



ALLEY CAT RESCUE
ALLIANCE FOR CAT PROTECTION

CATS IN THE UNITED STATES 2021

**A report by
Alley Cat Rescue**

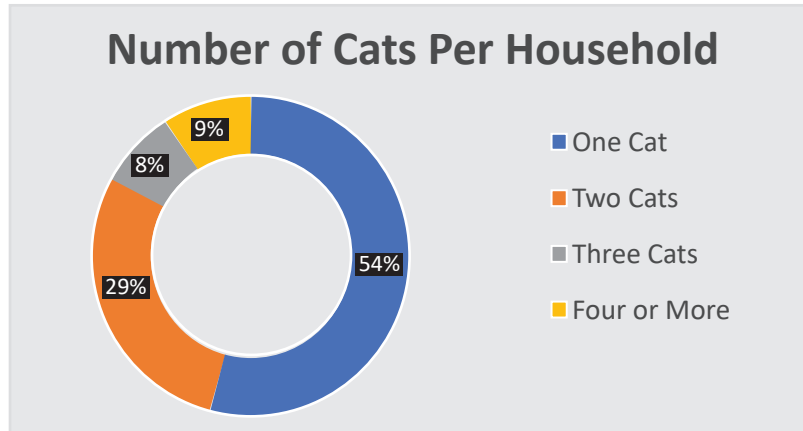
**The Status of Cats
in the United States**

PO Box 585
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Pet Cat Demographics

Cats in Households

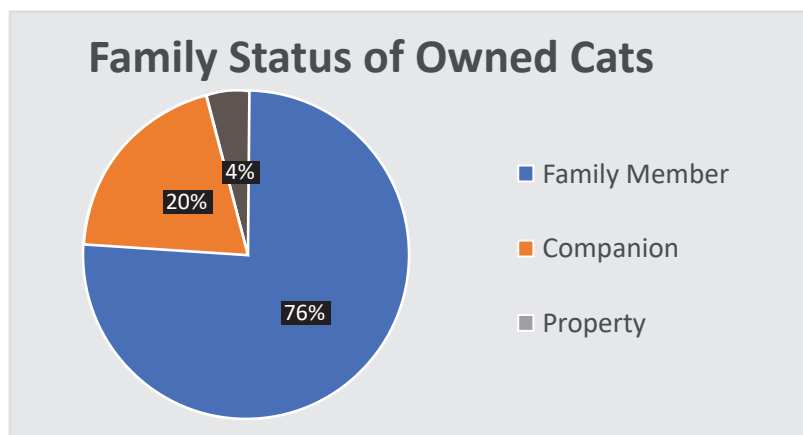
How many cats live in U.S. households? President & Chief Program Officer of WellBeing International, Andrew N. Rowan, Ph.D. analyzed data published in 2018 by AVMA. His analyses revealed the following trends.



The per-household average of 1.8 cats per home is the lowest reported since AVMA began its surveys in 1982 (AVMA, 2018). The AVMA speculates that decline in cat ownership may be due to increased accuracy in survey methodology.

2016 AVMA data also reveals that people's attitudes toward their household cats and an increase in overall veterinary care during the last two decades.

The majority of respondents (76%) consider their cats to be family members and 54% of households report taking their cat(s) to a veterinarian. The survey found that 89.1% of cat owners reported having a regular veterinarian, a number that has steadily increased from 73.7% in 1996 (AVMA, 2018).



Sterilization

AVMA reports that 80% of household cats are sterilized (spayed or neutered) (AVMA, 2018). APPA analyzed household responses and divided them into two categories – the general population and low-income communities. Although the spay/neuter rate within the general population is a healthy 93%, the rate among low-income households is much lower at only 12%. Nearly 69% of owned cats in underserved communities have never been to a veterinarian.

The Humane Society of the U.S. found that when it makes veterinary services geographically and financially available in underserved communities, the number of animals in those communities who are spayed/neutered rises to nearly 90%. Making sterilization procedures available to low-income communities is crucial to increasing the wellbeing of community cats.

Spay and neuter surgeries are less expensive when done at shelters versus private veterinary offices.

- Average spay cost at shelters: \$43
- Average spay cost at private vets: \$95
- Average neuter cost at shelters: \$43
- Average neuter cost at private vets: \$75

As many as 32% of shelter-provided surgeries were provided at no cost. A smaller but significant portion of sterilization surgeries, 28% were provided at no cost by private veterinary clinics.

