

MARS
Petcare

A woman with curly hair, wearing a white face mask, a pink tank top, black leggings, and black sneakers, is crouching on a paved path in a park. She is gently petting a golden retriever. The dog is standing and looking towards the camera with its tongue out. The background shows lush green trees and a bright, sunny day.

Pets *in a* Pandemic

BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™ 2020 REPORT

IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD,
PETS MUST BE

welcome



So much changed in 2020, but pets stood out as a reason for joy. About 85 million U.S. homes include a pet. During the pandemic, over 11 million welcomed a new one.

Whether they were entertaining us as we worked from home, getting us out for stress-relieving walks or simply giving us the companionship we craved, pets have made a vital impact during the pandemic. Yet too many pet parents also struggled to keep or care for their pets this year.

To understand what this means for pets and communities, we talked with pet parents and government leaders across the United States. This report shares our findings and how cities can use these insights to inform policies and programs in the years ahead.

With so much comfort provided by pets this year, one thing is clear: Pet parents aren't going to settle anymore for housing that doesn't allow pets or communities that put limits on where they can bring their furry best friends.

For our well-being and theirs, in a post-pandemic world, pets must be welcome.



86% OF PET PARENTS SAID

companionship

**HAS BEEN A TOP BENEFIT
OF HAVING PETS IN THE PANDEMIC.**

How Pets Helped Us Through 2020

From keeping us company to distracting us from the news, dogs and cats have given many people a reason for joy throughout a difficult year.

Ways pets made life better...



86%

COMPANIONSHIP



78%

LESS STRESS
OR ANXIETY



75%

LESS MONOTONY
OR BOREDOM

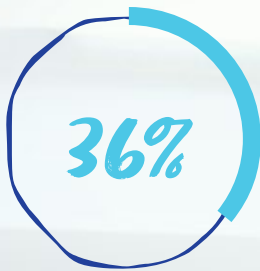


69%

SENSE
OF HOPE

Percentage of respondents who said owning or fostering their pet provided these benefits.

1 in 3 pet parents got a new pet during the pandemic.



TO AVOID
OR ALLEVIATE
DEPRESSION



FOR
COMPANIONSHIP

About 12% of “pandemic pets” started as fosters.

Pets’ Place in Our Homes is Growing

In 2020, dogs and cats are part of more families than ever before. Ten years ago, the American Pet Products Association reported that 71 million U.S. homes had a pet. Today it’s almost 85 million.

Plus, pets’ place in our homes and hearts has grown. In its 2020 Pet Census, WISDOM PANEL™ found that nearly all pet parents said their pets have a positive impact on their mental health. In fact, 72% of dog parents and 32% of cat parents admitted they have canceled plans to spend time with their pets.

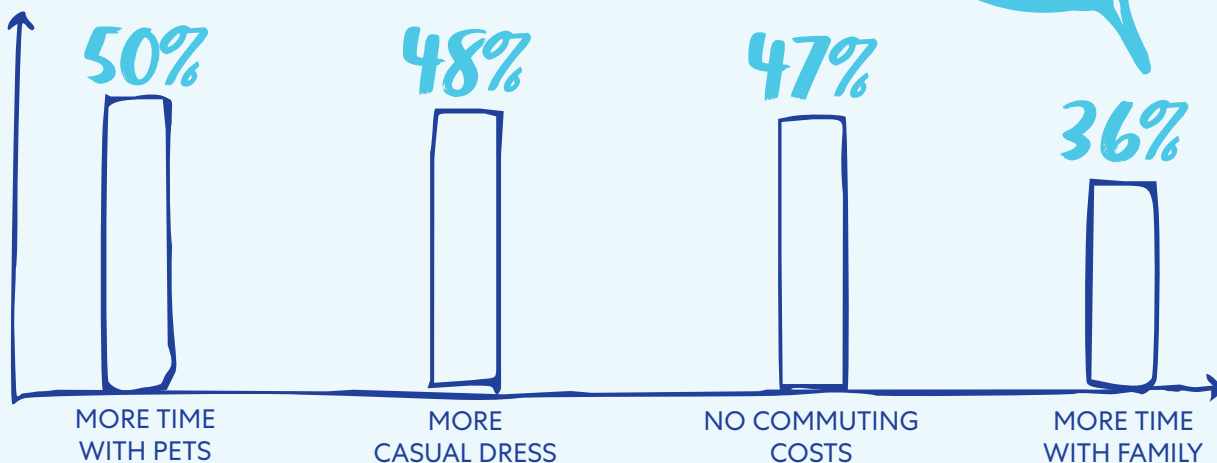
Pets Made Working from Home Work

With more than half of working pet parents we studied doing at least part of their work at home due to COVID-19, pets have become even more integrated into people's work life. In fact, asked about the advantages of working at home, half said having more time with pets has been the greatest benefit.

