



SHELTER  
ANIMALS  
COUNT

A PROGRAM OF THE  ASPCA

# 2025

## Annual Data Report

Comparing to 2024 Annual Data



*A Decade of Trusted Animal Sheltering Data*

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Dear Animal Welfare Community,

As we reflect on 2025, one of the most striking themes in this year's data is its steadiness. Across many of our core metrics, the national sheltering landscape held consistent with 2024. Yet within that stability, we identified important shifts that help us better understand the pressures, progress, and opportunities facing the field. These nuanced changes are exactly why data matters: they reveal where the system is holding strong and where targeted support can make a meaningful difference.

In this year's report, we expanded our animal-level data analysis more than ever before and improved data standardization efforts. Thanks to the continued expansions in technology and partnerships with our software partners, this report includes deeper insights into age, size, and organization-type trends across intakes, outcomes, and length of stay. These details highlight the pathways of animals moving through the system and provide shelters, rescues, and the industry with more actionable information to guide their work.

In 2025, we released more [data reports](#) and research than in any previous year—covering topics from sterilization rates at intake to field services, foster-based rescue trends, and adoption policies. Each report reflects our commitment to equipping the field with timely, transparent, and practical data. And moving into 2026, we are building on that momentum as we join the ASPCA, strengthening our long-term sustainability and expanding our capacity to serve as the trusted, neutral source of national sheltering data.

This year also marks a meaningful milestone: 10 years of collecting and analyzing sheltering data. While Shelter Animals Count was founded in 2012, our first year of data collection began in 2016, and since then, tens of millions of animal records have helped shape an understanding of the sheltering landscape. We are deeply grateful to every organization that contributes data and makes this work possible.

Thank you for trusting us to tell the national story of what is happening in sheltering organizations today and for your unwavering commitment to animals and the people who care for them.



## **Stephanie Filer**

Vice President

Shelter Animals Count, a program of the ASPCA



# Strengthening the Future of Shelter Data: SAC + ASPCA

At the end of 2025, Shelter Animals Count (SAC) was acquired by the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) to ensure the long-term sustainability of the nation's most trusted animal sheltering dataset. This strategic partnership preserves SAC's neutrality, strengthens our infrastructure, and secures our future - so the data you rely on remains accessible, independent, and impactful.

This acquisition guarantees that SAC's data will remain as clean and independent as it has always been. Our funding status is no longer dependent on grants, corporate sponsorships, or financial support from shelters. Instead, this partnership secures SAC's future in a way that protects the integrity of the data and the accessibility of the tools and analysis you rely on.

## What this Means for You:

- **Data Independence:** Our mission remains unchanged. We will continue collecting and analyzing sheltering data with the same neutrality, transparency, and consistency you've come to expect – reporting on current and historic sheltering trends.
- **Long-Term Sustainability:** The acquisition ensures SAC's infrastructure, tools, and datasets will remain available and supported for years to come.
- **Security and Confidentiality Maintained:** The data remains secure and confidential. SAC's privacy standards and data use agreements are still in place, and no changes will be made without review and consent of our organizations.
- **Uninterrupted Access:** Our dashboards, reports, and coalition tools will remain fully accessible to shelters, rescues, coalitions, and community service organizations. If you submit data to us, your process remains the same through our member portal or through APIs.
- **Community-Driven Priorities:** SAC will continue gathering feedback from shelters and rescues to guide future enhancements, which ensures the data reflects your work, overall trends in the field, and supports your efforts in your communities.

This partnership exists because we believe the data must endure to tell the national story. It must remain independent. And it must continue to serve the entire field for years to come.

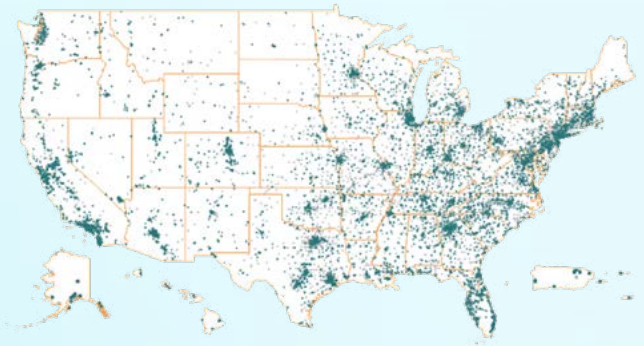
## Shelter Animals Count Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee is a non-fiduciary, non-governing committee whose purpose is to support SAC's continued success at the ASPCA. Advisory Committee members will engage with communities and priority audiences about SAC and will provide input and feedback to the ASPCA regarding engagement of shelters and rescues, insights into animal welfare and shelter operations, trends in data analysis and reporting, and collaborations between the ASPCA and third parties.

For more information and to view FAQs on the acquisition, visit [shelteranimalscount.org/aspca](https://shelteranimalscount.org/aspca).

# Shelter Animal Count's Machine Learning Model

In 2024, Shelter Animals Count (SAC) introduced an advanced Machine Learning (ML) model that elevates our ability to analyze and interpret data from animal shelters across the country. Leveraging cutting-edge data science techniques, this ML model enhances our ability to provide meaningful insights that foster data-driven decisions in animal welfare outcomes.



## How it Works

Machine Learning (ML) refers to statistical methods that find patterns in data. Our ML model analyzes data from reporting organizations—including factors like organization type, size, region, and historical trends—to make estimations from large volumes of data. This approach allows us to analyze shelter data with unprecedented precision, delivering:



### Deeper Insights:

Granular analysis of species-specific trends, regional differences, and organization-level impacts.



### Improved Accuracy:

More reliable estimations, even for underrepresented data sets.



### Actionable Information:

Insights tailored to the needs of shelters, rescues, and other animal welfare organizations.

## Using the Model for the 2025 Report

At the start of each year, our data team revises estimates for the upcoming reporting cycle and ensures the model reflects the most current methodology. Once updated, previously released estimates are superseded. These revisions typically occur due to refreshed data, newly submitted information from participating organizations, methodological improvements, or changes within organizations themselves. This process allows us to continually provide the most accurate and reliable estimates possible, giving organizations a clearer understanding of key national metrics.

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Model:

### What kind of data does the model use?

In 2024, SAC released national estimates based on organization and species-level medians. While these estimates were thoroughly validated and instrumental in identifying high-level trends, we recognized an opportunity to deepen our analysis. The updated model enables a more nuanced understanding of the data, helping us uncover patterns and insights that can drive significant improvements in animal welfare outcomes.

The model analyzes anonymized data from shelters and rescues across the country. This includes organization-level data (e.g., intake and outcomes) and species-specific information. **Monthly data for intakes and outcomes from more than 6k organizations** for the years of 2016-2025 is included in the model to determine intake and outcome totals for all organizations across the country.

Demographic data that was identified to be associated with intakes and outcomes are included to more accurately predict intakes and outcomes.

### How does machine learning improve the model?

Machine learning is more powerful because it can:

- process and learn from multiple pieces of data
- find hidden patterns
- make predictions that are more accurate for specific situations or groups rather than providing a one-size-fits-all number like the median does

**More Data Collected** + **Enhanced Data Analysis & Modeling** = **Continually Improving Insights**

As shelters submit more data each year, our machine learning model learns and improves. This means the estimates in this report are more accurate than ever before—and will continue to get better.

This report is a snapshot in time. Numbers may change as new data is submitted and our model improves.

To learn more about the estimation model, visit our website at [shelteranimalscount.org/shelter-animals-count-estimation-model](https://shelteranimalscount.org/shelter-animals-count-estimation-model)

## About Shelter Animals Count

Shelter Animals Count (SAC), a program of the ASPCA, is a nationally recognized initiative dedicated to collecting, analyzing, and sharing data on animal sheltering across the United States and Canada.

As a neutral, industry-wide data collection entity, SAC provides valuable insights into shelter operations, trends in animal intake and outcomes, and the challenges faced by shelters and rescues. SAC collaborates with organizations of all sizes to encourage data submission, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the state of animal welfare.

This data-driven approach supports evidence-based decision making, helping to improve outcomes for animals, guide policy, and increases transparency within the animal welfare industry and in communities across the country.



**Community Intakes:** Total intakes excluding transfers in to show actual community activity, and avoid double counting intakes when aggregating. Includes strays, owner surrenders, and other intakes (e.g. seizures, born in care).

**Community Live Outcomes:** Total live outcomes excluding transfers out. Includes adoptions, return to owner, return to field, and other live outcomes.

**Community Outcomes:** Total outcomes (live and non-live) excluding transfers out. Includes adoption, return to owner, return to field, other live outcomes, shelter euthanasia, died in care, and lost in care.

**Days in Care:** The number of days that an animal has been in the organization's care from the date of the initial intake and has not had a permanent outcome.

**Government Shelter:** A city or county-operated entity providing animal control services and housing services.

**Intake Rate:** The percentage of community intakes that are a certain intake type.

**Length of Stay (LOS):** Calculated as the number of days from intake to outcome for animals that have already had a permanent outcome.

**Non-live Outcomes:** Died in care (neonatal loss, illness, etc.), lost in care, and shelter euthanasia.

**Outcome Rate of Total Intakes:** The percentage of total intakes that resulted in a certain outcome type. Transfers out are included as an outcome and Transfers in are included as an intake in this calculation.

**Outcome Rate:** The percentage of community outcomes that were a certain outcome type. Excludes transfers out.

**Population Balance** (aka Awaiting Outcome or Gap):  $(\text{Community Intakes} + \text{Transfers in}) - (\text{Community Outcomes} + \text{Transfers out}) =$  the number of animals that have entered and not had an outcome. In the specified time period, this is the number shows if the population in care has increased (positive number) or decreased (negative number).

**Private Shelters:** A private/nonprofit agency with a physical facility but no government contract.

**Rescue:** Also called 'foster-based rescue'. An animal welfare organization that houses animals exclusively in the homes of volunteers and/or staff of the organization. Rescues can also be 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and, in some cases, can hold full or partial contracts with government entities.

**Shelters with Contract:** A private/nonprofit agency with a contract or contracts for animal control services or housing services. A government contract is a formal agreement with a government entity for animal control and/or housing services.

**Total Intakes:** All intakes including strays, owner surrenders, other intakes (e.g. seizures, born in care, and transfers in).

**Total Live Outcomes:** Adoption, return to owner, return to field, transfer out, and other live outcomes.

**Total Outcomes:** Includes all outcomes including adoptions, return to owner/field, other live outcomes, transfers out, shelter euthanasia, and died in care/lost in care.

## Animal Welfare Glossary by Shelter Animals Count

The Animal Welfare Glossary by Shelter Animals Count provides clear definitions of commonly used terms in the animal welfare sector. Explore additional industry definitions, data collection terms, and animal terminology at [shelteranimalscount.org/glossary](https://shelteranimalscount.org/glossary).

# 2025 ANNUAL DATA REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

## Community Intakes Slightly Decreased

In 2025, dog and cat community intakes totaled **5.8M animals**, a decrease of 121,000 animals (2%) compared to 2024. [\(pg 14\)](#)

## Adoptions Slightly Increased for Dogs and Cats

Adoptions reached **4.2M animals**, increasing by **29,000 (+0.7% more)**. This modest rise helped offset intake declines and supported overall live outcomes. [\(pg 25\)](#)

## Non-Live Outcomes Slightly Decreased for Dogs

Non-live outcomes totaled 757,000 animals, **a 1% decline from 2024** (4k fewer). Dog non-live outcomes decreased, while cat non-live outcomes rose slightly, reflecting species-specific challenges such as neonatal fragility. [\(pg 32\)](#)

## Transfers In Increased and Transfers Out Decreased

Transfers into shelters and rescues **increased to 3%** compared to 2024, reaching **1.3 million animals**, while transfers out decreased by 1% - totaling 906,000 animals. Government shelters remained the primary source of transfers out, and rescues absorbed the majority of transfers in. [\(pg 30\)](#)

## A Decade of Trusted Sheltering Data

This year's report includes **10 years of national sheltering data**, offering a clear, long-range view of how the system has changed and where momentum is building. [\(pg 11\)](#)

## Continued Decline in Return to Owners

Return to owner outcomes **declined by 3%** compared to 2024, with **638,000 animals** reunited with their families in 2025. Stray dogs remained ~6 times more likely to be returned to owners than stray cats, a consistent pattern across the past two years. [\(pg 29\)](#)

### Report Reading Tip

To improve readability, many figures in this report are rounded to the nearest 1,000. On the Stats at a Glance pages, numbers are rounded to the nearest decimal point. Some totals may exceed 100% due to rounding.

### Animal-Level Data from Shelter Animals Count

Beyond high-level totals, Shelter Animals Count analyzes Animal-Level data, which is detailed records on individual animals, from organizations using select shelter software systems integrated with SAC's API (Application Programming Interfaces). This data enables a more nuanced view of sheltering trends by capturing details like age, size, intake type, and outcome. In 2025, we added an additional software to our animal-level data analysis, approximately doubling the volume of records in our dataset. While this expanded coverage provides a more comprehensive view of shelter operations nationwide, some year-over-year trends may be influenced by the change in data composition. As a result, the data offers further valuable insights into shelter animal outcomes, detailed analysis for animal age and size, and length of stay patterns across the field. As more organizations contribute their data each year and the dataset continually improves, totals may differ from previously published figures.

