

San Diego Study: Survey Results

Pet ownership distribution

Over half (53.9%) of SDC households do not own dogs or cats. The pet owning households break down as follows: 21.3% own dogs only, 15.5% own cats only, and 9.2% own both dogs and cats.

8.9% of all SDC households feed cats they do not own. This includes those who own pets and those who do not. These households feed an average of 2.6 roaming cats each. Roaming cats are defined as unowned feral or stray cats

Chart One shows these four main population distributions. Based on the survey results, and given 887,403 households in SDC,^[2] the owned animal population was determined. The owned dog population of SDC is 374,732, with 30.6% of the county owning an average of 1.4 dogs each. The owned cat population is 371,928, with 24.8% of the county owning 1.7 cats.

CHART ONE.

Owned Dog and Cat Distribution

No Pets	54%
Dogs Only	21%
Cats Only	16%
Cats and Dogs	9%

Similarly, the number of known, unowned, roaming cats is calculated to be 205,345. This is based on the number of households feeding cats they do not own. Roaming cats make up at least 35.6% of the entire known cat population in the county. $(205,345 / (205,345 + 371,928) = .356)$ It is important to stress the word "known" here. This percentage (35.6) can be considered the minimum number of roaming cats, as many cats are not actively fed by humans. Many more live wild in the countryside or forage in city alleys.

Homeowners made up 70.6% of cat owners and 84.6% of dog owners. Not surprisingly, far fewer renters own pets. Renters comprise 29.4% of cat owners and 15.4% of dog owners.

Gender distribution of pets

The dog population was found to be 51.4% female and 48.6% male. The cat population, however, changed dramatically over the age of the animals. The gender ratio starts out equally,

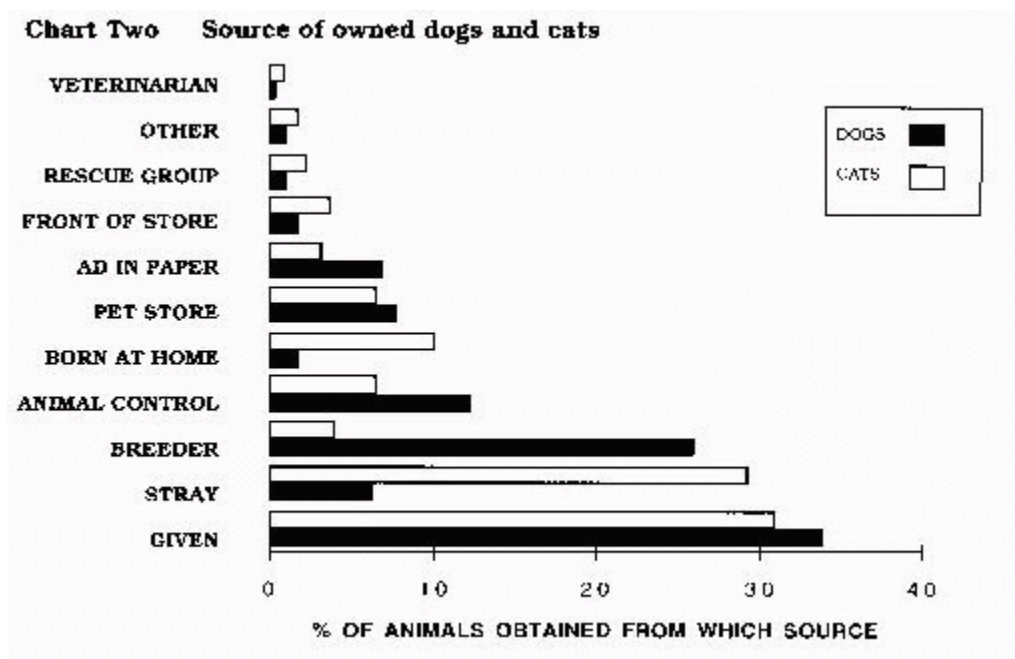
but by the time the cats are in the five-year-old age group, 60% are female. By the age of ten years, 70% of the owned cats are female.

Of the owned SDC cats, 5.6% are purebred with registration papers, while another 3.5% are claimed to be purebred but do not have registration papers.

Owned dogs are much more likely than cats to be purebred. In SDC 38% of owned dogs are purebred with papers, and 20% are claimed to be purebred without papers.

Source of pets

Only 4% of SDC's owned cats are obtained from breeders, whereas 26% of dogs come from breeders. Pet stores account for 6.6% of cats and 7.9% of dogs. Over 60% of owned cats are obtained either as strays or were gifts. Only 6.3% of dogs are obtained as strays, but a sizeable 34% were gifts.



Reponsible pet ownership

The percentage of cats kept indoors only was 37.2, compared to 17.4% which were kept outdoors only. The remainder were indoor-outdoor cats.

Residents of SDC are spaying and neutering their pets. **Owned cats are altered at 84.2%.** Intact female cats, old enough to breed, comprise only 3.3% of the owned cat population.

Only 1.2% of the cats were kept intact for planned breeding purposes.

Of all owned dogs, 67.7% are altered--58.9% of the males, and 76.0% of the females.

The distribution of spayed and neutered pets was fairly constant throughout the county. No area stood out as having a significantly higher or lower percentage of unaltered dogs or cats.

Lost pets

In 1993, 3.3% of SDC dogs disappeared for a day or more. Of these, 42.9% returned on their own and 7.1% were never found. Most of the owners checked at humane shelters, where 21.4% of the lost dogs were found. The number of permanently missing dogs, with no hint as to their fates, accounts for only 0.2% of the dog population. Less than one percent (0.9%) either were, or could have been, handled by Animal Control.

During the same time, 6.4% of owned cats disappeared for a day or more. Most (74.1%) returned on their own. Of the missing, 14.8% were never found. None were found in humane shelters, although all of the owners of the permanently missing cats did check with shelters in search of their lost pets. The number of permanently missing owned cats accounts for less than one percent (0.9%) of the entire owned cat population. Calculating from these figures, roughly 3,500 of the cats handled by SDC Animal Control and the shelters are owned, stray or dead, pet cats.