Last year, we reported that 59% of people would choose a dog-friendly employer over one that's not and that 87% of employers think dog-friendly policies help attract and keep talent. That trend is likely to be even more amplified now that more people have experienced the companionship and stress relief pets bring to the work day.

Pet parents even ranked the benefit of time with pets **over time with family!**

Benefits of working at home...



Percentage who named these among the most important benefits of working at home.

75%

Now that they've spent more time at home, 3 in 4 working pet parents are concerned about leaving pets when they return to the workplace.



How We Helped

People can't experience the benefits of pets, and of working at home with pets, until they can welcome a pet into their life. Mars Petcare offered to cover up to \$100,000 in adoption fees during its 2020 **Better Cities For Pets™** Adoption Weekend, helping hundreds of pets get adopted. A partnership with the Tennessee Titans placed 200 cutouts of adoptable dogs and cats in the stadium for a Tennessee Titans/Houston Texans game, bringing the message of pet adoption to viewers nationwide.



Top Takeaway for Cities: Pets Matter



Pets are helping citizens cope with some of the stressors brought on by the pandemic, such as anxiety and loneliness. By encouraging adoption, cities can enable this benefit while also working to reduce pet homelessness.

Thirty-nine percent of city leaders we spoke with for this report said that since the pandemic started, they've heard increased demand from citizens to support animal shelters. The learnings from 2020 provide a proof point for putting initiatives that support pet adoption on the policy agenda.

Leadership in Action



“I’m very excited to have Rooney visit my office this month. He’s a one year old pitbull. Bright green eyes! I encourage all pet lovers to visit @NashAnimalCare and learn about its Bow Wow Breakout Program.”

— Nashville Mayor John Cooper,
encouraging pet adoption on Twitter

Policy for Pets

Cities play an important part in ending pet homelessness through:

- Advocating for pets and pet adoption
- Providing appropriate funding for city animal shelters
- Encouraging public/private programs to support pet parents in need
- Including planning for pets in city emergency preparations

Visit [BetterCitiesForPets.com](https://www.bettercitiesforpets.com) for tools to help.



1 IN 5 PET PARENTS

HAS CONSIDERED

giving up their pet

DUE TO PANDEMIC HARDSHIPS.





New Stressors for Pet Parents

While pets brought many benefits in 2020, some pet parents have struggled to keep their pet with them. The challenges may get even tougher.

What's made pet parenting harder...



29%

LACK OF ACCESS TO
VETS, GROOMERS,
WALKERS



28%

DIFFICULTY
PAYING FOR PET
EXPENSES



28%

LIMITED
INTERACTION
WITH OTHER PETS



24%

LACK OF ACCESS
TO PET-FRIENDLY
SPACES

Percentage of respondents who said these have been challenging during the pandemic.

For those who considered giving up their pet, these would have helped...



13% of pet parents ended up giving up a pet.

The Pandemic Put Pets at Risk

As a result of the pandemic, almost two-thirds of pet parents surveyed (61%) said they were concerned about their financial ability to care for their pet. Among those directly affected by COVID-19, nearly a quarter reported a great deal of concern. The reasons for this anxiety are numerous, but short-term financial help stands out as a key influencing factor in the potential decision to give up a pet. Of the 20% of pet parents who considered giving up their pet, more than half ultimately made that difficult choice.

What Pet Parents Need from Cities is Evolving

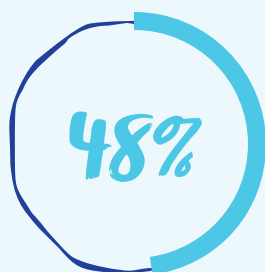
In the last five years, pet-friendly initiatives have focused on community amenities like dog parks and pet-friendly public events. These are still key for pet-friendly cities, but the pandemic has shown that in crises, pet parents need help at home too.