# STATS AT A GLANCE

## COMMUNITY INTAKES

2025 totals (excluding transfers) with percentage change to 2024.

### Stray/Lost

2025 **1.6M** 2024 **1.7M** ↓ 7.6%

2025 **1.8M** 2024 **1.8M** ↓ 1.3%

### Owner Surrender

2025 **848K** 2024 **838K** ↑ 1.2%

2025 **881K** 2024 **847K** ↑ 4%

### Other Intake e.g., seized, born in care

2025 **387K** 2024 **396k** ↓ 2.2%

2025 **292K** 2024 **294K** ↓ 0.9%

### TOTAL COMMUNITY INTAKES

*Excluding transfers*

2025 **2.8M** 2024 **3M** ↓ 4%

2025 **3M** 2024 **3M** ↑ 0.2%

## COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

2025 totals (excluding transfers) with percentage change to 2024.

### Adoption

2025 **2M** 2024 **2M** ↓ 0.8%

2025 **2.2M** 2024 **2.2M** ↑ 2.2%

### Return to Owner/Field

2025 **542K** 2024 **566K** ↓ 7.5%

2025 **352K** 2024 **360K** ↓ 0.9%

### Other Live Outcome

2025 **59K** 2024 **65K** ↓ 8.5%

2025 **59K** 2024 **62K** ↓ 4.7%

### TOTAL COMMUNITY LIVE OUTCOMES

2025 **2.6M** 2024 **2.7M** ↓ 1.7%

2025 **2.6M** 2024 **2.6M** ↑ 1.5%

### TOTAL COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

*Excluding transfers*

2025 **3M** 2024 **3M** ↓ 2.1%

2025 **3M** 2024 **3M** ↑ 2.2%

# STATS AT A GLANCE

## TOTAL INTAKES

2025 totals with percentage change to 2024.

Category	2025	2024	% Change	2025	2024	% Change
<b>Stray/Lost</b>	1.6M	1.7M	↓ 7.6%	1.7M	1.7M	↓ 1.3%
<b>Owner Surrender</b>	848K	838K	↑ 1.2%	881K	847K	↑ 4%
<b>Other Intake</b> <small>e.g., seized, born in care</small>	387K	396K	↓ 2.2%	292K	294K	↓ 0.9%
<b>Transfer In</b>	717K	697K	↑ 3%	543K	530K	↑ 2.5%
<b>TOTAL INTAKES</b> <small>includes transfers in</small>	3.5M	3.7M	↓ 3%	3.5M	3.5M	↑ 0.6%

## TOTAL OUTCOMES

2025 totals with percentage change to 2024.

Category	2025	2024	% Change	2025	2024	% Change
<b>Adoption</b>	2M	2M	↓ 0.8%	2.2M	2.2M	↑ 2.2%
<b>Return to Owner/Field</b>	542K	566K	↓ 4.3%	352K	360K	↓ 2.1%
<b>Other Live Outcome</b>	59K	65K	↓ 8.5%	59K	62K	↓ 4.7%
<b>Transfer Out</b>	530K	536K	↓ 1.1%	376K	378K	↓ 0.5%
<b>Euthanasia</b>	320K	343K	↓ 6.8%	277K	270K	↑ 2.3%
<b>Died/Lost in Care</b>	47K	42K	↑ 10.7%	113K	105K	↑ 7.6%
<b>TOTAL OUTCOMES</b> <small>includes transfers in</small>	3.5M	3.6M	↓ 2%	3.4M	3.3M	↑ 1.6%

**GAP**

**37K DOGS**

**109K CATS**

147K PETS were added to sheltered populations at the end of 2025.

# STATS AT A GLANCE

## OUTCOMES % COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

The percentage of animals leaving the shelter by a certain community outcome type. Transfers are not included as a community outcome.

Outcome Type	2025	2024	2025	2024
<b>Adoption</b>	67.4%	66.6%	73.4%	73.1%
<b>Return to Owner/Field</b>	18.3%	18.7%	11.7%	12.1%
<b>Other Live Outcome</b>	2.0%	2.1%	2.0%	2.1%
<b>Euthanasia</b>	10.7%	11.3%	9.2%	9.1%
<b>Died/Lost in Care</b>	1.6%	1.4%	3.7%	3.6%
<b>Community Live Outcomes</b>	87.7%	87.3%	87.1%	87.3%
<b>Non-Live Outcomes</b>	12.9%	12.7%	12.9%	12.7%

## OUTCOMES % TOTAL INTAKES

The percentage of animals entering the shelter that are leaving by a certain outcome type. May not equal 100% due to animals without outcomes.

Outcome Type	2025	2024	2025	2024
<b>Adoption</b>	56.6%	55.4%	63.2%	62.3%
<b>Return to Owner/Field</b>	15.5%	15.8%	10.4%	10.7%
<b>Other Live Outcome</b>	1.7%	1.8%	1.7%	1.8%
<b>Transfers</b>	15.1%	15.0%	11.1%	11.3%
<b>Euthanasia</b>	9.1%	9.6%	7.9%	7.8%
<b>Died/Lost in Care</b>	1.3%	1.2%	3.2%	3.0%
<b>Live Outcomes</b> <i>includes transfers out</i>	88.9%	88.0%	86.4%	86.1%
<b>Non-Live Outcomes</b>	10.4%	10.6%	11.1%	10.8%

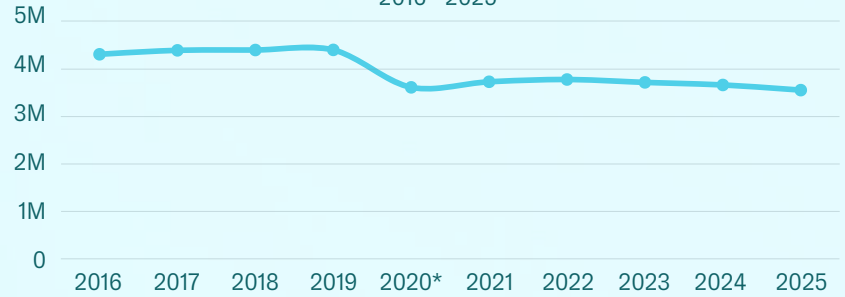
## A Decade of Trusted Dog Sheltering Data

Over the past decade, the sheltering field has contributed to the most comprehensive dataset ever assembled, thanks to the thousands of organizations that consistently report to Shelter Animals Count. With 10 years of data, the national dog dataset reveals a clear story of gradual change shaped by both stable trends and major system-wide disruptions. Dog intakes have remained relatively stable from 2016 through 2019 before dropping sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic and have remained stable since. Adoption rates for dogs was at its lowest point 10 years ago. It remained stable then rose to the highest rate on record in 2025. Non-live outcome rates declined from 2016 to the lowest percentage of the past decade in 2020. Rates have since climbed back to historic levels from 10 years ago.

The bottom line chart shows the dog Population Balance Calculation (PBC) at the end of each year. PBC compares outcomes to intakes to indicate whether shelter populations are growing, shrinking, or stable. In 2025, the dog PBC reached 98.9%, meaning nearly all dogs entering shelters were matched by an outcome. This reflects a strong recovery from the dip in 2022, when PBC fell below 96%. Together, these long-term patterns offer valuable context for understanding how the dog population has moved through organizations over time.

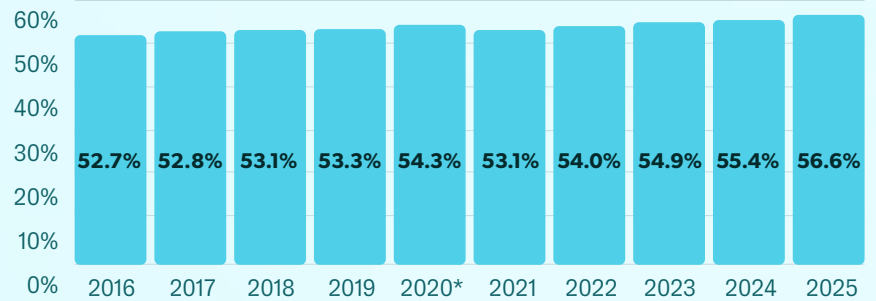
### Dog Community Intakes

2016 - 2025



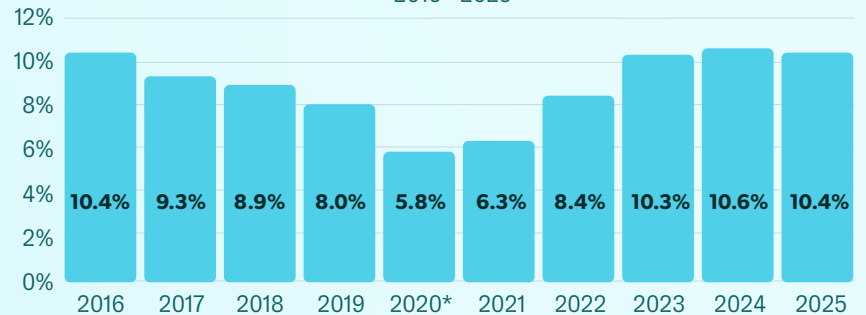
### Adoption Rate as a % of Total Intakes

2016 - 2025



### Non-Live Outcome Rate as a % of Total Intakes

2016 - 2025



### The Population Balance Calculation

The Population Balance Calculation (PBC) is a simple formula used by Shelter Animals Count to understand whether a shelter's animal population is growing, shrinking, or staying the same over a given period. It's calculated by dividing the total number of animals leaving the shelter (outcomes) by the total number coming in (intakes).

#### Here's what different PBC percentages mean:

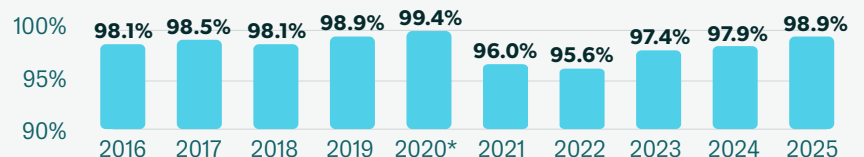
**100%:** The shelter is in balance. Animals are leaving at the same rate they're arriving, so the overall population isn't changing.

**Under 100%:** The population is increasing. For example, a PBC of 97% means that 3% more animals entered the shelter than left it, so some animals stayed behind.

**Over 100%:** The population is decreasing. For example, a PBC of 107% means that 7% more animals left than entered, reducing the shelter population.

### Dog Population Balance at End of Each Year

2016 - 2025



\*COVID-19 Pandemic



## A Decade of Trusted Cat Sheltering Data

A decade of national sheltering data reveals a steady long-term pattern in cat intakes and outcomes, with clear shifts during the pandemic years and gradual stabilization afterward. Cat intakes rose modestly from 2016 to 2019 before dropping sharply in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, then rebounding to a consistent range from 2021 through 2025. Over the same period, adoption rates showed steady improvement, climbing from the low-to-mid 50% range pre-pandemic, to more than 63% in 2025, the highest level in the dataset.

Non-live outcomes declined dramatically from 2016 to 2020 and have since remained stable at around 10–11%, reflecting sustained progress despite ongoing challenges with neonates and older cats. Together, these trends illustrate how the sheltering system has evolved over ten years and where continued gains are emerging.

### The Population Balance Calculation

The Population Balance Calculation (PBC) is a simple formula used by Shelter Animals Count to understand whether a shelter's animal population is growing, shrinking, or staying the same over a given period. It's calculated by dividing the total number of animals leaving the shelter (outcomes) by the total number coming in (intakes).

