

Animal sheltering in the U.S. has transformed in recent years, driven by increased awareness, community support, and tireless efforts of shelter workers and supporters. This document highlights essential statistics and trends that reflect the strides and ongoing challenges in ensuring every pet finds a loving home.

National Shelter Statistics

- **Annual Shelter Intake:** Approximately **6.3 million companion animals** enter U.S. shelters annually, with **3.1 million dogs** and **3.2 million cats**.
 - ◆ *Source:* ASPCA, "Pet Statistics" (2021)
- **Adoption Rates:** Around **4.1 million animals are adopted** from shelters each year.
 - ◆ *Source:* ASPCA, "Pet Statistics" (2021)
- **Euthanasia Rates:** Roughly **920,000 shelter animals** are euthanized each year, comprising **390,000 dogs** and **530,000 cats**.
 - ◆ *Source:* Best Friends Animal Society, "Statistics on Shelter Animals in the US" (2023)
- **Return to Owner (RTO) Rates:** About **710,000 animals who enter shelters as strays are returned to their owners** each year. However, RTO rates differ widely for dogs and cats, with around **70% of stray dogs** returned but less than **5% of stray cats**.
 - ◆ *Source:* ASPCA, "Pet Statistics" (2021)

Pet Homelessness

- **Stray Population:** There are an estimated **70 million stray cats** and **30-40 million stray dogs** in the U.S.
 - ◆ *Source:* Humane Society of the United States, "Pets by the Numbers" (2023)
- **Owner Surrender:** Primary reasons for pet surrenders include housing issues, financial difficulties, and behavioral challenges.
 - ◆ *Source:* Best Friends Animal Society, "Shelter Pet Statistics" (2023)

Shelter Outcomes

- **Live Release Rate (LRR):** The nationwide LRR (the percentage of animals leaving shelters alive) is approximately **80-85%**. The no-kill threshold is generally considered a 90% live release rate.
 - ◆ *Source:* Shelter Animals Count, "National Database" (2022)
- **Community Cat Programs:** Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs have been shown to reduce shelter euthanasia rates for cats and stabilize community cat populations.

- ◆ *Source:* Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, "Community Cat Population Management" (2019)

Benefits of Pet Adoption

- **Health Benefits:** Studies show that adopting a pet can reduce stress, increase physical activity, and enhance overall mental health.
 - ◆ *Source:* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Healthy Pets, Healthy People" (2022)
- **Reduced Costs:** Adopting from a shelter or rescue is generally much more affordable than buying from a breeder, with shelter animals often spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and microchipped before adoption.
 - ◆ *Source:* American Pet Products Association (APPA), "National Pet Owners Survey" (2022)

Pet Overpopulation & Spay/Neuter

- **Spay/Neuter Impact:** Widespread spay/neuter efforts have contributed to a significant decrease in shelter intake and euthanasia rates over the past two decades.
 - ◆ *Source:* National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA), "Shelter Intake and Euthanasia Trends" (2022)
- **Public Perception:** Around **86% of people consider pet overpopulation to be a problem**, yet only **10% of pets are obtained from shelters**.
 - ◆ *Source:* American Pet Products Association, "National Pet Owners Survey" (2022)

Volunteer and Foster Contributions

- **Volunteer Impact:** Volunteers contribute approximately **\$2 billion in unpaid labor** to U.S. shelters annually, providing essential support in care, socialization, and adoption events.
 - ◆ *Source:* National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy (2021)
- **Foster Programs:** Foster programs increase shelter capacity, reduce stress on animals, and improve adoption rates. Some shelters report an adoption rate of over **90% for fostered animals**.
 - ◆ *Source:* ASPCA, "Foster Program Benefits" (2021)

COVID-19 Impact on Shelters

→ During the COVID-19 pandemic, **shelter adoptions surged**, with an increase in pet fostering and a reduction in shelter euthanasia rates. However, **2021-2022 saw an increase in intakes** as pet owners faced financial and housing challenges.

◆ *Source: American Pet Products Association, "COVID-19 Pet Adoption Trends" (2022)*

CASPCA Statistics (2023):

Live release rate: **96.6%**

Pets reunited with owners: **432 animals**

Animals taken in: **3,051 animals**

Adoptions: **2,658 animals**

Outgoing animals: **3,266 animals**

Pets altered: **3,037 animals**

Animals entered into foster care: **2,377 animals**