Animal Shelter Demographics

Dr. Andrew Rowan looked at intake and disposition data reported by shelters. He extrapolated the data to represent 5,000 shelters and rescue organizations across the country. He found that in 2020, euthanasia dropped by around 40%. He also found that overall intake at shelters and rescues dropped by 20%. This prevents overcrowding at shelters.

Estimated USA Cat Shelter Intake & Outcome Numbers			
Year	2010	2015	2020
Intake	4,749,839	3,636,325	3,194,079
Adopted	1,791,465 38%	2,009,851 55%	2,143,348 67%
Euthanized	2,221,083 48%	1,021,350 28%	399,885 13%
Outcome Total	4,442,488	3,580,456	3,152,900

Outdoor Community Cats

The Humane Society of the U.S. estimates the number of feral and stray cats in the U.S. to be 30 – 40 million (Pets by the Numbers, 2019).

A feral cat is considered “wild” because it fears people, and this response usually presents as aggression. A stray cat is one who is acclimated to people but escaped from its home.

Outdoor cats and wildlife

Some wildlife advocates believe that because some outdoor cats kill birds and small mammals, cats represent a threat to biodiversity and should be removed from ecosystems entirely. Research does not substantiate their claims.

A study released in 2018 by Bird Life International found that unsustainable agricultural practices, not cats, is the primary threat to birds. Killing cats to protect wildlife has proven to be ineffective and the public is opposed to it.



TNR

TNR stands for trap-neuter-return, and this refers to the management of community cat populations through trapping, neutering or spaying, and releasing them to the same area from which they were trapped or another safe location. Research shows TNR is the most effective and desirable method of managing free-roaming cat populations.

Overpopulation

ACR's 2017 national survey showed a 72% reduction in kitten births after TNR was introduced in monitored colonies. Following ACR surveys showed a 77% reduction in kitten births between 2017 and 2019 in these same monitored colonies where TNR had been introduced. TNR resulted in an 82% decline in overall population in a sample of 20 colonies, with eight of these colonies disappearing completely.

Community cat welfare

A 2019 study funded by Best Friends Animal Society found that targeted, high-intensity TNR programs in six diverse U.S. communities reduced cat euthanasia at municipal shelters by an average of 83%. This also reduced shelter intake of cats by 32%.

TNR usually also involves vaccinating the cats for the most common diseases – including rabies, distemper, and viruses that cause upper respiratory infections – as well as attending to any immediate medical needs. This improves the welfare of community cats and keeps colonies healthy.

Community Kittens

A non-sterilized female community cat will have an average of 1.4 litters per year. Once a community cat gives birth, 75% of her street kittens between the ages of one day to six months do not survive. Kittens are especially vulnerable to cat diseases because their immune systems are not fully developed. These kittens get sick easily and cannot fight infection on their own. They are also less able than a grown cat to withstand a parasitic infection such as fleas and roundworms. TNR is the most humane and only effective practice that dramatically decreases the number of kittens born to such a harsh fate.



Recent U.S. Laws Affecting Cats

Policy reform and new laws affect the welfare of cats in homes and outdoor communities. Here are the most recent changes in policies affecting U.S. cats.

Laws Passed

Declawing Ban – Austin, Texas

In 2021 Austin, Texas banned painful declawing procedures, joining New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver and St. Louis in their goal to ban declawing procedures throughout the U.S. Check to see if your city or state has a declawing ban in place. If it does not, contact local policymakers and share resources (from ACR's website, <http://www.saveacat.org/news/declawing-what-you-need-to-know>) with them about the realities of declawing. Effective and humane alternatives to the declawing exist, and ACR implores you to explore these alternative options and refrain from this torturous procedure.



Citywide Cat Program and Funding for TNR – Los Angeles, CA

Los Angeles' program plans to spay/neuter 20,000 cats per year using municipal funds will inspire other cities to provide similar resources for TNR and feral cat care.

Laws That Did Not Pass

Bill SB 1390 – Virginia

A bill to prevent TNR volunteers from being penalized for “abandonment and licensing of animals” (source: <https://legiscan.com/VA/bill/SB1390/2021>) and program operators from general shelter requirements for holding periods, releasing of animals, and recordkeeping. Although the bill was passed in the Virginia State Senate, it did not pass in the House of Delegates.