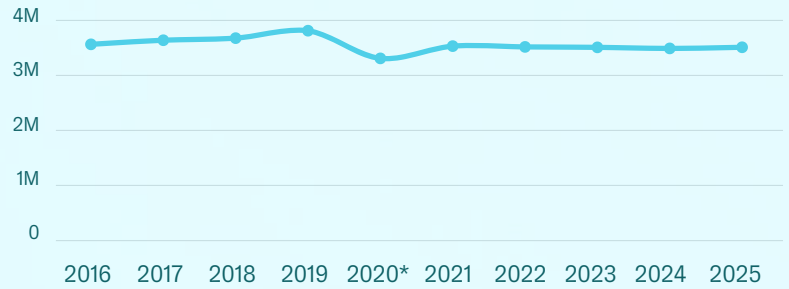
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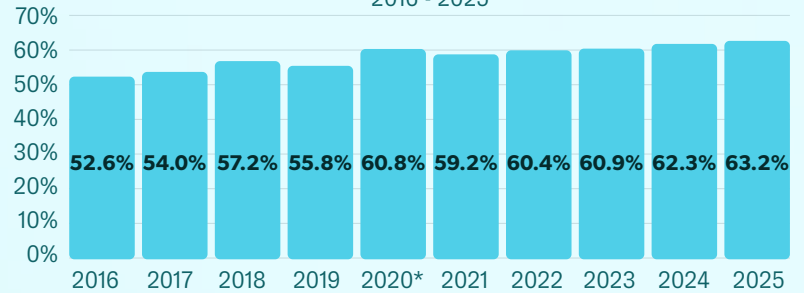
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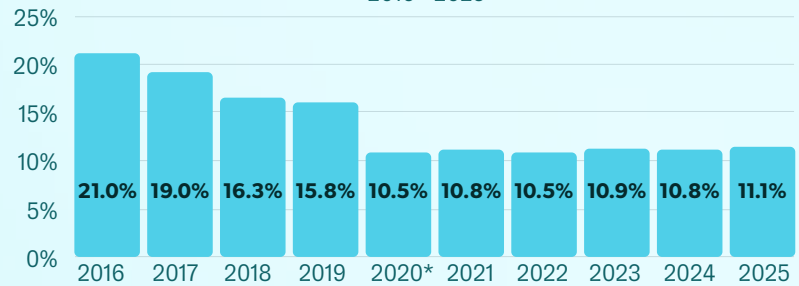
**Cat Community Intakes**  
2016 - 2025



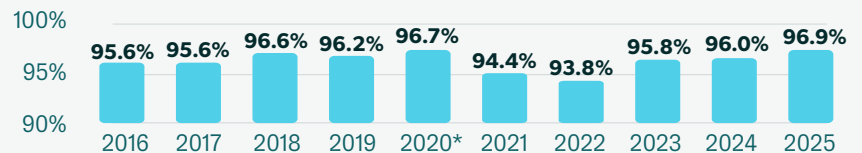
**Cat Adoption Rate as % of Total Intakes**  
2016 - 2025



**Cat Non-Live Outcome Rate as % of Total Intakes**  
2016 - 2025



**Cat Population Balance at End of Each Year**  
2016 - 2025



\*COVID-19 Pandemic



# INTAKES

SHELTER ANIMALS COUNT 2025 ANNUAL DATA

In 2025,

# 5,789,000

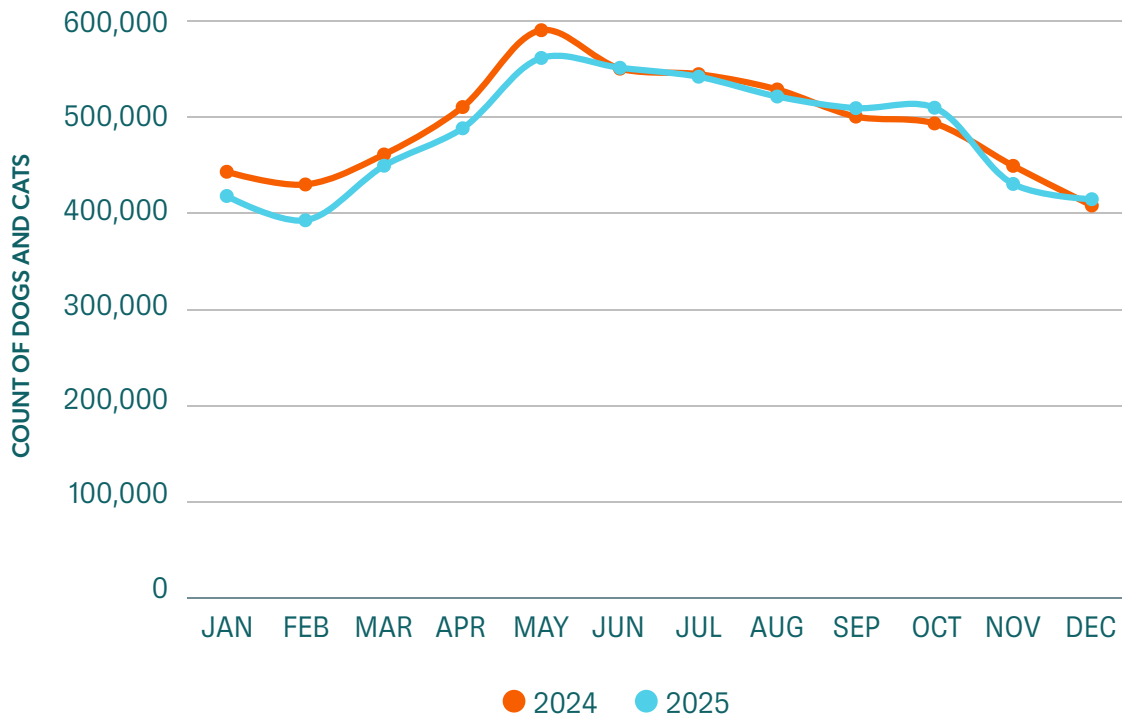
dogs and cats entered shelters and rescues nationwide.

2%  
compared  
to 2024

In 2025, dog and cat community intakes decreased by 2% compared to 2024, representing 121,000 fewer animals that entered shelters. When we look at month-over-month trends, intakes followed the familiar seasonal pattern that we see each year. However, intake counts in 2025 were consistently lower than 2024 across nearly every month, particularly in the first half of the year.

### Month over Month Community Intakes

Dogs and Cats | 2024 vs 2025



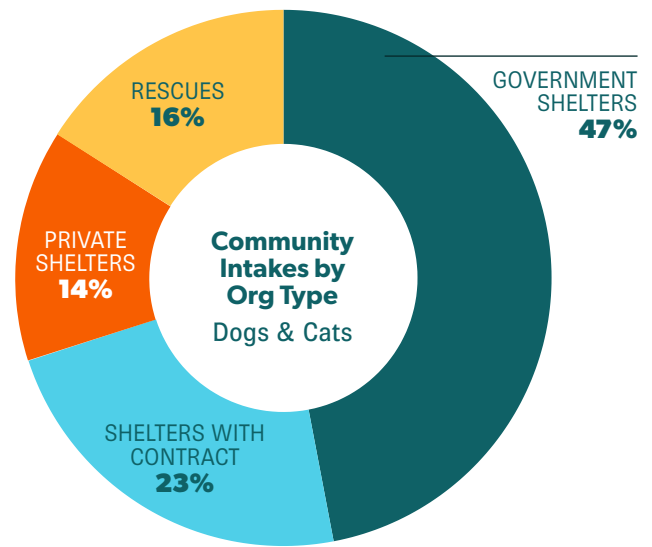
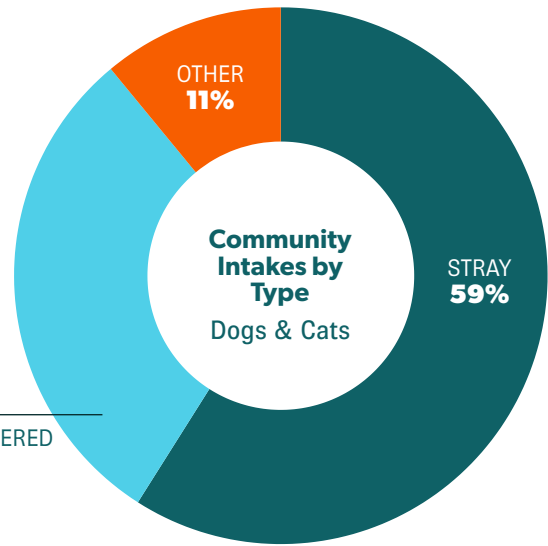
*\*Community intakes include all intakes except transfers to ensure a clear count of animals received directly from the community, avoiding double counting during total intake calculations.*

# Combined Species Intake Rates

In 2025, community intakes continued to be driven primarily by stray animals (top chart), which made up 59% of all dog and cat intakes nationwide, a slight decrease from 60% in 2024. Owner relinquishments/surrenders increased slightly to 30% (compared to 29% in 2024), and animals entering through other pathways remained consistent with 2024 with 11% of community intakes.

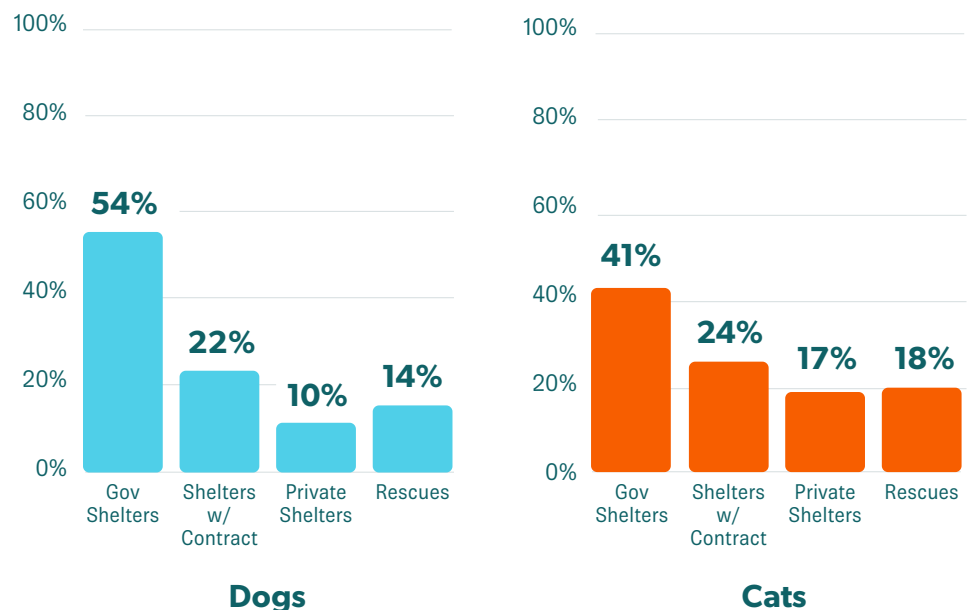
Intake distribution across organization types also showed small year-over-year changes. Government shelters received 47% of all community intakes in 2025, slightly lower than 48% in 2024, while private shelters (14%) and rescues (16%) absorbed a marginally larger share of dogs and cats than in 2024 (13% and 15%, respectively).

The bottom right bar chart highlights species-level patterns, showing how intake distribution varied across organization types in 2025. Government shelters continued to take in the largest share of dogs, holding steady at 54% in both 2024 and 2025, while their share of cat intakes dipped slightly from 42% to 41%. Shelters with contracts remained consistent for both species, receiving 22% of dogs and 24% of cats in both years. Private shelters saw a decrease in dog intake from 12% in 2024 to 10% in 2025, but increased cat intakes from 16% to 17% in 2025. Rescues maintained the same share year-over-year, taking in 14% of dogs and 18% of cats.



**Tip:** Throughout this report, we include both the change in the number of animals and what percentage increase/decrease that represents. We also include percentage distributions, which allow us to see patterns, and compare patterns over time. For example: there has been a 2% decrease in community intakes, which equates to 121,000 fewer cats and dogs compared to 2024. Further, the intake distribution on this page shows the percentage of intake types and organization type, which describes the composition of intakes in 2025 regardless of whether total intake numbers go up or down. These composition percentages can also be compared year-over-year to identify shifts in intake patterns—for instance, strays made up 59% of intakes in 2025 compared to 60% in 2024.

## Org Type Distribution of Community Intakes by Species



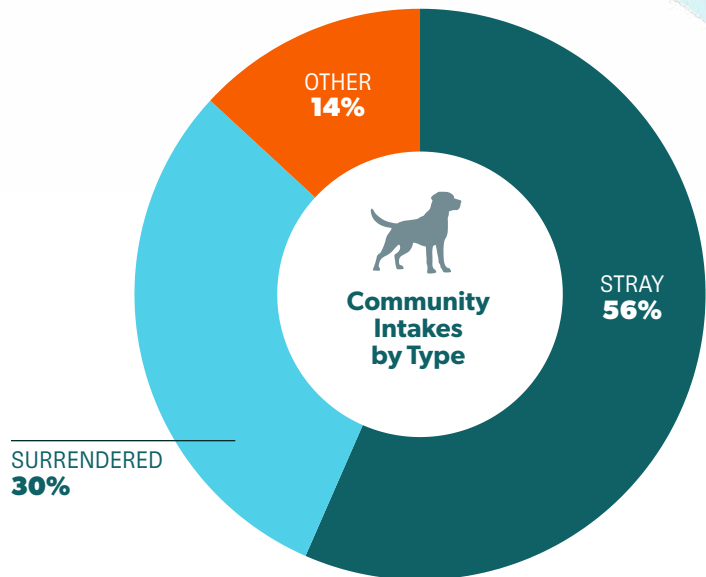
# 2,825,000 DOGS

ENTERED SHELTERS AND RESCUES IN 2025.

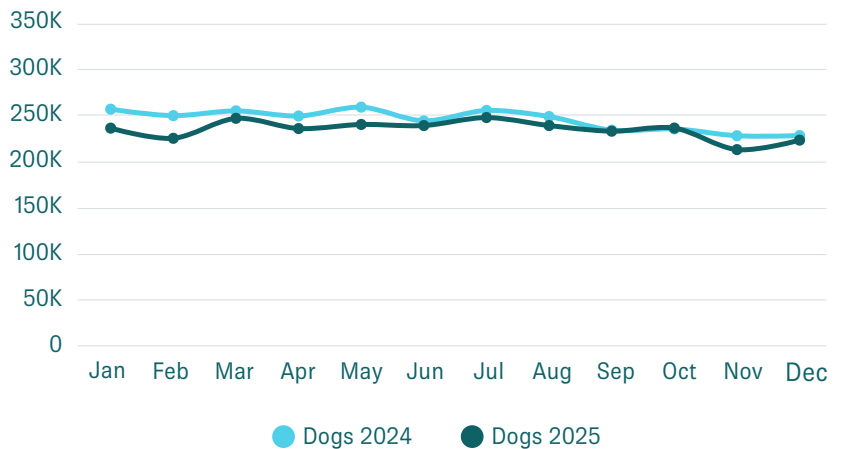
**4%**  
compared  
to 2024

In 2025, an estimated 2.8 million dogs entered shelters and rescues, a 4% decrease from 2024. Stray dogs continued to make up the majority of community intakes, accounting for 56% of all intakes into organizations, followed by owner surrenders at 30% and other intake types at 14%. This shifted from strays at 58%, owner surrenders at 28%, and others at 13% in 2024. This distribution aligns with long-standing patterns in the field, where stray intake remains the predominate means of intake for dogs and cats.

