cat litters by accident, dog litters for breeding

“What were reasons there were one or more litters of puppies or kittens born to your household?”



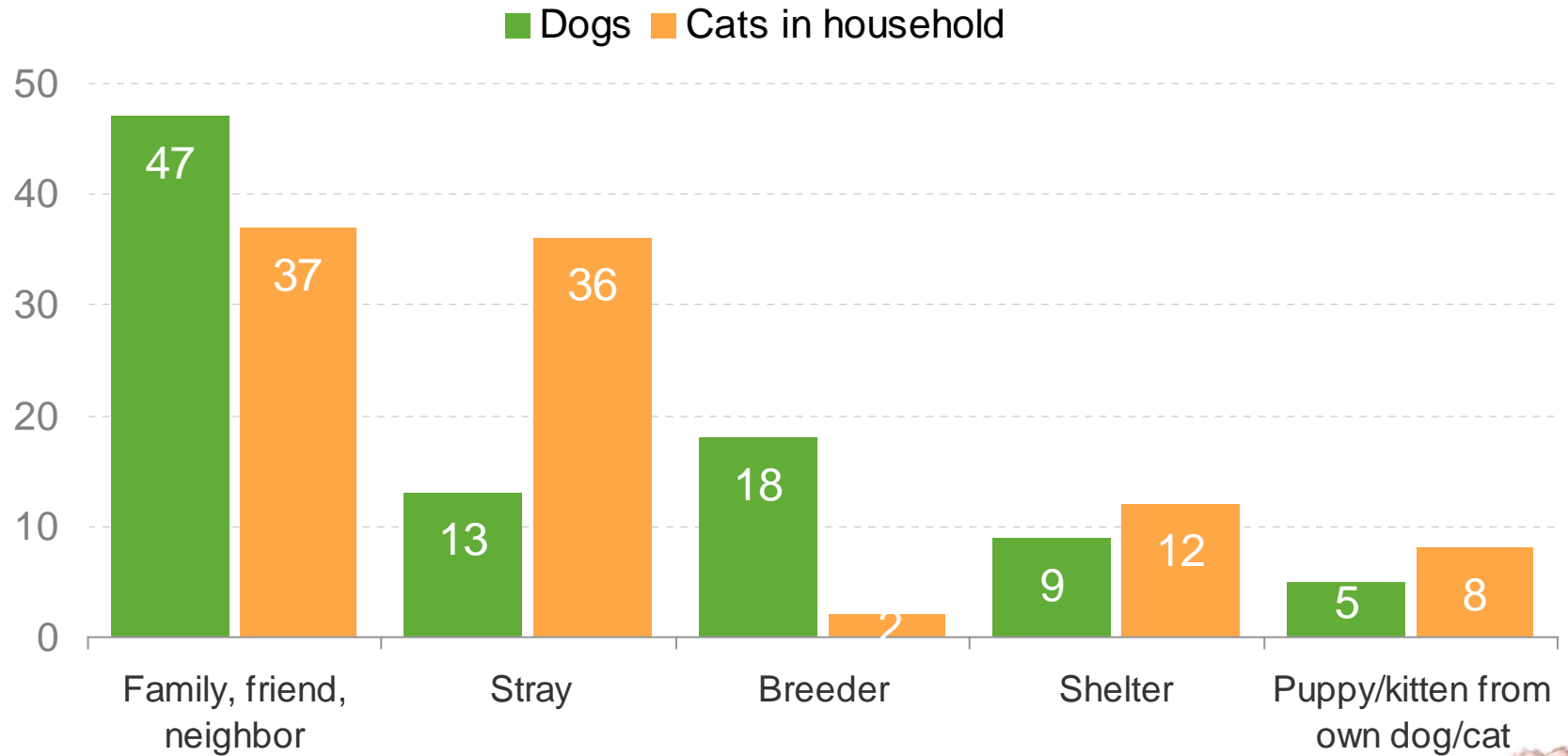
Percent of households reporting at least one litter in last five years



How People Get Their Pets

Many obtain pets by chance

"From where did you get [your dog/cat]?"



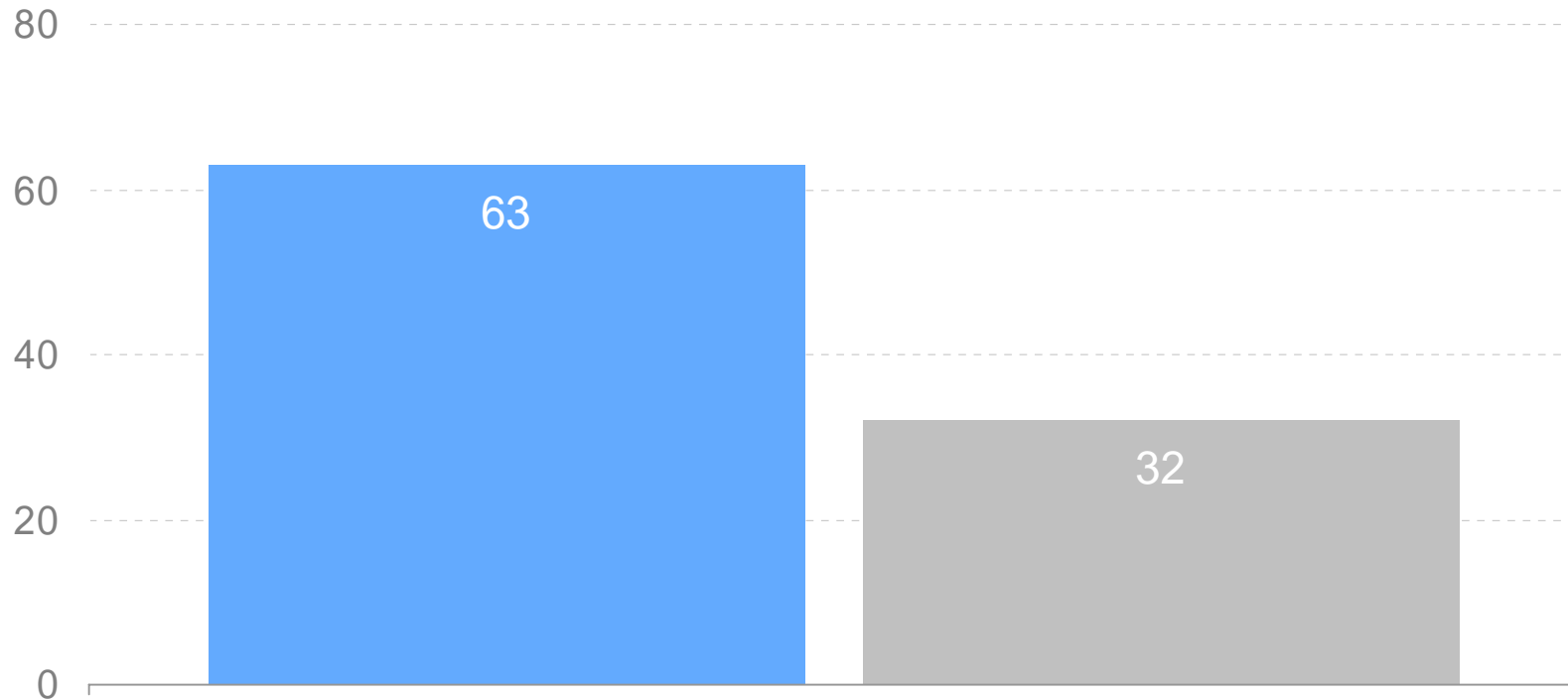
** Percent of dog-owning or cat-owning households with at least one pet who fits the criteria*



