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NEW STUDY SHOWS MAJORITY OF PET CATS ARE NEUTERED

Peer-reviewed analysis finds significant relationship between neuter and household income

BETHESDA — A new study in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Association* reports that the vast majority—at least 80%—of pet cats in U.S. households are neutered, with middle-to-higher-income households reporting rates of over 90%.

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The peer-reviewed study, based on data collected for Alley Cat Allies by Harris Interactive and analyzed by Alley Cat Allies using a rigorous statistical approach, is the first nationally representative study to thoroughly examine household income as it relates to the neuter status of pet cats.

“This study indicates that spaying and neutering is an accepted, established practice among the large majority of Americans with pet cats,” said Becky Robinson, president of Alley Cat Allies. “This is a very positive finding. As a result, our nation’s pet cats are living much healthier lives.”

The study found that family income was the strongest predictor of whether house cats are neutered. In households earning \$35,000 or more annually, 93% of cats were neutered, compared to 51% of cats in households earning less than \$35,000. While both income groups reported a majority of their pet cats to be neutered, the disparity underscores a challenge long observed by Alley Cat Allies, said Robinson.

“Up until now, there has been a lot of speculation that income is a barrier for neuter in lower-income families, but now we have a scientific study establishing that this is the case nationally,” Robinson said.

“It is also critical to point out that household cats represent only part of the total U.S. cat population,” said Wendy Anderson, director of law and policy for Alley Cat Allies and a co-author of the study.

“Previous research has shown there may be just as many stray and feral cats in the U.S. as pet cats, and most of these cats are intact and breeding. We need to enact smart policies and programs that expand the availability of low-cost, high-volume spay and neuter services, not only to serve lower-income pet owners, but to provide services for feral cats as well,” Anderson said.

The study (“Population Characteristics and Neuter Status of Cats Living in Households in the United States,” *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2009; 234:1023-1030) consisted of 1,205 respondents across the continental U.S., contacted by telephone and selected via random-digit dial methodology. Following completion of the data collection, respondents were weighted for region, age, gender, education, income, race and ethnicity to ensure a sample representative of the U.S. population.

Based on the nationally representative sample, the study concluded that there are approximately 82.4 million pet cats in the United States, living in a total of 36.8 million households. One third of these households reported adopting at least one of their cats as a stray.

Additional information about the study, including a link to the article abstract and related images, can be found at www.alleycat.org/research.

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About Alley Cat Allies

Alley Cat Allies is dedicated to ending the killing of cats and leading the movement for their humane care. Their web site is www.alleycat.org.