Month-to-month trends show that dog intakes in 2025 tracked closely with 2024 but at slightly lower counts throughout most of the year. The largest year-over-year declines occurred in the first half of the year, particularly in February and May, before stabilizing in late summer and fall. These patterns mirror seasonal fluctuations typically seen in sheltering, with intake peaks in spring and summer and declines toward the end of the year.

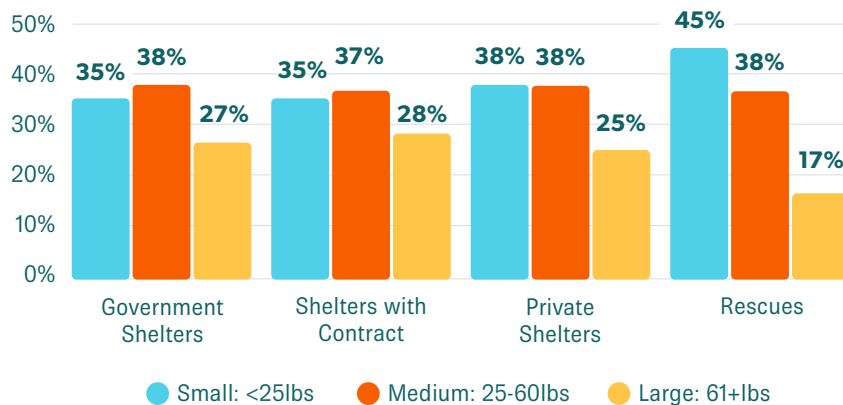


**Dog Community Intake Counts**  
2024 and 2025



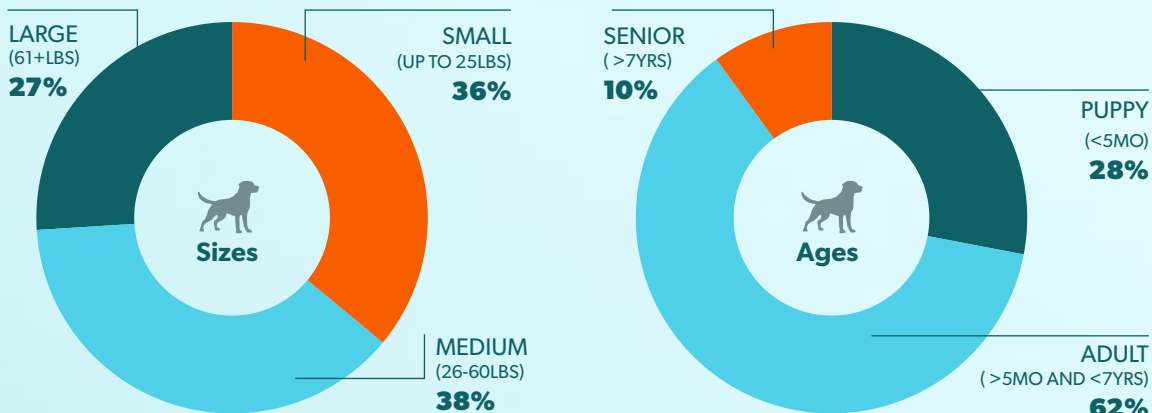
Animal-level data show clear differences in how organization types intake dogs by size. Government shelters and shelters with contracts have similar distributions, with small dogs making up 35%, medium dogs 37-38%, and large dogs 27-28%. Private shelters take in a slightly higher share of small (38%) dogs and fewer large dogs (25%). Rescues continue to see the most pronounced amount of smaller dogs (45%) and least amount of large dogs (17%) in their community intakes.

### Org Type Distribution of Community Intakes by Dog Size



Shifts in the types of dogs entering shelters help explain some of the year's outcome patterns (pgs 26,29,32). Puppies made up 28% of dog intakes in 2025, while adult dogs represented 68% of intakes and seniors remained the smallest portion of the population at 10%. Size distribution also remained consistent with prior years: small dogs accounted for 36% of intakes, medium dogs at 38%, and large dogs at 26%.

### Characteristics of dogs that entered shelters in 2025



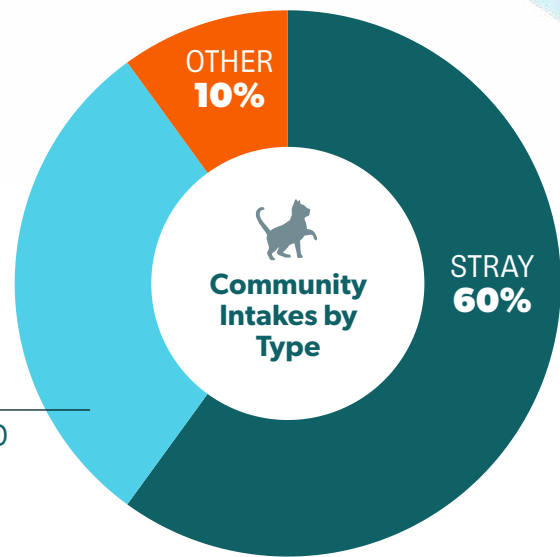
# 2,963,000 CATS

ENTERED SHELTERS AND RESCUES IN 2025.

**<1%**  
compared  
to 2024

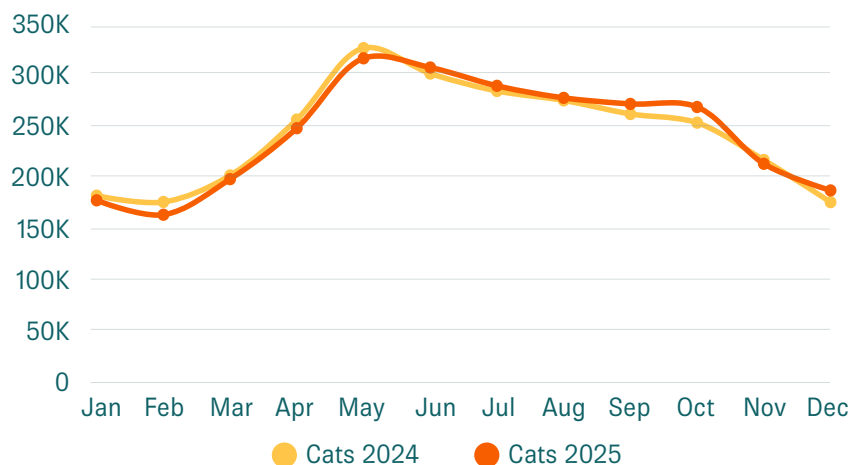
In 2025, an estimated 3 million cats entered shelters and rescues, an increase of less than 1% (0.2% more totaling 7,000 cats) compared to 2024. Stray intake continued to drive the majority of entries, accounting for 60% of all cat intakes, followed by owner surrenders at 30% and other intake types at 10%.

Month-to-month trends show that cat intakes in 2025 closely mirrored 2024, with modest fluctuations across the year. Intake volumes remained highest during the spring and summer months—consistent with year-over-year patterns of kitten season intakes—before tapering off in the fall and winter.



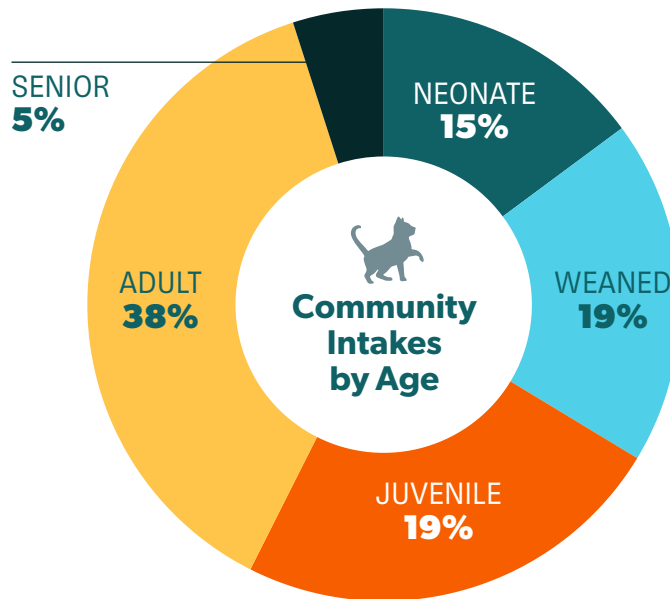
## Cat Community Intake Counts

2024 and 2025



*\*This data is made possible through Shelter Animals Count's Animal-Level Data, which captures detailed information on each animal in shelters and rescues—including age, size, intake type, and outcome—helping to identify trends and support data-driven decisions in animal welfare.*

Across all organizations, the overall age distribution of 2025 cat intakes shows that juveniles (24%) and adults (38%) made up the majority of intakes, followed by weaned kittens (19%), neonates (15%), and seniors (5%).



Animal-level intake data from 2025 reveal clear differences in the age distribution of cats across organization types. Government animal services and shelters with contracts show similar patterns: adults make up the largest share of intake (35% in government and 40% in shelters with contracts), followed by juveniles at 24% and 22%. Government shelters receive slightly higher proportions of neonates (17%) and weaned kittens (20%) than shelters with contracts (15% and 18%). Senior cats make up a small portion of intake in both, accounting for 4% in government shelters and 5% in shelters with contracts.

Private shelters differ, with a larger share of juveniles (26%) and a lower share of neonates (13%), while their intake of weaned kittens (18%) is the same as shelters with contracts. Adults account for 38% of private shelter intake, and seniors 5%. Rescues receive 26% juveniles (the same as private shelters), with neonates (17%), weaned kittens (20%), and adults (35%) at the same shares as government shelters. Rescues take in the smallest share of seniors (2%).

## Distribution of Cat Intakes by Age for Each Organization Type

	Neonate	Weaned	Juvenile	Adult	Senior	Total
Government Shelters	17%	20%	24%	35%	4%	100%
Shelters with Contract	15%	18%	22%	40%	5%	100%
Private Shelters	13%	18%	26%	38%	5%	100%
Rescues	17%	20%	26%	35%	2%	100%

**Neonate:** Under 4 Wks | **Weaned:** 4 to 8 Wks | **Juvenile:** 8 Wks to 5 Mo  
**Adult:** 5 Mo to 7 Yrs | **Senior:** 7+ Yrs



# OUTCOMES

SHELTER ANIMALS COUNT 2025 ANNUAL DATA

In 2025,

# 5,996,000

dogs and cats had a community outcome (excluding transfers).

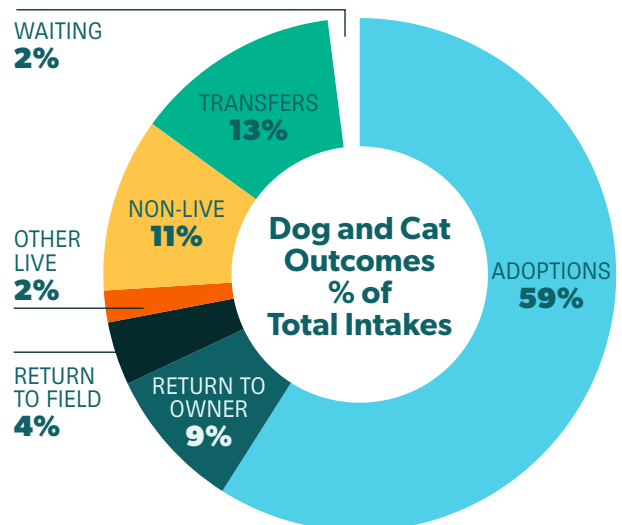
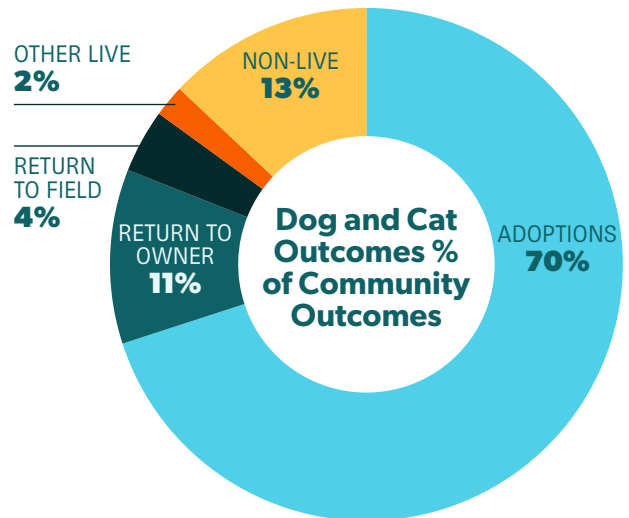
This is a decrease of 1,000 dog and cat outcomes compared to 2024.