When asked about the worries they're hearing from citizens during the pandemic, about a third of city officials mentioned financial concerns related to pet care or fears about having to give up pets.

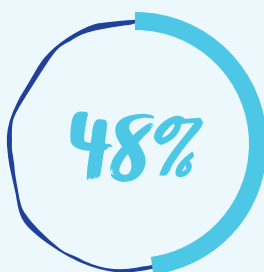
If evictions rise as some expect, people who are displaced may find they have to make the difficult choice between their pet and a place to live.

29% of city officials said their city has taken **new actions to help pet owners** experiencing pandemic-related tough times.

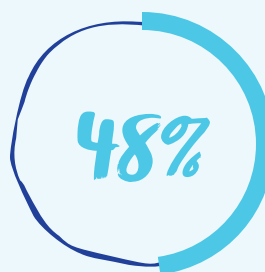
Where the focus has been...



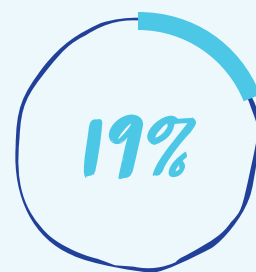
DEDICATED
GREEN SPACE,
BEACHES, TRAILS



NEW OFF-LEASH
DOG PARKS



PET-FRIENDLY
PUBLIC EVENTS



PET-FRIENDLY
POLICIES FOR PUBLIC
OR OTHER HOUSING

Types of pet-related measures local governments have put in place over the last five years.



31%

Of pet parents who considered giving up a pet during the pandemic, about 1 in 3 said access to pet-friendly housing resources would have been helpful.

How We Helped

As the pandemic's impact for pets and pet parents became clear, Mars Petcare worked to get support to those in need. Grants totaling \$200,000 were awarded in partnership with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) to help local animal welfare organizations in cities across the U.S. Mars Petcare provided a \$100,000 match, helping HSUS raise the additional \$100,000 during a livestream event. PEDIGREE Foundation, the non-profit created by the PEDIGREE® brand in 2008, awarded \$175,000 to shelters and rescues struggling due to the pandemic. Across its brands, Mars Petcare also donated 3.5 million free meals for pets.



Top Takeaway for Cities: Pet-Friendly Housing is Key



One of the top reasons people surrender pets to shelters is that they have to make a housing change and can't find an apartment where they can bring their cat or dog. With financial challenges and evictions increasing due to the pandemic, this sad outcome is likely to become even more common.

Nineteen percent of the city leaders we spoke with for this report said they see growing demand for pet-friendly housing options or regulations. Tackling this in the coming year could be a great benefit to citizens and cities alike.

Leadership in Action



“In today’s environment, comprehensive approaches such as Better Cities For Pets™ are critical. It’s time to reimagine the family unit and recognize what pet owners already know to be true — that companion animals are family members.”

— Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson



Policy for Pets

These are key types of legislation that help keep pets in homes:

- Ensuring pet-friendly low-income housing options
- Eliminating breed-based pet restrictions
- Requiring microchipping so lost pets can get home
- Simplifying reunification of lost or stray pets with owners

Visit [BetterCitiesForPets.com](https://www.bettercitiesforpets.com) for ready-to-use sample ordinances.



AROUND **HALF** OF PET OWNERS
SAID THEY'D BE

more comfortable

IN PUBLIC SPACES IF THEY
CAN BRING THEIR PET.



In the “New Normal,” Make Pets Welcome

People got used to spending all day with pets. They now want to bring pets to work, to public spaces and when they travel, for the pets’ comfort and their own.

Where pet parents want to take pets...



67%
OF THOSE
WORKING AT
HOME WANT TO
BRING PETS WHEN
THEY RETURN
TO WORK



59%
OF THOSE
WHO EXPECT
TO RESUME
TRAVELING WANT
TO BRING PETS
WITH THEM

Percentage of respondents who want to bring pets to these locations.

When they return to work, pet parents are worried...



ABOUT
LEAVING
PETS HOME



ABOUT PET
ANXIETY OR
CONFUSION

Those with new “pandemic pets” are **especially concerned** (93%) about leaving pets to go to work.