Most dogs are reported to be “pure breed” (percent of all dogs)

“Is [your dog] a pure breed, a mixed breed or mutt, or are you not sure?”

■ Purebred (reported) ■ Mixed breed

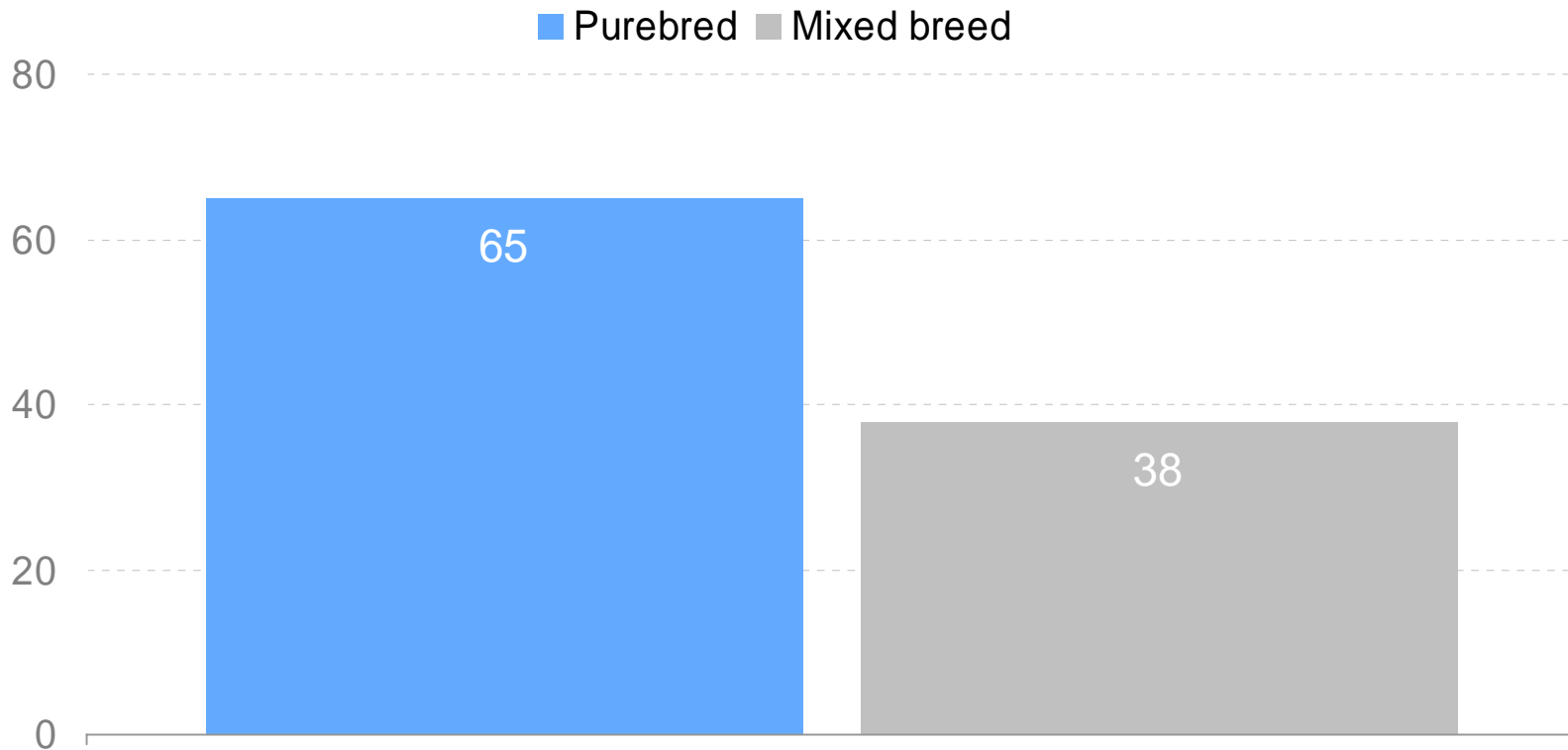


* Percent of dogs on which we collected data (i.e. up to five pets per household)