### Two Ways to Look at the Data:

The top graph shows the outcome type percentages based on all of the community outcomes that occurred. These percentages can be used to calculate how many animals were represented, out of all of the community outcomes that occurred (5.9M). The bottom graph shows the status of all cat and dog intakes that occurred, the outcomes that have occurred, including transfers out, and also accounting for the percentage of animals that are still waiting for an outcome (this is the gap that is resulting in high shelter populations: 2% or 147k more animals have arrived than have left). These percentages can be used to calculate how many animals were represented in each outcome type, out of all of the total intakes\* that occurred (7M on [pg 9](#)). For example: Of the 5.9M animals who have community outcomes, 70% were adopted (4.2M cats/dogs) and at the same time, of the 7M total intakes ([pg 10](#)), 59% were adopted - with 2% still waiting in the shelter.

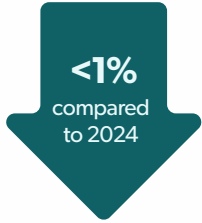
*\*Total intakes include community intakes and transfers in.*



IN 2025

# 5,294,000

## DOGS AND CATS HAD A COMMUNITY LIVE OUTCOME.



In 2025, 5.3 million dogs and cats achieved a community live outcome (live outcomes excluding transfers), a total that remained steady with less than a 1% decrease (45k fewer) from 2024. Animal-level data show that this stability in outcomes was supported by shorter median length of stay for cats and dogs from intake to adoption across every organization type compared to 2024. Government shelters, shelters with municipal contracts, and private shelters all saw reductions in days to adoption for dogs and cats compared to the previous year, with private shelters posting the shortest median stays for dogs and cats overall. Rescues, historically, have experienced longer lengths of stay ([pg 28](#)) than other organization types, but they too experienced improvements in 2025.

We will dive into each type of live outcome and the analysis for each type in the next pages of this report. ([pgs 23-31](#))

### Median Length of Stay (Days to Adoption) for 2025 by Org Type

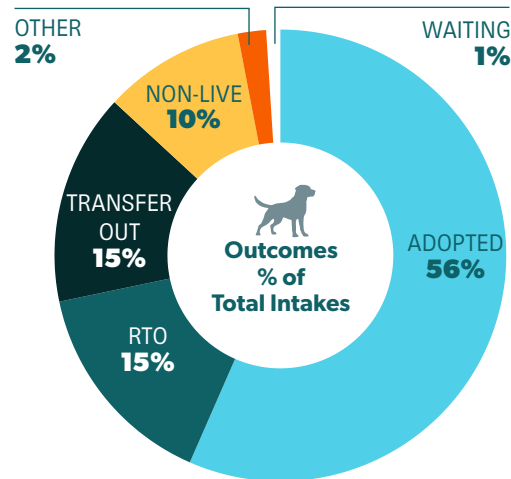
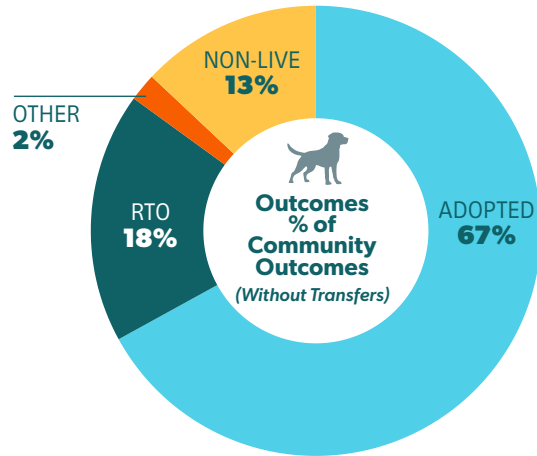
	Dog Total	Small Dogs	Medium Dogs	Large Dogs	Cat Total
<b>Government Shelters</b>	16 Days	11 Days	18 Days	23 Days	16 Days
<b>Shelters with Contract</b>	14 Days	10 Days	16 Days	20 Days	16 Days
<b>Private Shelters</b>	12 Days	10 Days	14 Days	16 Days	13 Days
<b>Rescues</b>	19 Days	18 Days	19 Days	23 Days	21 Days

# 2,975,000 DOGS

HAD A COMMUNITY OUTCOME IN 2025.\*

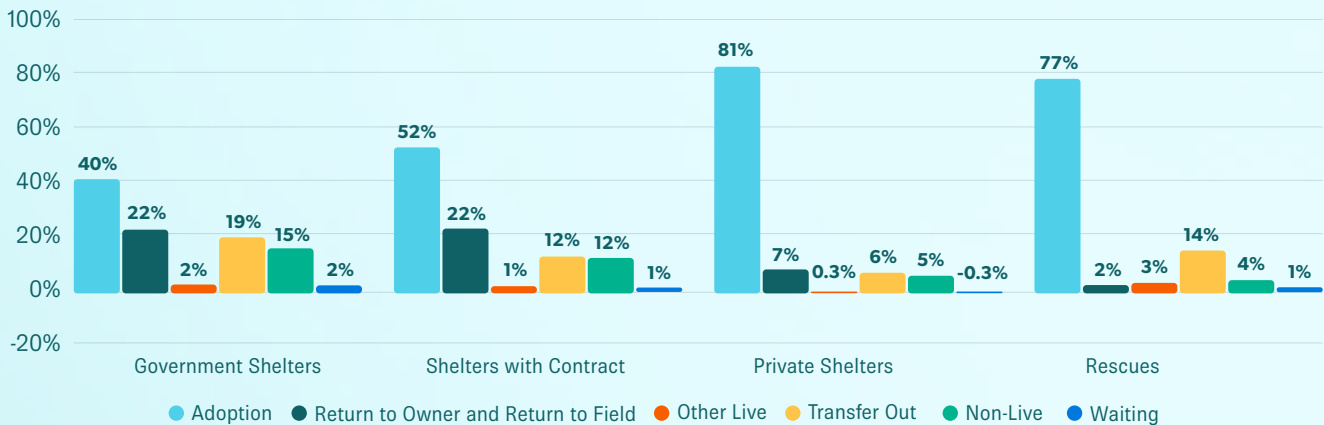
**2%**  
compared  
to 2024

In 2025, nearly 3 million dogs received a community outcome (an outcome that excludes transfers to another organization), a 2% decrease (64k animals) from 2024. Adoption remained the primary outcome for dogs, accounting for 67% of all community outcomes, followed by 18% returned to owner, 2% other live outcomes, and 13% non-live outcomes. When viewed as a share of total intakes (which includes transfers and those waiting in care without an outcome), 56% of all dogs entering shelters were adopted, 15% were returned to owner or field, and 15% were transferred out, with 10% experiencing a non-live outcome and 1% still awaiting an outcome at year's end.



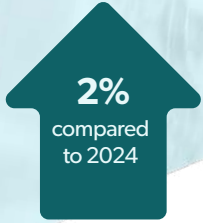
\*Community outcome totals do not include transfers to ensure a clear count of animals receiving a final outcome in their community, avoiding double counting.

## Dog Outcomes as a % of Total Intake by Org Type

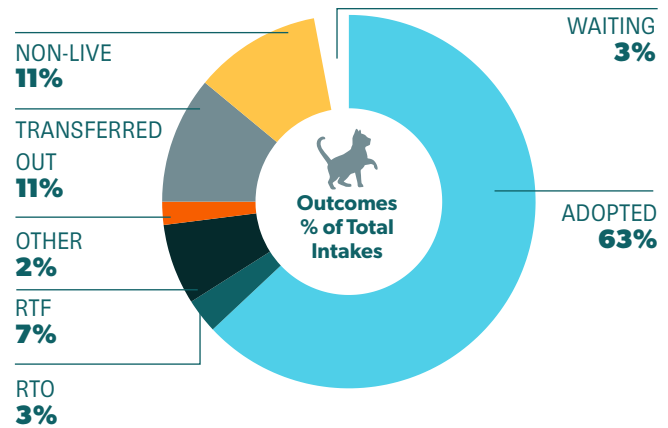
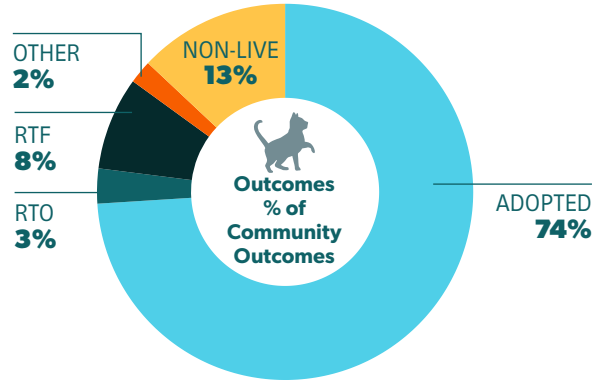


# 3,021,000 CATS

HAD A COMMUNITY OUTCOME IN 2025.\*

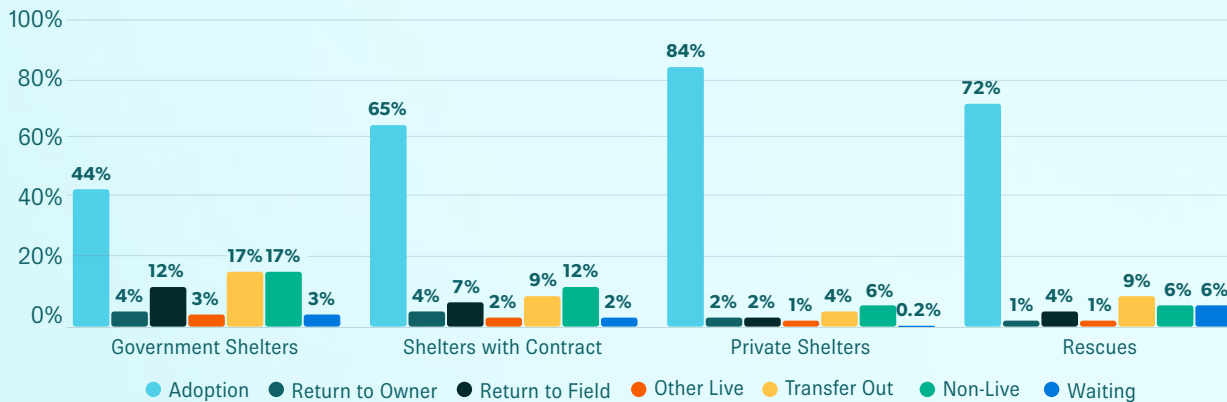


In 2025, 3 million cats had a community outcome, a 2% increase (54k more) from 2024. Adoption remained the primary pathway for cats, making up 74% of all community outcomes, followed by 3% returned to owner, 8% returned to field, 2% other live outcomes, and 13% non-live outcomes. When viewed as a share of total intakes, 63% of all cats entering shelters were adopted, 11% were transferred out, 7% were returned to field, and 3% were still awaiting an outcome at the end of the year.



\*Community outcome totals do not include transfers to ensure a clear count of animals receiving a final outcome in their community, avoiding double counting.

## Cat Outcomes as a % of Total Intake by Org Type



IN 2025

# 4,223,000

DOGS AND CATS WERE ADOPTED.

**↑**  
1%  
compared  
to 2024

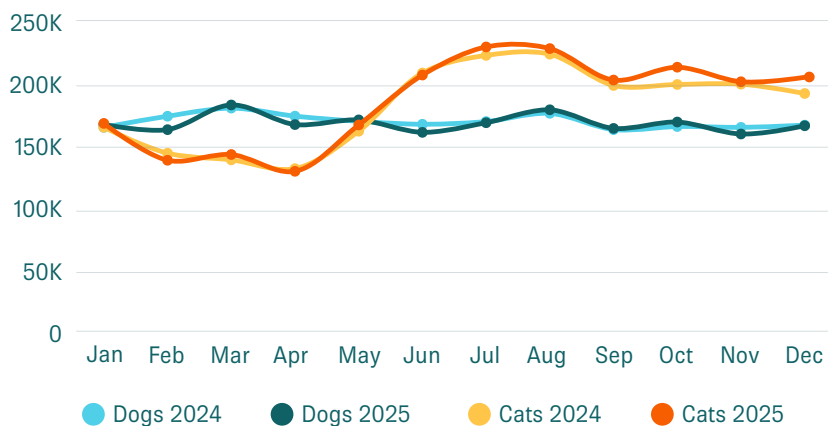
In 2025, 4.2 million dogs and cats were adopted, a 1% increase (30k more) from 2024. Monthly adoption trends for both species closely tracked 2024 patterns, with dogs holding a steady pattern and cats experiencing shifts that are typically seen during seasonal spikes revolving around kitten season.

Adoption patterns by organization type varied by species in 2025, with dogs most often adopted through rescues (32%) and government shelters (31%). Cat adoptions were more evenly distributed, with private shelters seeing the highest proportion at 27%, followed by rescues (26%), shelters with contract (23%), and government shelters (24%), highlighting a broader spread of adoption activity across organization types for cats.