Returning to Work Sounds Better with Pets

The return to “normal” may seem far off, but pet parents seeing the benefits of working at home with pets are developing new expectations for going back to the workplace: They want their pets to be welcome.

About three-quarters of pet parents surveyed said they’re concerned about pets when they return to working away from home. Just as important, 75% of working pet parents expressed concerns about their *own* personal anxiety if they have to return to work without their pet.

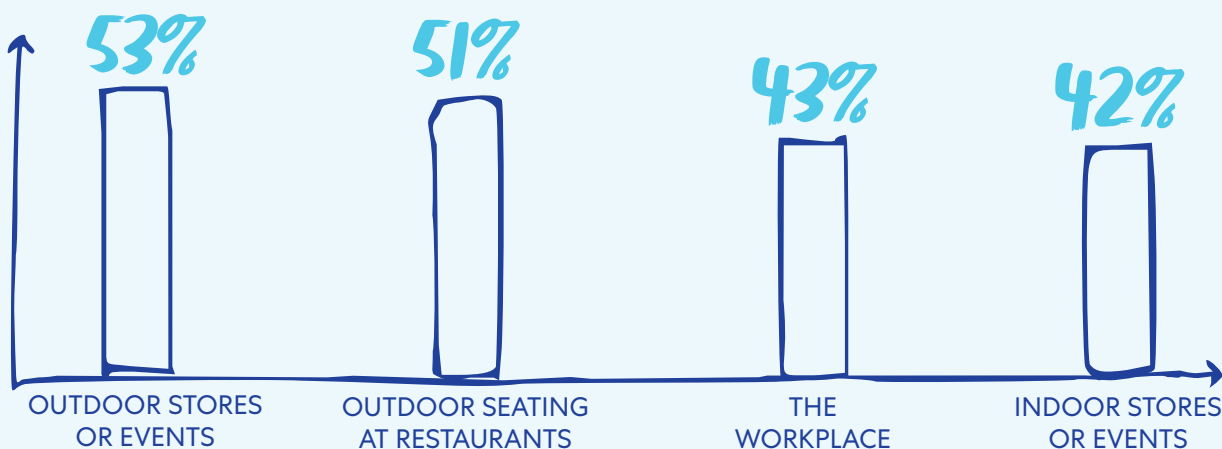
When We Reopen, We Want Pets by Our Side

The pandemic of 2020 has revealed another benefit of making pets welcome: pet parent comfort. Half of pet parents would be comfortable bringing pets to outdoor stores, restaurants or events. Similarly, 50% of dog owners said they'd be more comfortable in these spaces with their dog along.

As communities begin to reopen, pet parents want to keep spending time with pets by bringing them along to public spaces. This continues the trend we were already seeing in 2019, when survey respondents said they wanted to bring pets with them to run errands (42%) and dine at restaurants (32%).

The ability to bring a pet could help more people **consider returning to public spaces.**

We're happier when pets are with us at...



Percentage who said having a pet along would make them more comfortable in these public spaces.

74%

Nearly three-quarters of pet parents aged 18-34 said they want to bring a pet along on future travel.



How We Helped

Since 2017, the **Better Cities For Pets™** program has been providing tools to help communities be pet-friendly. When cities fully reopen and those working from home return to workplaces, our Pets Welcome and **Pets Work At Work™** toolkits are ready to help. Through 2020, we have 40 **Better Cities For Pets™** certified cities across North America demonstrating the benefits for individuals and communities when pets are welcome. We look forward to certifying more cities and helping many more organizations adopt pet-friendly practices.



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Top Takeaway for Cities: Make Pets Welcome



Getting back to business growth will be a priority for cities when the pandemic passes. Knowing that pet parents may be more likely to spend time out in their communities with their pet along, it's a good time to evaluate increasing pet-friendly business programs.

A third of the city leaders we spoke with said they have implemented pet-friendly policies for pets in commercial settings in the past five years. The evolving expectations of pet owners build the case for making pets a priority in the years ahead too.

Leadership in Action



“When you’re a pet-friendly city, you’re a more desirable city. It improves quality of life, and that is really a significant driver to attract businesses to your community.”