More purebred than mixed breed dogs in household

Percentage of households with at least one purebred or mixed breed dog

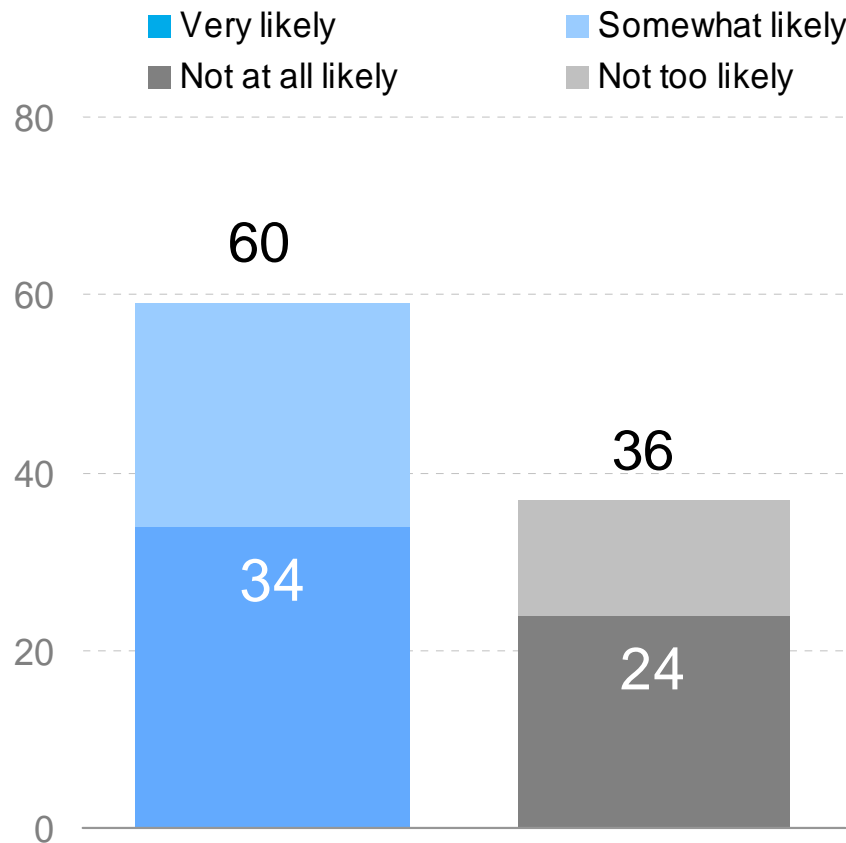


* Percent of dog-owning households with at least one dog who fits the criteria



Interest in shelters for dog adoption*

“How likely is it you would adopt your next dog or puppy from an animal shelter, humane society, SPCA or rescue group – very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, not at all likely?”



* Percent of pet-owning households

“What is the primary reason you would NOT adopt your next dog or puppy from an animal shelter, humane society, SPCA or rescue group?”

Won't have the kind of animal I want 16

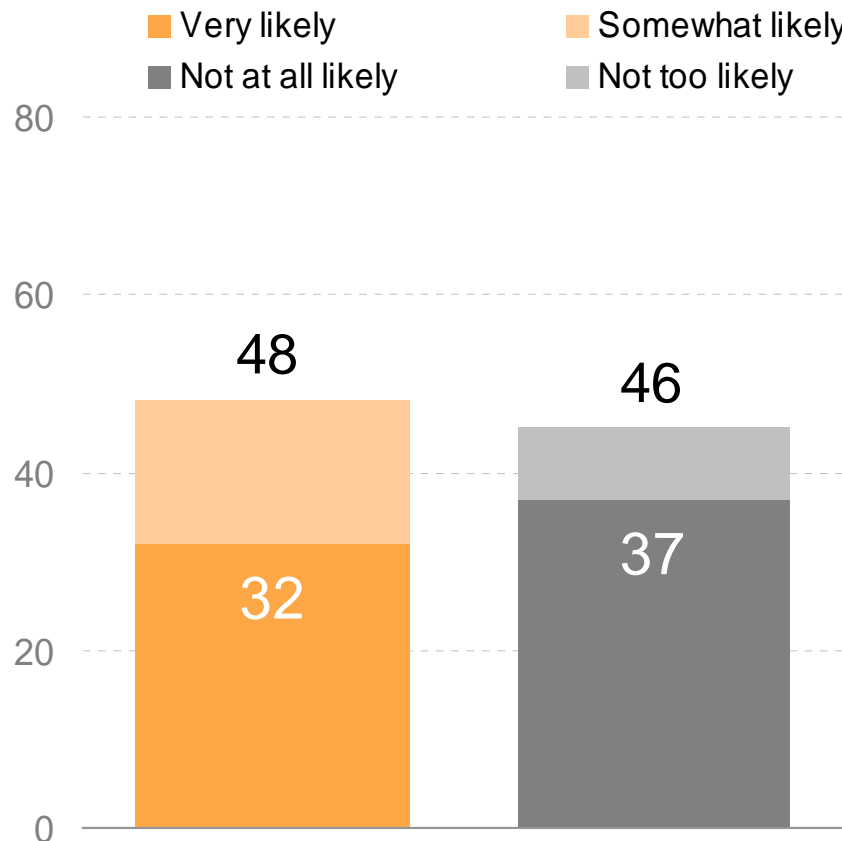
Want a purebred 12

**Adjusted to exclude respondents who stated they were very likely to adopt a dog or puppy and those who volunteered that they would not be getting another pet.
Note: 38% did not know or could not report a reason
There were also many different reasons cited by 6% or fewer of respondents.*



Relatively low interest in shelters for cat adoption*

“How likely is it you would adopt your next cat or kitten from an animal shelter, humane society, SPCA or rescue group – very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, not at all likely?”



**Percent of pet-owning households*

“What is the primary reason you would NOT adopt your next cat or kitten from an animal shelter, humane society, SPCA or rescue group?”