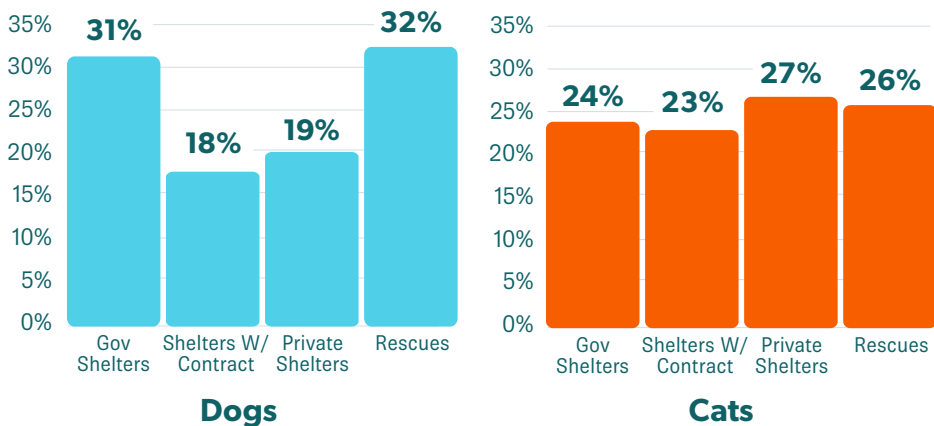
The bottom chart displays adoption rates for dogs and cats across organization types. These percentages represent the likelihood that an animal entering each type of organization will be adopted. Government organizations and shelters with contracts have higher rates of other types of outcomes, such as return to owners, so their adoption rates are typically lower than other organization types.

### Count of Cat and Dog Adoptions by Month

2024 and 2025



### Distribution of National Adoptions by Org Type



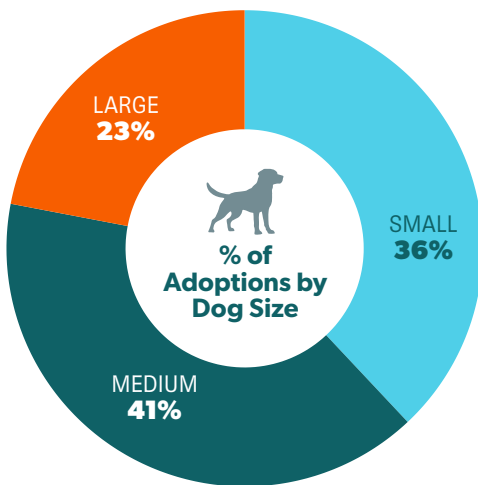
### Adoptions as % of Community Outcomes by Org Type

	Dogs	Cats
Government Shelters	51%	55%
Shelters with Contract	60%	73%
Private Shelters	86%	88%
Rescues	91%	85%

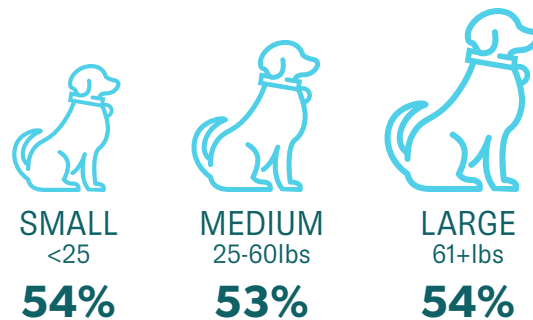
# Dog Adoptions

## Animal Level Data

Animal-level data shows the adoption patterns by dog size for 2025, with small and medium dogs accounting for the majority of adoption distribution (38% and 40% as seen in the left chart below); while large dogs made up 22% of adoptions. This mirrors their intake distribution, which followed the same size breakdown. Adoption rates, as seen in the chart on the right, remained consistent with adoption rates across dog sizes in 2024. Large and small dogs had an adoption rate of 54% in 2025, while medium dogs had an adoption rate of 53% (as a % of Total Intakes).



### Dog Adoptions as a % of Total Intakes by Size



### Dog adoption rates also varied by age at intake.

Puppies (combined ages of 0 weeks and 5 months) and adult dogs had the highest adoption rate among dog age groups at 54%. Senior dogs faced more challenges, with an adoption rate of 37%. Compared to cats, dogs had lower adoption rates for adults and seniors. The largest gap between dog and cat adoption rates was among seniors (37% for dogs vs 61% for cats), highlighting the continued need for targeted placement support for older dogs.

### Dog Adoption as a % of Total Intakes by Age Group

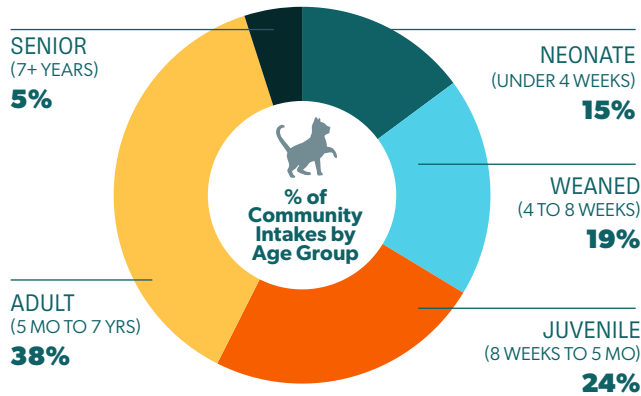
	Adoption Rate
Puppy	54%
Adult	54%
Senior	37%

**Puppy:** Under 5 Mo | **Adult:** 5 Mo to 7 Yrs | **Senior:** 7+ Yrs

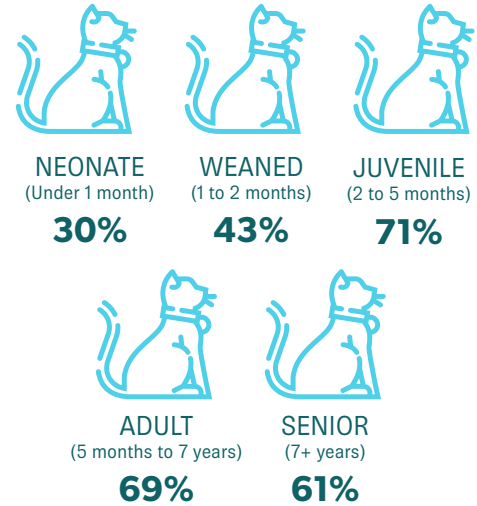
# Cat Adoptions

## Animal Level Data

**What age of cats entered shelters in 2025?**



**Cat Adoptions as % of Total Intakes by Age**



Animal-level data shows clear age-related patterns in cat adoptions. The top, left chart highlights how cat community intakes were distributed by age group. In the top, right chart, we see the adoption rate by age groups at intakes. Juveniles had the highest adoption rate by age at intake in 2025 (71%), followed by adult cats (69%), seniors (61%), and weaned kittens (43%), while neonates were adopted at a rate of 30% (as a % of total intakes).

The bottom two charts show the age mix of adopted cats and how they varied by organization type. The first chart highlights the overall distribution total adoptions by organization type, and how they broke down by age at intake. Of the total adoptions at each organization type, the distribution of cat adoptions by age group is similar between government shelters and shelters with contracts, while private shelters and rescues show a shift toward more juvenile adoptions and fewer kitten adoptions. The bottom chart shows what percentage of cats were adopted out of total intake by age at intake and organization type. For example, of all senior cats that entered government organizations in 2025, 49% had an adoption option. These rates differ notably by organization type and age group. Government shelters and shelters with contracts have more outcome pathways and receive the largest number of underage kittens, making them more vulnerable to non-live outcomes.

**Proportions of Adoptions by Age at Intake and Org Type**

	Kitten*	Juvenile	Adult	Senior
<b>Government Shelters</b>	28%	34%	35%	3%
<b>Shelters with Contracts</b>	22%	34%	40%	4%
<b>Private Shelters</b>	15%	42%	39%	4%
<b>Rescues</b>	9%	50%	38%	2%

**Cat Adoptions as % of Total Intakes by Age at Intake and Org Type**

	Kitten*	Juvenile	Adult	Senior
<b>Government Shelters</b>	44%	69%	55%	49%
<b>Shelters with Contracts</b>	45%	74%	68%	57%
<b>Private Shelters</b>	37%	78%	81%	71%
<b>Rescues</b>	15%	55%	52%	49%

\*Kittens is defined as a cat under 8 weeks of age at intake.

# Length of Stay

Understanding how long animals remain in care before adoption provides important context for system-wide capacity, resource needs, and overall flow through shelters and rescues. This year's report introduces expanded animal-level data on length of stay (LOS), offering a more detailed look at how LOS varies by size, age, and intake type. The data shows improvements across both dogs and cats in 2025, with shorter stays observed in nearly every category compared to 2024.

## Dogs

The first graphic shows the overall median LOS to adoption for dogs, which improved from 15 days in 2024 to 13 days in 2025, a reduction of two days.

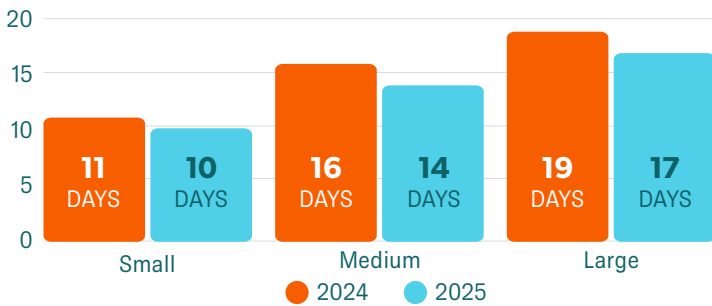
The first table breaks this out by dog size. All sizes saw year-over-year improvements: small dogs decreased from 11 to 10 days, medium dogs from 16 to 14 days, and large dogs from 19 to 17 days.

The final table shows median length of stay by intake type. Dogs entering as strays experienced the largest improvement, dropping from 19 to 16 days. Length of stay also decreased for owner surrenders (14 to 12 days) and transfer-in dogs (14 to 13 days), demonstrating faster placement across all intake categories.

Together, these charts show steady, system-wide gains in reducing the time dogs spend in care before adoption, with improvements evident across sizes and intake types.



### Median Length of Stay to Adoption by Dog Size



### Median Length of Stay to Adoption by Intake Type



## Cats

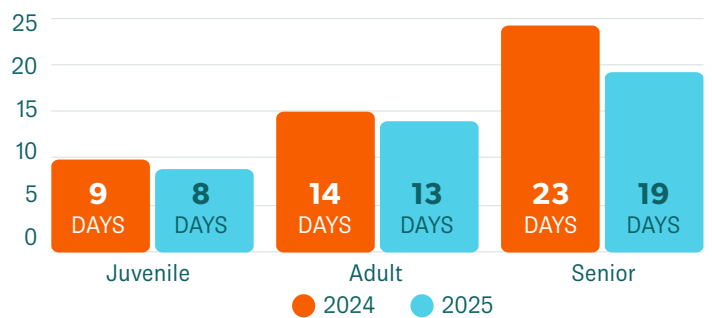
The first graphic shows the overall median length of stay (LOS) to adoption for cats, which decreased from 17 days in 2024 to 14 days in 2025, a three day improvement. This reduction reflects faster movement of cats into adoptive homes compared to the previous year.

The table shows median LOS to adoption by intake type. Cats entering as strays experienced the most significant improvement, dropping from 28 to 23 days. Length of stay also decreased for owner surrenders (16 to 14 days) and transfer in cats (14 to 12 days), suggesting fast adoption pathways across all intake categories.

This analysis illustrates consistent year-over-year gains in how quickly cats move through the system and into adoptive homes.



### Median Length of Stay to Adoption by Age Group



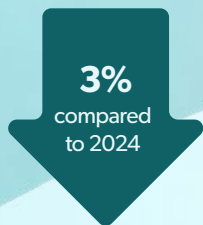
### Median Length of Stay to Adoption by Intake Type



IN 2025

# 638,000

## DOGS AND CATS WERE RETURNED TO THEIR OWNERS.\*



In 2025, 638,000 dogs and cats were returned to their owners, a 3% decrease (21k fewer) from 2024, reflecting a slight decline in reunification nationwide. Return-to-owner (RTO) outcomes continue to vary widely by species and organization type, with dogs far more likely to be reunited with their families than cats. The percentage of stray intakes in the table at the bottom, shows which dog sizes most commonly enter shelters as stray intakes, while the RTO rate reflects how often dogs of that size are returned to their owner when they enter shelters and rescues by any intake type.

Nationally, 19% of all dog intakes resulted in an RTO compared to 3% of cat intakes. When looking only at stray animals, which is the intake type most commonly associated with reunification, 34% of dogs and 6% of cats were returned to owners. This page shows two views because RTOs can occur from any intake type. The first chart reflects RTOs as a share of all community intakes, while the second focuses specifically on stray intakes to highlight outcomes within the intake category where RTOs are most likely.