— St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman

Policy for Pets

A pet-friendly business district program helps pet parents and businesses with:

- Ordinances like “pets on patios” policies that make pets welcome
- Clear signage about where pets are and are not allowed
- A shared code of conduct that guides pet parents
- Promotion of the district that benefits all businesses

Go to [BetterCitiesForPets.com](https://www.bettercitiesforpets.com) to get the Pets Welcome toolkit.





A Way Forward

Science shows that when people have a pet, they tend to report less loneliness and stress, get more exercise and have stronger social ties. As a result, cities that make pets welcome are supporting the health and well-being of their citizens.

The **Better Cities For Pets™** program was designed to help cities do this with a playbook for pet-friendliness, city certification program and online resources. The program was created by Mars Petcare, the world's leading pet nutrition and health care company, in partnership with experts in city planning and key government stakeholders.

The Better Cities For Pets™ model



The **Better Cities For Pets™** model — the core of our assessment for certified cities — lays out 12 key focus areas for pet-friendly cities and the fundamentals that support them. Cities can tackle improvements to achieve the model and make life better for people and pets using resources at [BetterCitiesForPets.com](https://www.bettercitiesforpets.com).

2020 BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™

Certified Cities



ONTARIO
Meaford

ARIZONA

Tucson

ARKANSAS

Bentonville

CALIFORNIA

Downey

Dublin

Laguna Niguel

Oakland

Santa Clarita

Waterford

FLORIDA

Dania Beach

Hallandale Beach

Key West

Miami

Miami Lakes

Port St. Lucie

St. Petersburg

GEORGIA

Lavonia

ILLINOIS

Calumet City

INDIANA

Bloomington

Fort Wayne

KANSAS

Topeka

MICHIGAN

Orion Township

Rochester

MINNESOTA

Royalton

NEBRASKA

South Sioux City

NEVADA

Henderson

Reno

NORTH CAROLINA

Southport

OHIO

Cleveland

OREGON

Gresham

Sutherlin

TENNESSEE

Brentwood

Franklin

Memphis

Nashville

TEXAS

Arlington

Dallas

Houston

Plano

WYOMING

Jackson

Resources for Cities



With toolkits, best practices and policy templates, the **Better Cities For Pets™** program helps city officials take action to make communities more pet-friendly. Here are some of the resources available for download at [BetterCitiesForPets.com](https://www.bettercitiesforpets.com).

Pet-Friendly Housing Toolkit

- Model Ordinance for Pet-Friendly Low-Income Housing
- Model Ordinance for Microchipping Pets
- Model Ordinance against Breed-Based Pet Restrictions
- Model Ordinance for Shelter Reunification of Lost or Stray Pets
- Sample Pet Agreement for Properties



Pets Welcome Toolkit

- Ways to Make Your Business Pet-Friendly
- Sample Pet Code of Conduct
- Handling Customer Concerns about Pets
- Pet Behavior 101 for Pet-Friendly Businesses
- Promoting Your Pet-Friendly Business

PETS WORK AT WORK™ Toolkit

- Facilities and Legal Considerations
- Sample Pet Policy
- Sample Participant Pledge
- Pet-Friendly Workplace Q&A

Public Spaces

- Pet-Friendly City Signage
- Key Features of a Successful Dog Park
- Sample Language for Pet Hydration Stations
- Sample Language for Pet Waste Stations

Animal Welfare and Adoption

- Making Shelters Welcoming
- How to Host a Community Pet Adoption Event
- How TNR Programs Help Community Cats
- How Collaboration Saves Homeless Pets

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BetterCitiesForPets.com



MarsPetcareUS

Unless otherwise noted, data in this report comes from online surveys conducted by KRC Research with 1,001 U.S. pet owners and 31 American city officials between September 9-25, 2020.

Other sources:

American Pet Products Association 2019-2020 National Pet Owners Survey and COVID-19 Pulse Study Volume 3. AmericanPetProducts.org (Page 1)

Wisdom Health Genetics 2020 Pet Census, conducted from June to August 2020 via a Typeform survey, with 13,930 respondents. Blog.WisdomPanel.com/Pet-Census (Page 5)

Better Cities For Pets™ Pet-Friendly Cities Survey, conducted by OnePoll in June 2019 with a sample of 2,000 American pet owners. Bit.ly/BetterCitiesForPets2019Survey. (Pages 6 and 22)