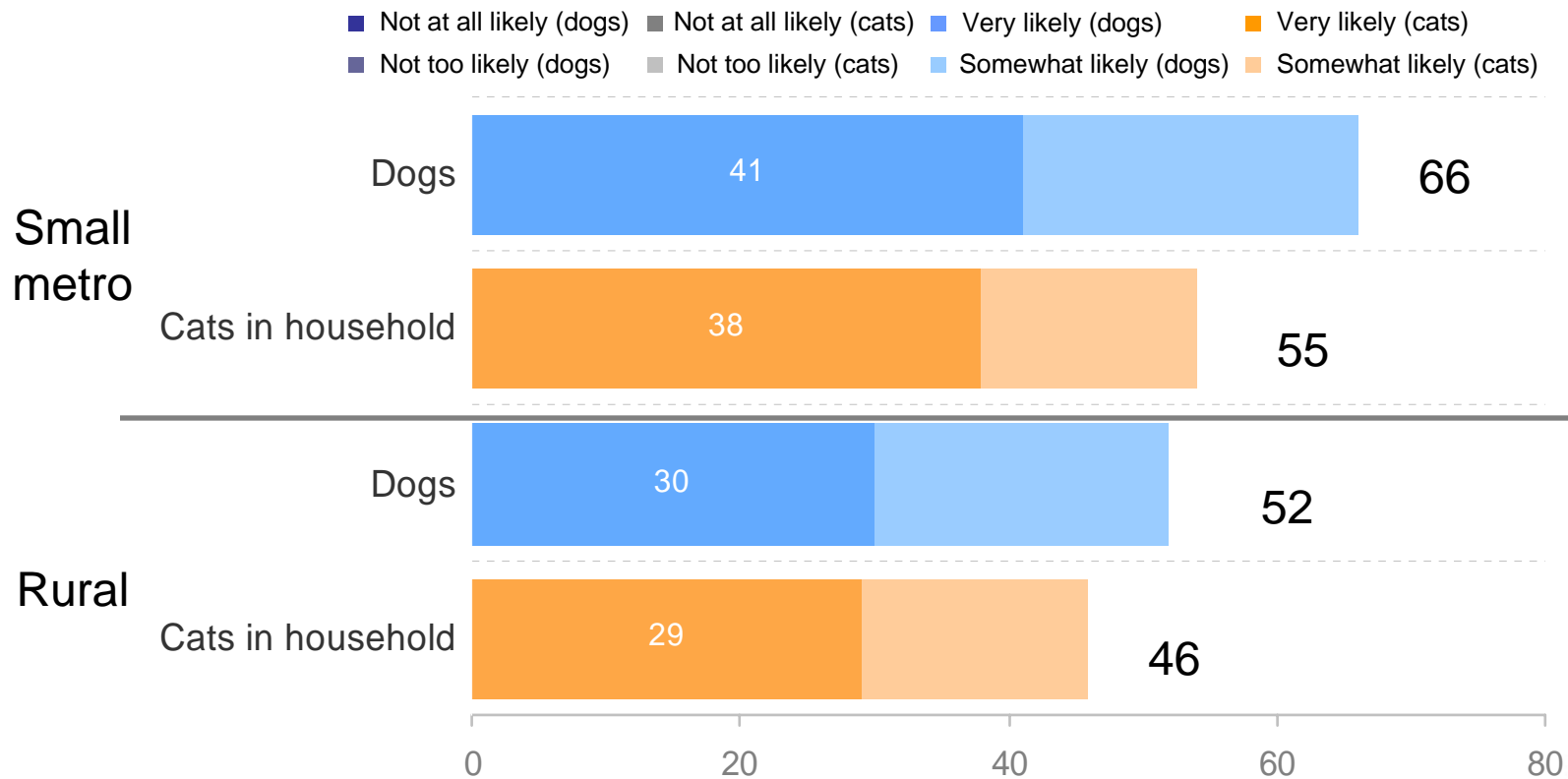
Won't have the kind of animal I want 14

**Adjusted to exclude respondents who stated they were very likely to adopt a cat or kitten and those who volunteered that they would not be getting another pet. Note: 30% did not know or could not report a reason. There were also many different reasons cited by 6% or fewer of respondents.*



Rural residents less likely to adopt from a shelter

“How likely is it you would adopt your next [dog/cat or puppy/kitten] from an animal shelter, humane society, SPCA or rescue group – very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, not at all likely?”