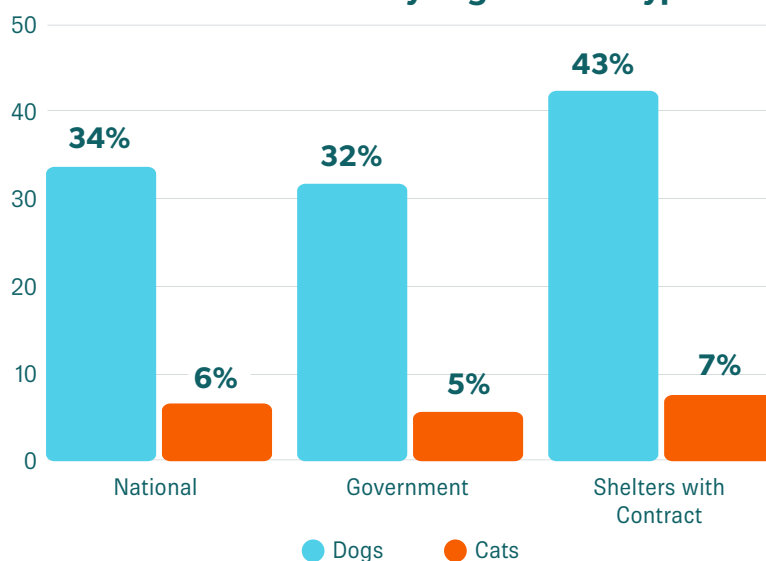
Several key insights emerge from the 2025 data. Since government and shelters with contract account for 89% of all stray dog intakes and 91% of all dog RTOs. Shelters with municipal contracts achieved the highest RTO success rates, returning 43% of stray dogs to their owners, followed by a 32% rate for government shelters (34% was the national average, which includes all organization types). When looking at the bottom table, dog size also played a notable role in reunification. Large dogs had the highest RTO rate at 17% (the percentage reflecting how many large stray dogs were returned to their owners out of all intake types), compared to 9% for medium dogs and 7% for small dogs. This trend appears despite small and medium dogs making up the majority of stray dog intakes in the first column of the table.

*\*Cats returned to field are not included. This is solely return to owner data.*

**% of Community Intakes Returned to Owner by Organization Type**

	Dogs	Cats
<b>National</b>	19%	3%
<b>Government Shelters</b>	22%	4%
<b>Shelters with Contract</b>	25%	4%

**% of Stray Intakes Returned to Owner by Organization Type**

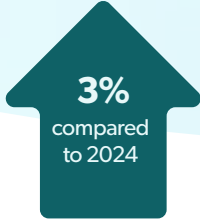


**% of Stray Intakes by Dog Size and RTO Rate**

	% of Stray Intakes	RTO Rate
<b>Small</b>	37%	7%
<b>Medium</b>	39%	9%
<b>Large</b>	24%	17%

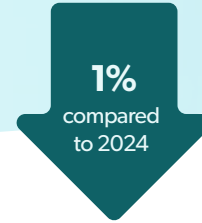
In 2025  
**1,260,000**

dogs and cats transferred **in** to sheltering organizations.



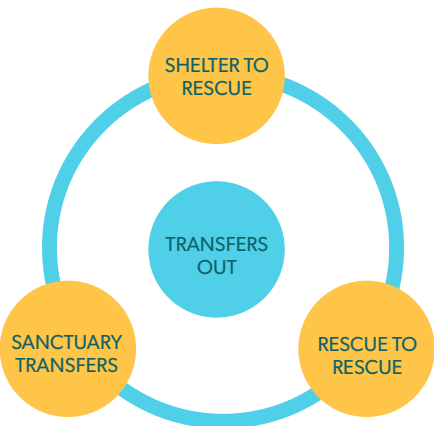
In 2025  
**906,000**

dogs and cats transferred **out** of sheltering organizations.

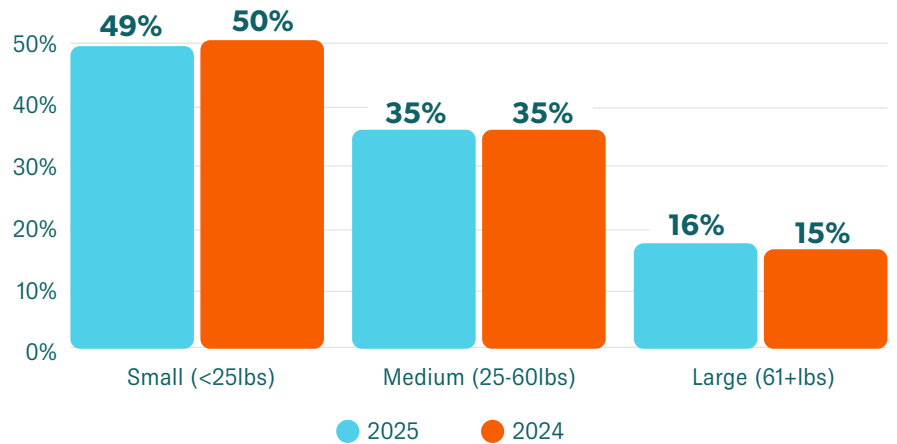


**IN:** In 2025, 1.2 M dogs and cats were transferred into sheltering organizations, an increase of 3% (34k more) from 2024. Of these, 717,000 were dogs, an increase of 3% compared to 2024. Cats made up 543,000 transfers, which was a 3% increase over 2024.

**OUT:** In 2025, 906,000 dogs and cats were transferred out of sheltering organizations, a 1% decrease (8k fewer) from 2024. Government shelters continued to serve as the primary source of transfer-out activity, accounting for 55% of all transfers. Dog transfer-out patterns by size remained consistent year over year, with small and medium dogs making up the majority of transfers, and monthly trends for both species closely mirrored 2024 with modest fluctuations throughout the year.



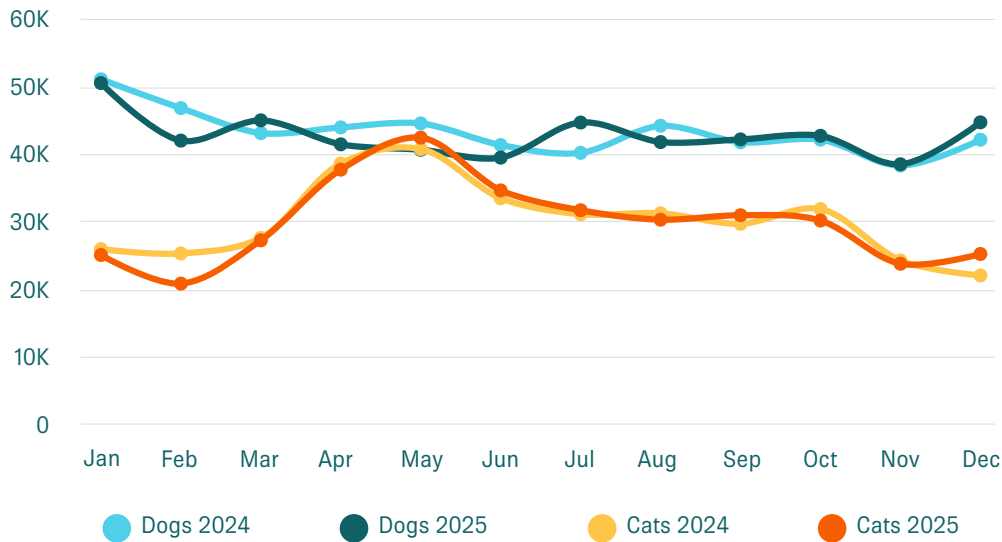
**Distribution of Transfers Out by Size - Dogs**



In animal welfare data, it's reasonable to expect that transfers in and transfers out should move in tandem, since every "transfer in" intake at one organization should correspond to a "transfer out" outcome from another. However, this isn't always true in practice. Many animals can be recorded as transferred in even though their original intake type is unknown or not reported to SAC. This often happens with large, national organizations processing animals instead of shelters and/or rescues during large-scale cruelty or disaster responses, international transports, or other non-sheltering entities that do not track or submit intake data. As a result, transfers in are impacted by systemic factors and trending is independent of transfers out.

# Transfers Out by Month for Dogs and Cats

2024 and 2025



## Top 5 Transfer In States in 2025

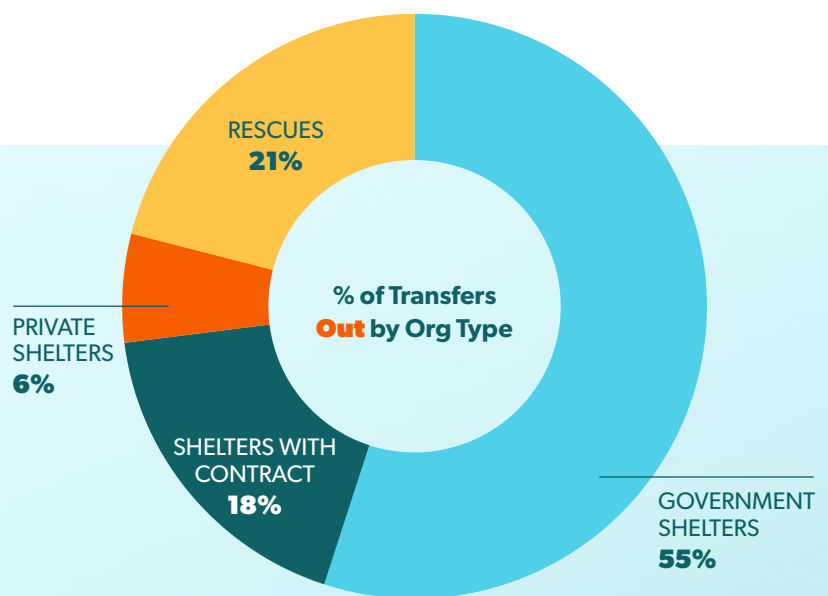
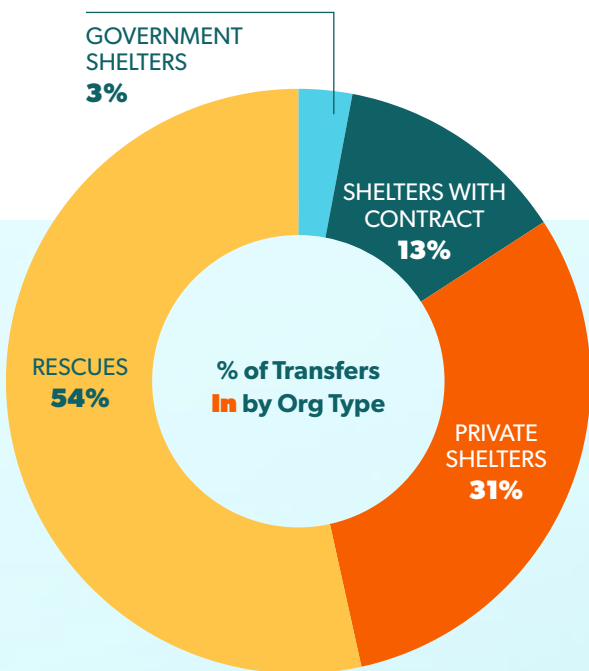
Transfers in from other states:

- |                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| 1. Massachusetts | 4. Virginia |
| 2. Colorado      | 5. New York |
| 3. Illinois      |             |

## Top 5 Transfer Out States in 2025

Transfers to other states:

- |                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. Texas          | 4. Kentucky  |
| 2. California     | 5. Tennessee |
| 3. South Carolina |              |



*Data Note: Rescues received the largest share of transfer-in animals in 2025 (54%), while government shelters accounted for the majority of transfer-out activity (55%). This pattern reflects the role government shelters play as primary intake point and the important function rescues serve in absorbing animals redistributed through the system.*



5% down (19k)

In 2025

# 757,000

## dogs and cats had a non-live outcome.



4% up (14k)

1% compared to 2024

In 2025, 757,000 dogs and cats experienced a non-live outcome, a 1% decrease from 2024. Species-level trends moved in different directions: dog non-live outcomes declined, while cat non-live outcomes increased slightly, largely due to the higher vulnerability of very young kittens and older cats.

The table on the right breaks this information into three views to show both where non-live outcomes occur and how frequently they occur within each organization type:

**% of Total Non-Live Outcomes** shows each organization type's share of total national non-live outcomes, highlighting that government organizations account for the majority of cases (59%), followed by shelters with contract (23%), private shelters (9%), and rescues (9%).

**Dog Non-Live Outcomes** shows, within each organization type, what percentage of dog intakes result in a non-live outcome, illustrating how risk varies by operational role and intake volume.

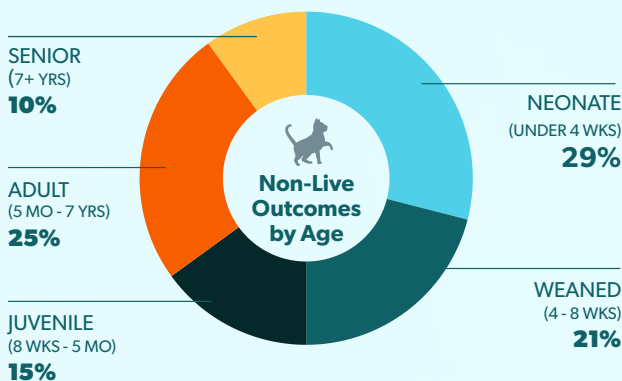
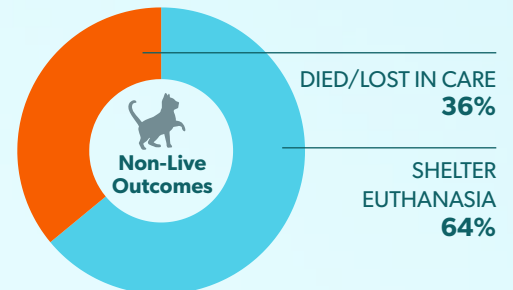
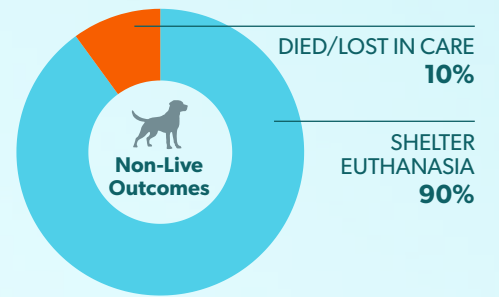
**Cat Non-Live Outcomes** provides the same view for cat intakes, where non-live outcome rates tend to be higher due for neonates and older cats.

