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A Survey of Pet- and Non-Pet-Owning Swedish Adolescents: Demographic Differences and Health Issues

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Abstract:

The aim of this study was to describe the prevalence of pet ownership in adolescents in Sweden and establish whether any gender, age or health-related differences exist between those who own pets and those who do not. In addition, the study aimed to explore the relationships between species of pet, age, gender, and other socio-demographic variables and the perceived importance of pets. Three age groups (13-14 years-old, 15-16 years-old, and 17-18 years-old) of adolescents, resident in a single county in Sweden, were surveyed using the questionnaire "Liv och Hälsa Ung" ("Youth Life and Health"). A total of 8,709 respondents were included in the analysis (pet owners = 5,793; non-pet owners = 2,916). Associations between importance of the pet and demographic variables and general self-rated health were investigated using logistic regression analysis. The prevalence of pet owners in the sample was 65%, and the most common types of pets were, in descending order of popularity, cats, dogs, rodents, fish/reptiles, and horses. Most of the pet owners said their pets were very or quite important to them, for the three age groups (73.1-88.6%). In general, pets were more important for the female respondents. Importance was dependent on type of pet, with male and female dog owners and female horse owners rating their pets as more important than the owners of other species of pet. Respondents who did not own a pet were more physically active than their pet-owning peers. Pet owners with the best self-rated health also attributed the greatest importance to their pet. However, adolescents with pets reported more psychological problems and somatic health aspects than those who did not own pets. This finding calls for further studies to be conducted, with designs allowing causal conclusions to be drawn.

Keywords: [ADOLESCENTS](#); [HEALTH](#); [PETS](#); [PREVALENCE](#); [SWEDEN](#)

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