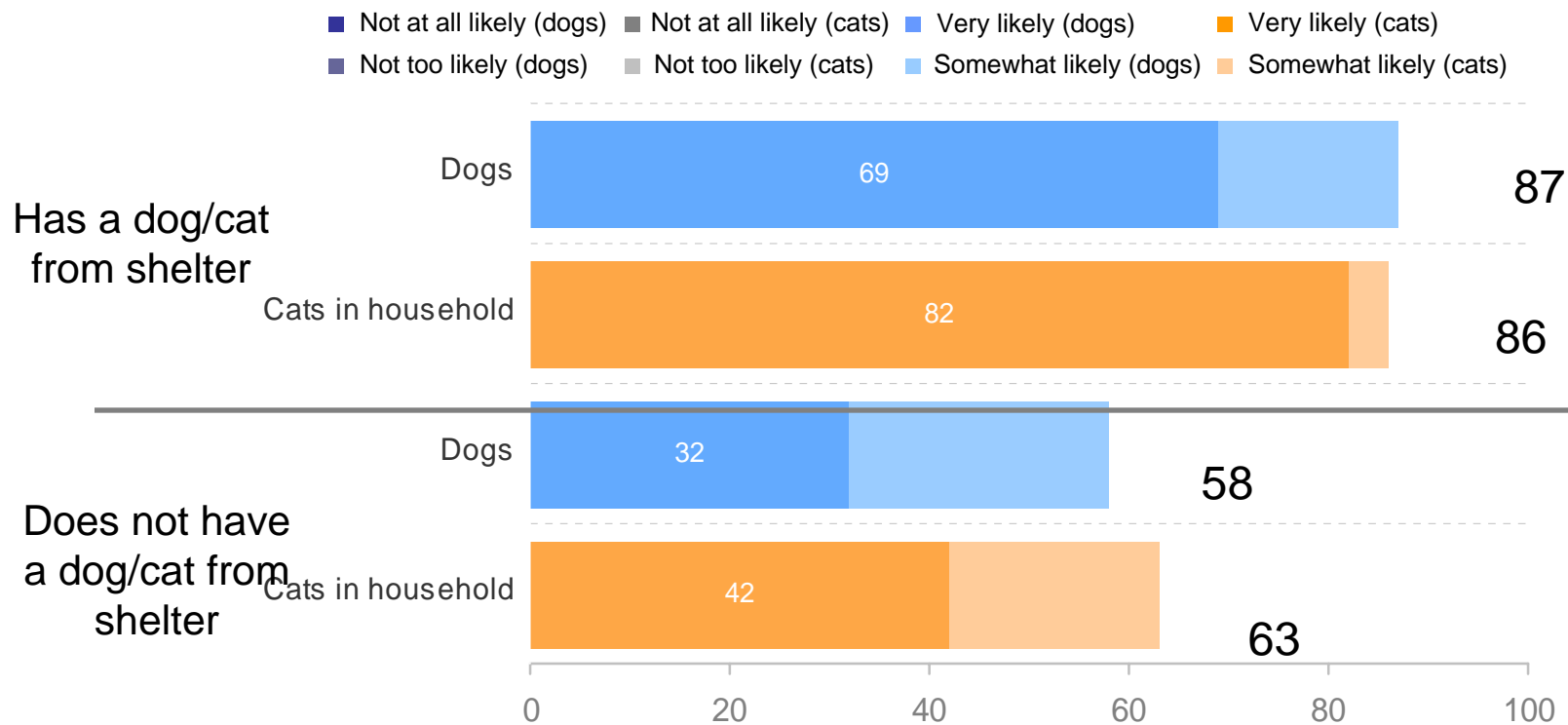


* Excludes respondents who volunteered that they would not be acquiring another pet



Yet, repeat customers are likely

“How likely is it you would adopt your next [dog/cat or puppy/kitten] from an animal shelter, humane society, SPCA or rescue group – very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, not at all likely?”



* Excludes respondents who volunteered that they would not be acquiring another pet

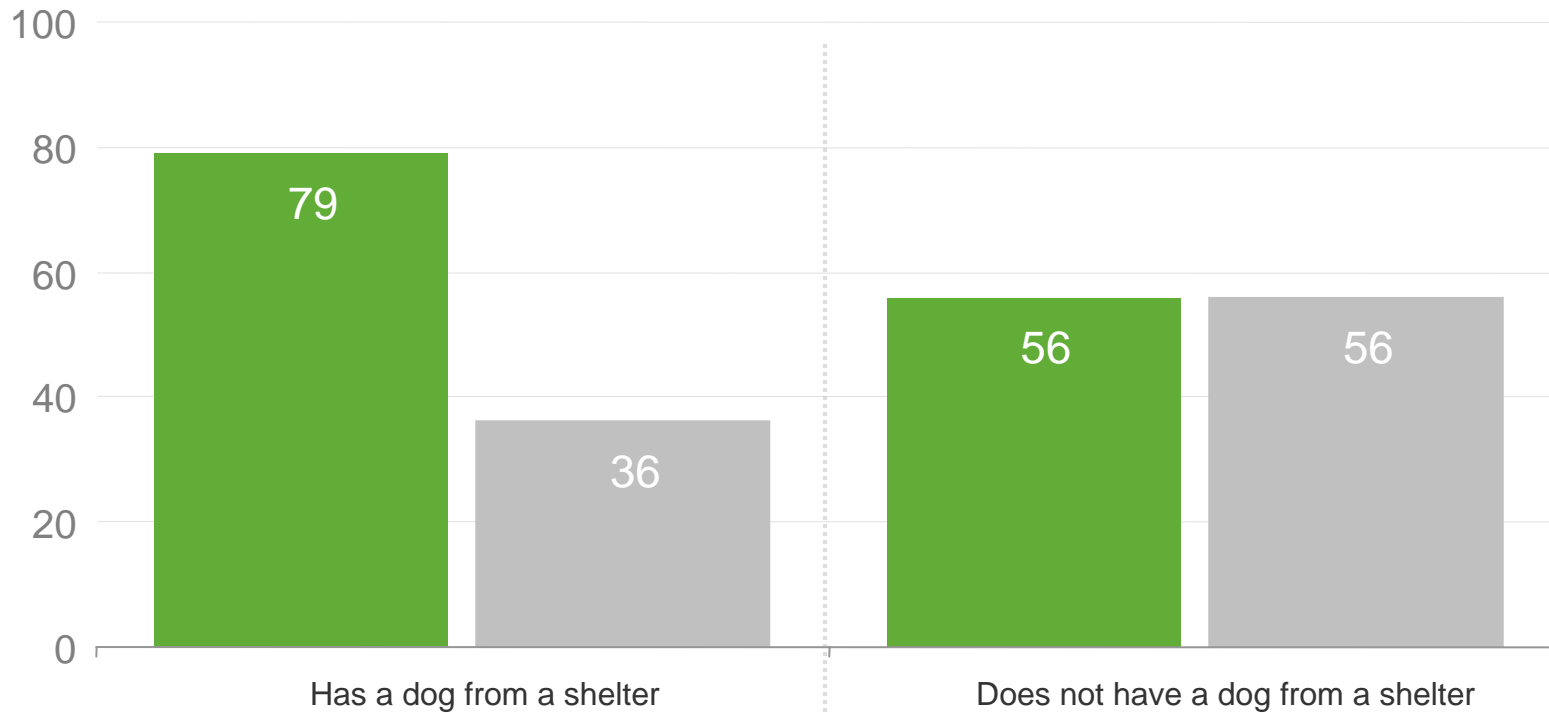


Gulf Coast Pet Research Project: Phase 1

Shelter customers more likely to have spayed/neutered dogs in the household

“How likely is it you would adopt your next dog or puppy from an animal shelter, humane society, SPCA or rescue group – very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, not at all likely?” [Percent very likely]