Together, these three columns offer a picture of non-live outcomes by showing not only the distribution of cases across the system but also the rate of a non-live outcome for dogs and cats within each type of organization.

### Non-Live Outcomes by Org Type

	% of Total Non-Live Outcomes	Dog Non-Live Outcomes	Cat Non-Live Outcomes
<b>Government Shelters</b>	59%	15%	17%
<b>Shelters with Contract</b>	23%	11%	12%
<b>Private Shelters</b>	9%	5%	6%
<b>Rescues</b>	9%	3%	5%

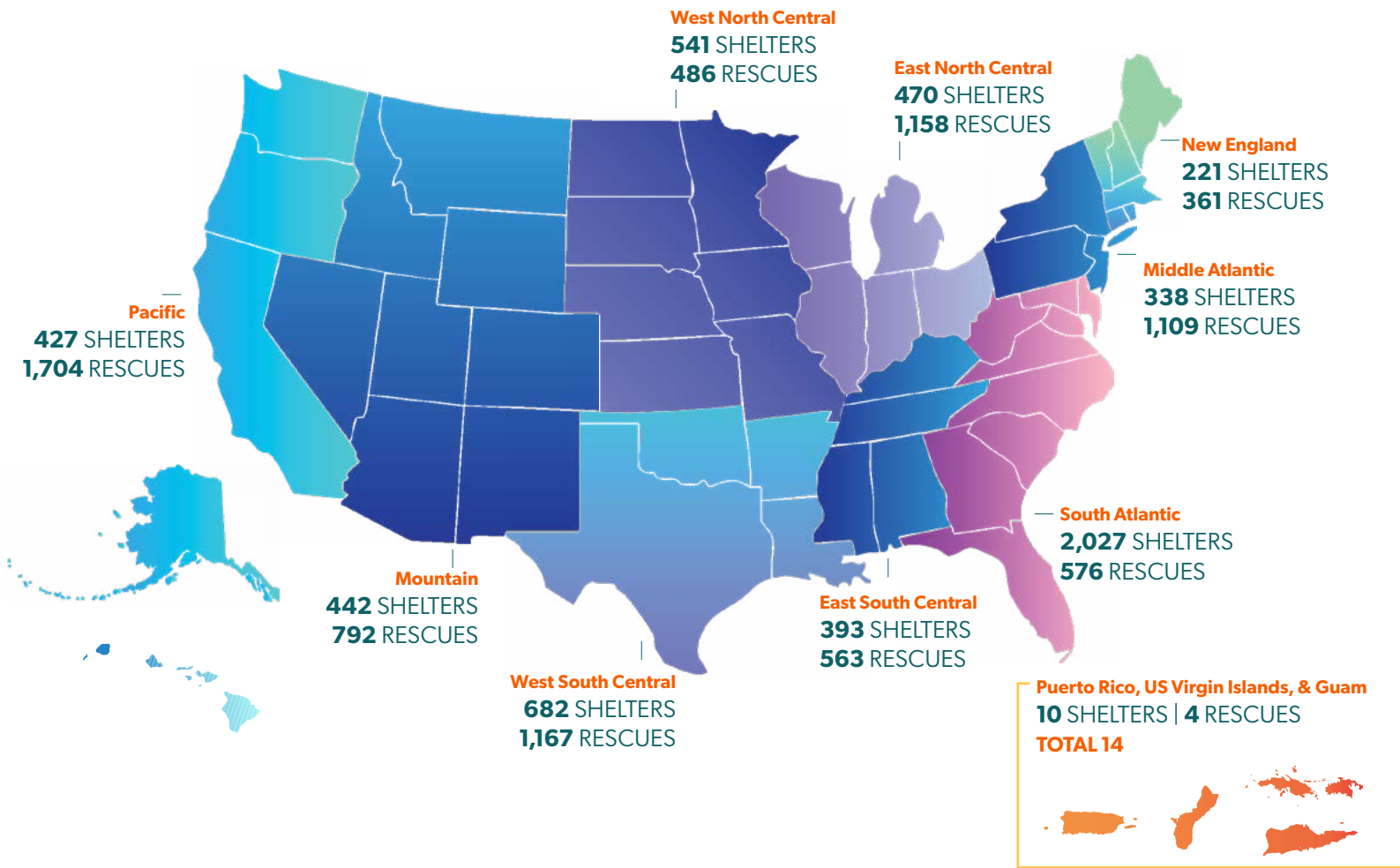
Animal-level data show clear differences in non-live outcomes for dogs and cats. For dogs, 90% of non-live outcomes were shelter euthanasia and 10% were deaths or losses in care. Cats showed a more varied pattern, with 64% due to euthanasia and 36% from dying or being lost in care—largely driven by neonates and young kittens. Counter to cats, 67% of dog non-live outcomes were adults, 19% were puppies, 14% were seniors. When we looked at distribution of non-live outcomes by dog size, medium dogs made up 43%, followed by large dogs at 35%, and smalls at 22%. Large dogs have the highest non-live outcome rate of all sizes at 12%. Age plays a major role in non-live outcomes for cats. In 2025 neonates accounted for the largest share at 29% of all non-live outcomes, followed by adults at 25%, weaned kittens at 21%, juveniles at 15%, and seniors at 10%. Non-live rates were highest for the youngest kittens, with neonates at 15%, weaned kittens at 8%, and juveniles at 3%.



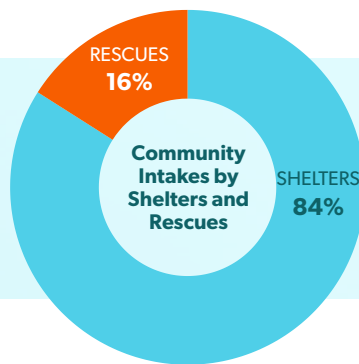
### Non-Live Rates by Kitten Age Group

Neonate	15%
Weaned	8%
Juvenile	3%

# Organizations



4,100 Shelters | 9,371 Rescues  
**Total: 13,471**



The animal welfare landscape across the United States and its territories includes at least **13,471 known organizations**, made up of **4,100 shelters** and **9,371 rescues**. This page provides an overview of how these organizations are distributed and represented by region. As shown in the accompanying chart, shelters account for the majority of community intakes at 84%, while rescues represent the remaining 16%.

# Shelter Animals Count Accomplishments in 2025

In 2025, Shelter Animals Count continued to lead the way in advancing data-driven practices within the animal welfare industry. Through new initiatives, expanded resources, and collaborative efforts, we empowered organizations to make a greater impact in their communities.

## Robust 2024 Year End Analysis and 2025 Mid-Year Reports

For our two signature reports, we delivered the most detailed analysis in our history.

### The 2024 Year End Report included:

- Our most comprehensive report to date, with deeper animal-level insights
- Clear breakdowns by organization type, plus regional trends
- Companion data resources focused on specific populations and in-depth analysis, including:
  - Kitten intake and outcomes
  - Length of stay for dogs and cats
  - Puppy trends
  - Spay/neuter at intake
  - Species- and age-focused analyses to support targeted programming
  - Organization type trends
  - Metro vs Rural analysis

## 2025 Mid-Year Report

Our 2025 mid-year analysis continues to stand as the most comprehensive nationwide snapshot of sheltering trends. Using data from January through June, the report helps organizations:

- Measure their own performance against national patterns
- Anticipate pressures coming in the second half of the year
- Understand intake and outcome shifts as they happen

## Major Conference Highlights:

Team members of Shelter Animals Count delivered multiple high-profile presentations in 2025:

- Three sessions at Animal Care Expo, including a main stage presentation
- Tableau Conference
- Texas Unites for Animals Conference
- Best Friends Animal Society Conference
- Online Kitten Conference
- Tennessee Animal Care and Control Conference
- Midwest Animal Sheltering Conference
- Additional virtual presentations reaching broad industry audiences

Additionally, we were featured exhibitors at Animal Care Expo, the Association for Animal Welfare Advancement Conference, and Best Friends National Conference.

## 2025 Data Reports

This year, we introduced new reporting for our organization that featured analysis on a variety of topics to help guide the industry and give insights into areas in our field. In 2025, we released four reports on the following topics:

### Altered Status Report

Released in June, this report looked closely at sterilization at intake, with breakdowns by species, sex, and year-over-year trends. The report provides guidance organizations can use to target services where they're needed most.

In addition, the "Decrease in Proportion of Sterilized Dogs Entering Animal Welfare Organizations in the U.S. Postpandemic" paper was accepted for publication by the Journal of Shelter Medicine and Community Animal Health.

### Adoption Hours & Policies Pulse Check

In September, we released a nationwide snapshot of how organizations manage adoption access. With 349 responses to a pulse check survey that we conducted with our reporting organizations across all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Canada, the report found:

- Most shelters are open less than 45 hours a week
- Evening and Sunday access to shelters remains limited
- 80% allow same-day adoptions, but there are still restrictions in place for many adopters
- Many organizations are open for intake more hours than they are open for adoptions
- Timely data entry is critical to keeping adopters informed and engaged

These findings highlight straightforward opportunities to remove barriers and increase placements.

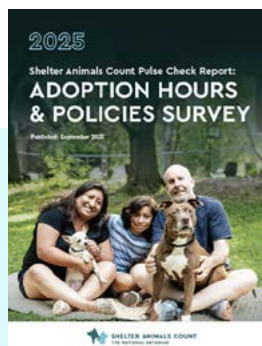
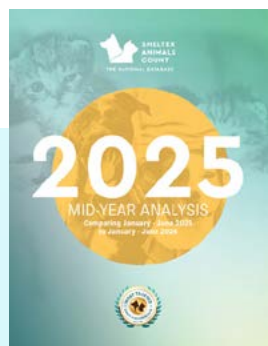
### National Trends in Foster-Based Rescue Operations

Released in November, this report — powered by SAC insights and a dataset from Pawlytics — examined how foster-based rescues operate and how their impact compares to brick-and-mortar shelters. This is one of the few national views into how foster-driven organizations contribute to system-wide outcomes.

### Field Services Report: A First-of-Its-Kind View into Animal Control Operations

In December, we partnered with the National Animal Care & Control Association (NACA) to release the first data-driven national look at animal control field services. Using a dataset from Shelterluv, this report provides:

- A breakdown of the types of calls and activities officers handle
- A clearer picture of community needs
- A roadmap for more consistent field data collection across the country



**CHECK OUT OUR REPORTS**  
[shelteranimalscount.org/reports](https://shelteranimalscount.org/reports)

## Unlocking Animal Data Series (Powered by Hill's Pet Nutrition)

This year's series of webinars and blogs breaks down shelter data in a way that helps teams actually use it. Topics included:

- Kitten intake and outcome data
- Length of stay
- Innovating foster programs and data trends
- Adoption barriers
- Big dog data and moving them through shelters faster

This series featured content all year, building practical knowledge the industry can apply immediately and featuring the innovative work of shelters and rescues around the country.

## Adopter Experience Webinar

- Featured panelists and data from Shelter Animals Count, Adopt-a-Pet, Hill's Pet Nutrition, Human Animal Support Services (HASS), and Humane World for Animals
- Addressed real barriers adopters face during the process
- Shared survey results and strategies for improving the adopter journey

## More Tools for Members

This year, we also updated our member exclusive comparative dashboard, giving members a better way to see their own data in context and compare it to regional, statewide, or national numbers. We launched updated public dashboards on National Animal Statistics and State Level statistics.

## Acquisition to the ASPCA and Looking Ahead

In December, we officially joined the ASPCA, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the nation's most trusted animal sheltering dataset.

This strategic partnership preserves SAC's neutrality, strengthens our infrastructure, and secures our future – so the data you rely on remains accessible, independent, and impactful.

We'll carry the work from 2025 and our mission and focus into 2026: delivering practical data, clear reporting, and tools the industry can use to serve animals and communities more effectively.

***Thank you for a successful year of support from all of us at Shelter Animals Count.***

## Member-Exclusive Dashboards

The following dashboards are available to organizations that submit data to Shelter Animals Count:

- **Comparison Dashboard**
- **Analytics and Forecast**
- **Rehome Dashboard** *Powered by Adopt-a-Pet*
- **Community Services Totals**
- **Intake and Outcome Totals**



With our transition to the ASPCA at the end of 2025, we would like to say thank you to our sponsors who supported us at Shelter Animals Count and made our work possible.

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