Virginia Residents should check to see how your representatives voted on SB 1390 and hold them accountable. If they voted no, call them and ask them why—and tell them why you support the bill.

Undetermined Laws

The Animal Cruelty Enforcement (ACE) Act

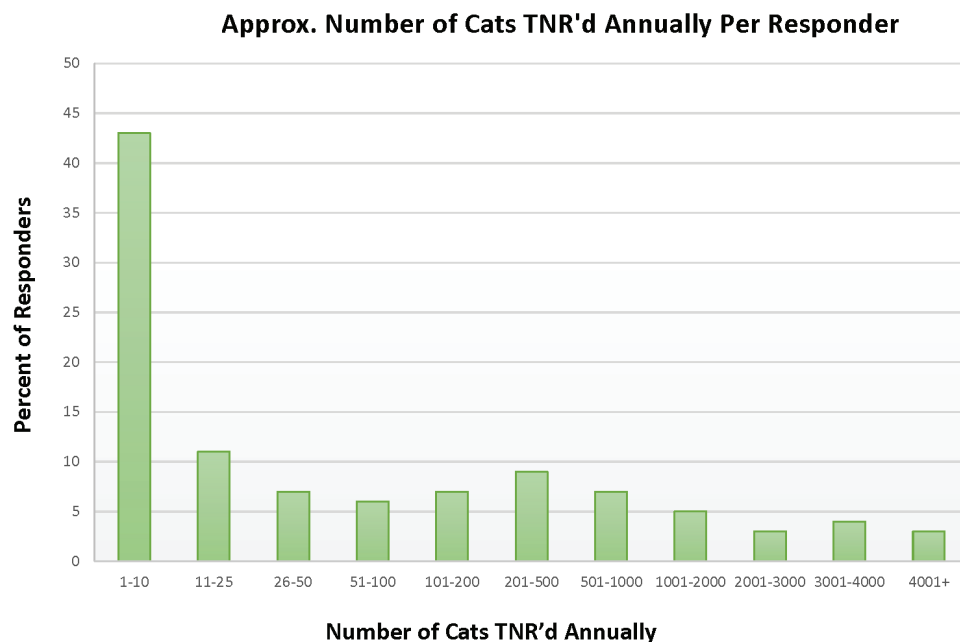
According to the bill’s sponsors, this legislation “would establish a dedicated Animal Cruelty Crimes Division at the Department of Justice to aid in the investigation, enforcement, and prosecution of felony animal cruelty crimes.” This act is currently in the House Judiciary Committee.

***H.R. 1016 — 117th Congress: Animal Cruelty Enforcement Act of 2021.” www.GovTrack.us. 2021. April 19, 2021 <<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/117/hr1016>>*

Community Cat Survey Results

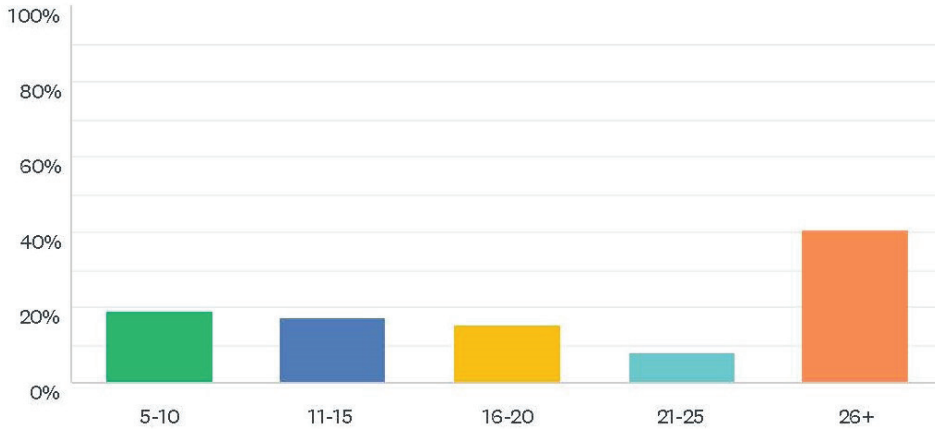
ACR conducted a wide-spread online “Community Cat” survey of TNR groups and colony caretakers that shows a solid increase in TNR practices from 2012 to 2019. Below are samples of the survey questions and an overview of the responses for each. You can view all of the questions and response data on our website at www.saveacat.org/SurveyResults2019.html

1) How many cats do you TNR per year?