■ Spayed or neutered ■ Not spayed or neutered



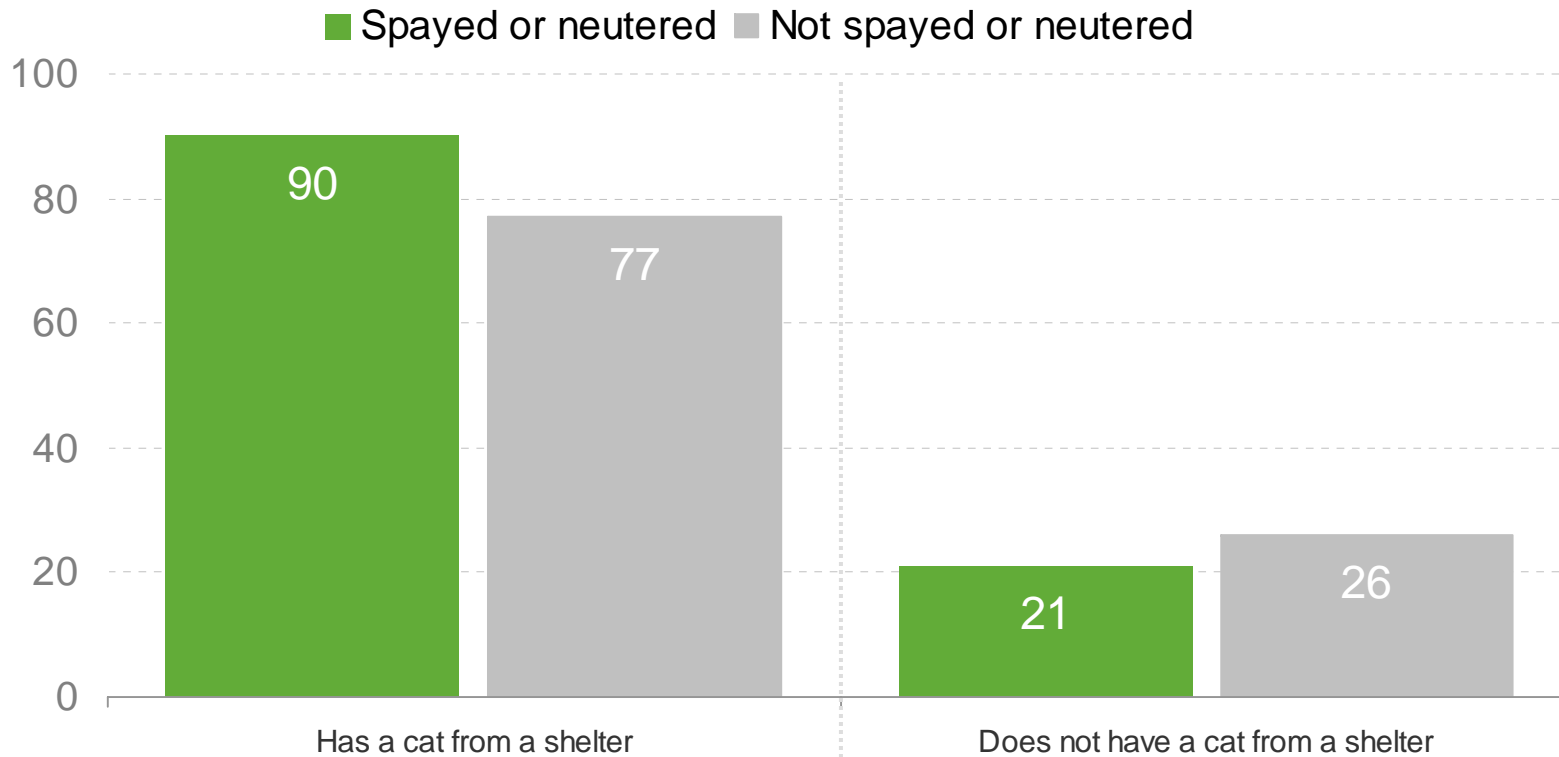
** Percent of dog-owning households with at least one dog who fits the criteria*



Gulf Coast Pet Research Project: Phase 1

Shelter customers more likely to have spayed/neutered cats in the household

“How likely is it you would adopt your next cat or kitten from an animal shelter, humane society, SPCA or rescue group – very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, not at all likely?” [Percent very likely]