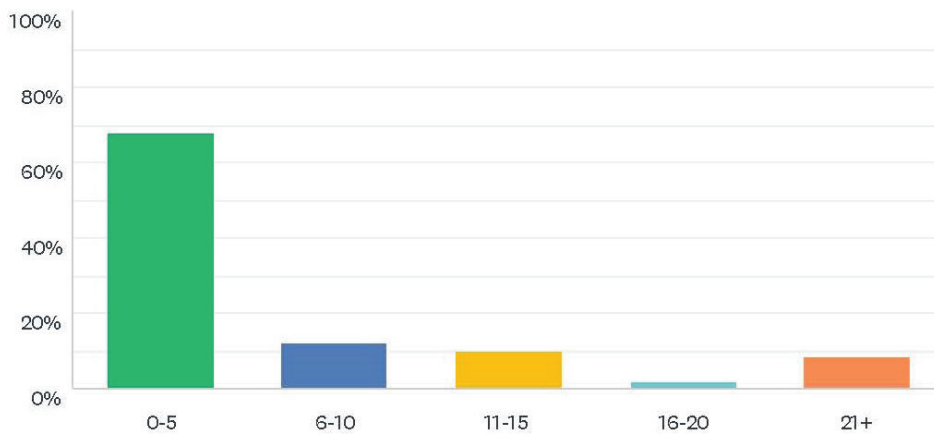


The Community Cat Survey was sent to rescue groups and colony caretakers throughout the U.S. Out of the 298 responses received, a little over half confirmed that the responder practices TNR. That group of responders collectively sterilized 67,822 cats annually, with one third of the responders reporting sterilizing 100 or more cats in a year. The largest amount of annual sterilizations reported was an impressive 15,501.

2 a) How many kittens were reported prior to TNR?

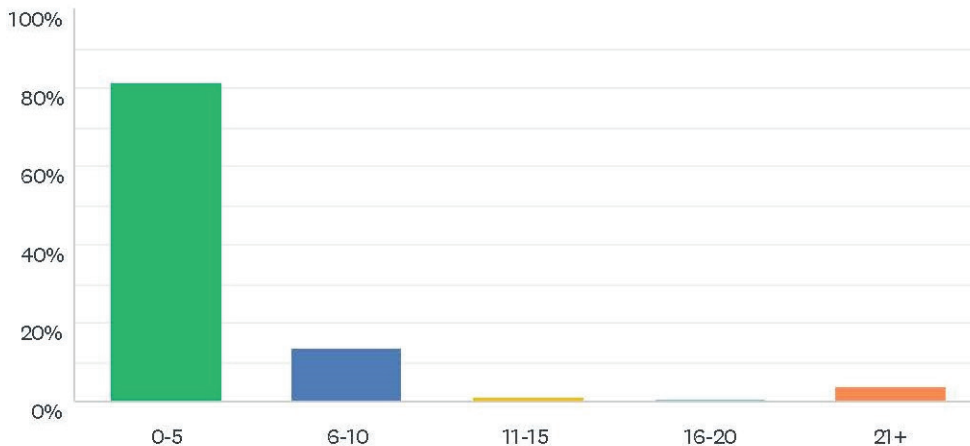


b) How many kittens were reported after TNR?



Overall, the average number of kittens per respondent dropped from 3.34 in 2012 to 1.7 before TNR was practiced in their colonies. The percentage of respondents who reported over 20 kittens in their care dropped remarkably from 48% before TNR to only 10% after TNR, while the percentage of those who reported five or fewer kittens in their care rose from 19% to 70%, revealing the TNR groups have greatly reduced the number of kittens within individual colonies.

3) a) After performing TNR how many new cats moved into the colonies



The data from these questions helps prove culling is not a solution to community cat overpopulation. Respondents whose local animal control had killed cats to eradicate colonies reported that 84% of the time, new cats moved into the territory, creating new colonies.

The 2019 Community Cat Survey, through a sampling of individual colony caretakers and cat welfare groups, gives strong evidence for the effectiveness and growing popularity of TNR. This is wonderful news for alley cats!

It is estimated that a total of 600,000 community cats in the United States are sterilized (HSUS). ACR is dedicated to further increasing the momentum of the TNR movement and continuing to monitor its progress in the U.S.

Sources

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