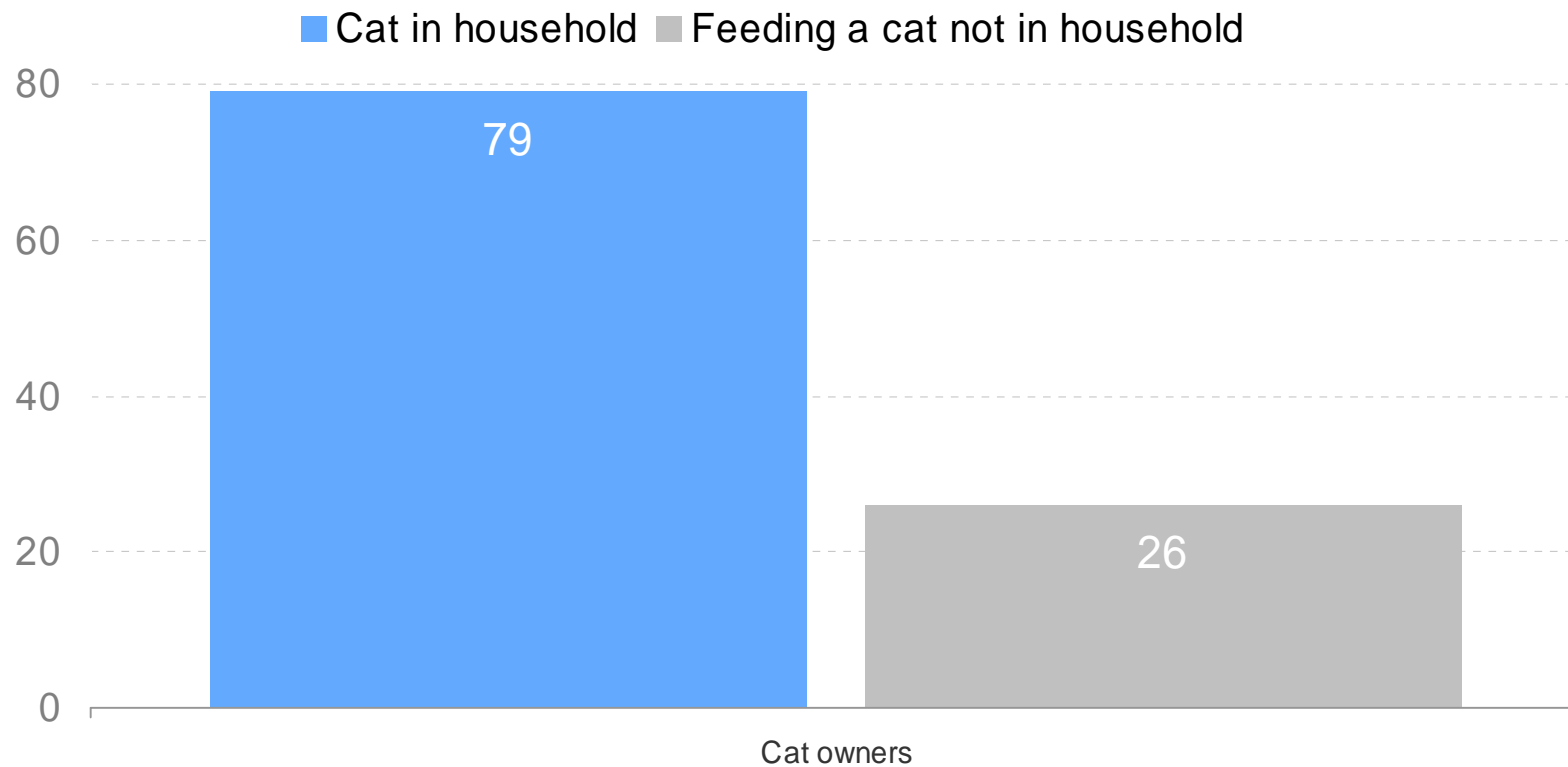


** Percent of cat-owning households with at least one cat who fits the criteria*



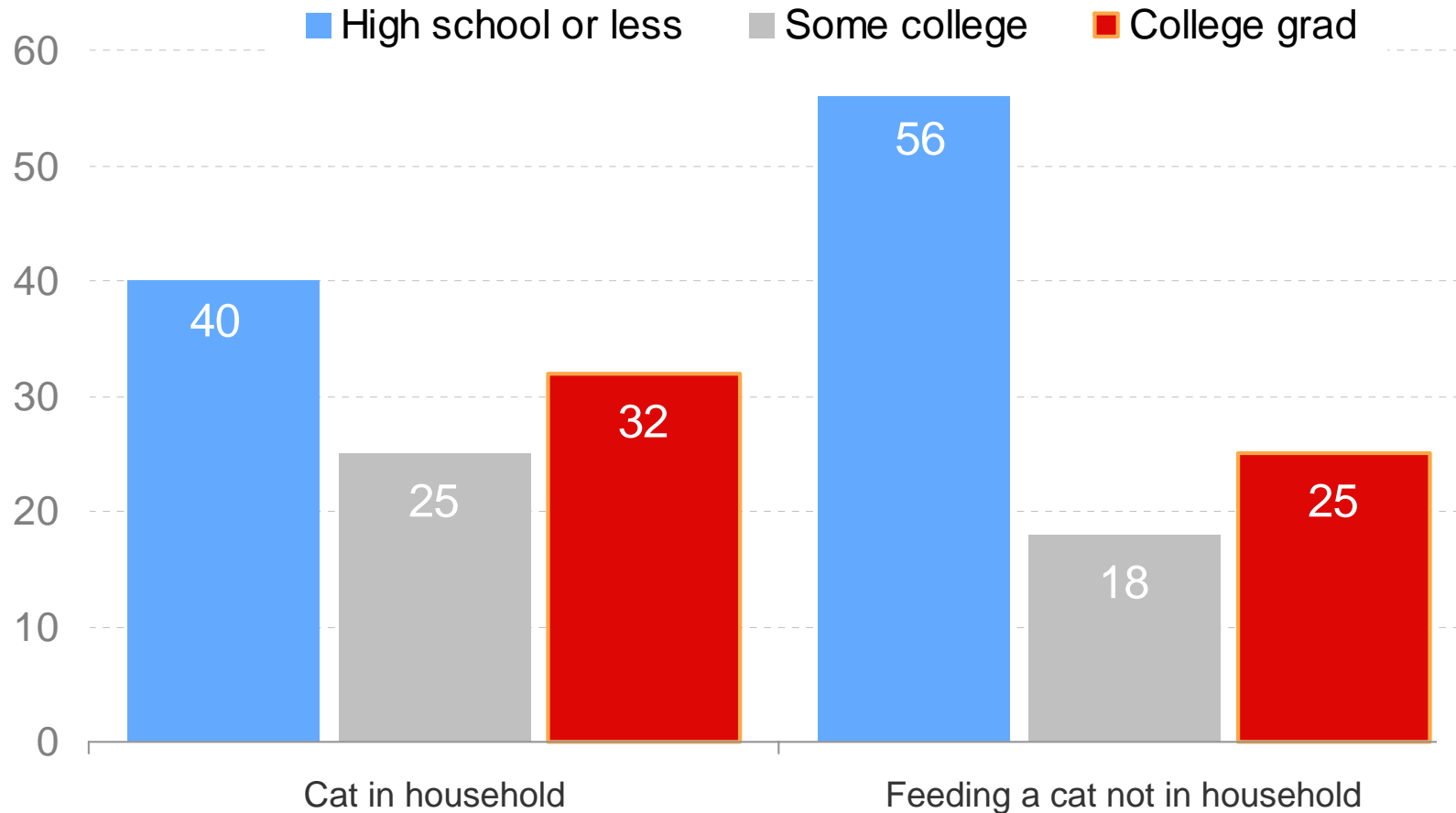
One in four cat owners feeds a cat *not* kept in the household

Do you have any cats in your household or are you currently feeding any cats that are not in your household?



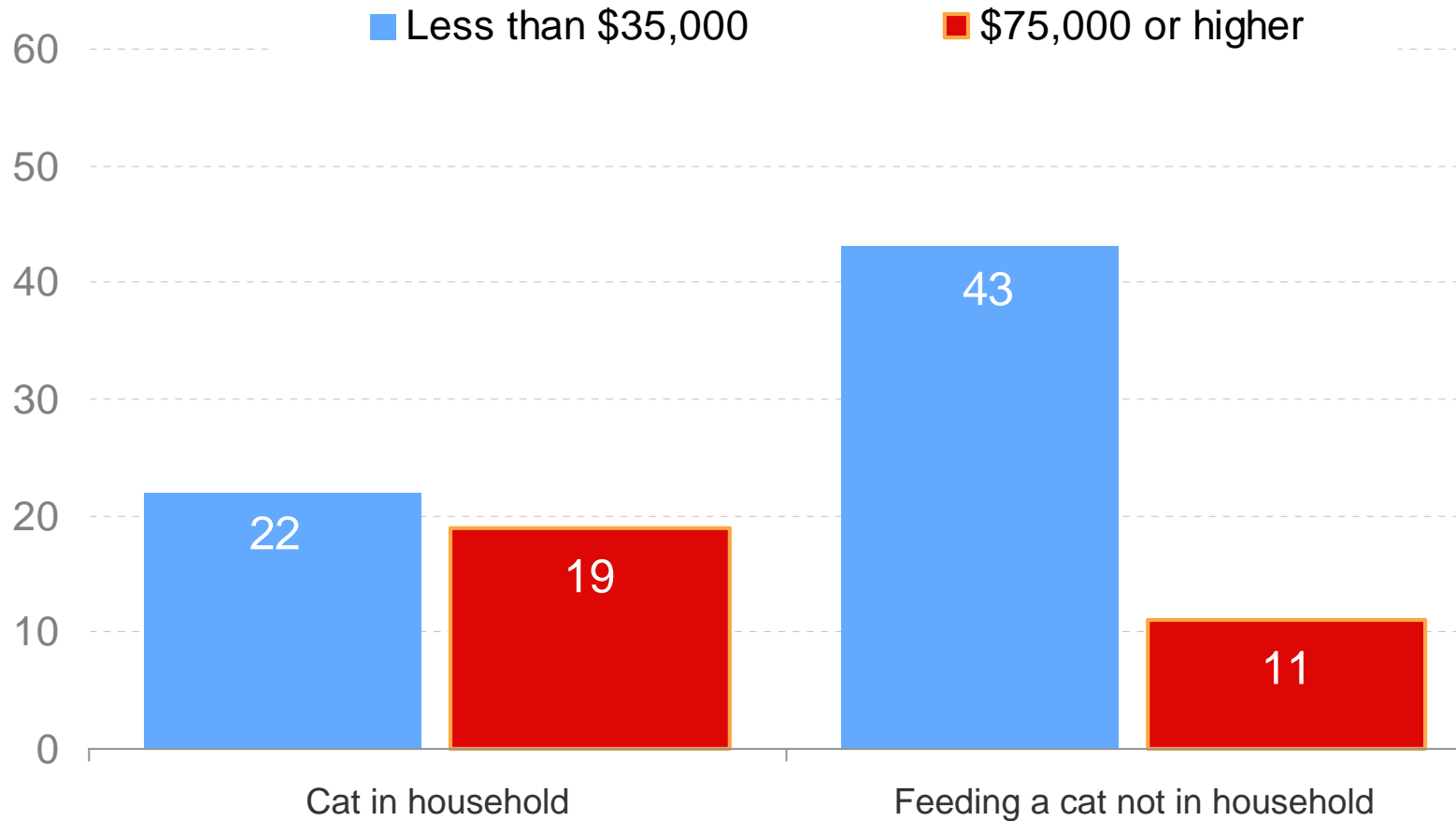
People feeding cats are more likely to be high school educated or less

Percent currently feeding any cats that are not in the household, by education



People feeding cats are more likely to be low income

Percent currently feeding any cats that are not in the household, by education



Summary

Key Findings

- Prevalence of dog ownership, relative to the population, is unchanged since Katrina/Rita. Cat ownership shows some evidence of change, with the prevalence dropping slightly. Gulf area residents are more likely to own dogs than cats.
- Over half of dogs in households, and about one quarter of cats, are not spayed or neutered. Most people spay or neuter their pets because they do not want to have more pets or contribute to overpopulation rather than trying to control behaviors (e.g., urination or being in heat).
- People who do not spay or neuter their pets are more likely to:
 - Live in Mississippi, rather than Louisiana
 - Be less educated
 - Be low Income
 - Have a lot of pets
- Pets who are not spayed or neutered are more likely to:
 - Be male
 - Be a purebred
 - Come from friends or family rather than shelters
 - Visit the veterinarian less frequently



Key Findings (cont'd.)

- Dog owners who do *not* spay or neuter their dogs say:
 - Do not want to or do not believe they need to (e.g., inside dog or kept away from other dogs)
 - Many just have not gotten around to it
 - They want to breed
 - Disagree with the practice
 - Cannot afford it
- Dog owners who *do* spay or neuter their dogs say:
 - They do not want more pets
 - Want to reduce pet overpopulation
 - Want to prevent medical problems
 - It's the right thing to do
- Cat owners who do not spay or neuter their cats are less intentional; most simply have not done so and do not know why. Cat owners are much more likely to take in strays or get a cat from a friend or family member, which may account for some of the difference in spay/neuter behaviors between dog and cat owners.
- Some pet owners who have litters do so intentionally (to breed pets, for example), but a plurality do so accidentally.



Key Findings (cont'd.)

- Few people get their pets from shelters. Many pet owners are simply unfamiliar with shelters or think adopting from shelters means they will not get their choice of pet.
- However, people who do go to shelters are more likely to own spayed or neutered pets, partly because some shelter pets are adopted already altered, but also because socially desirable behaviors cluster.
 - In addition to spaying and neutering, people who adopt from a shelter are less likely to have pets who roam, more likely to have pets who are licensed and/or rabies vaccinated and more likely to have taken their pet to visit the vet.
- Previous shelter adopters are more likely to return to a shelter for their next pet than non-adopters.



March 2007

Gulf Coast Pet Research Project: Phase 1

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