

More Than Ever, Pets are Members of the Family

New York, N.Y. — Whether furry, feathered or flippers a-flapping, Americans continue to display close relationships with their pets. 2015 is [expected](#) to continue the pet industry's more than two-decades-strong growth trend – and why shouldn't it?

More than three in five Americans (62%) have at least one pet in their household, with ownership highest among the two youngest generations tested (65% among Millennials, 71% among Gen X). What's more, nearly all pet owners (95%, up 4 points from 2012 and 7 points since the question was first asked in 2007) consider their pets to be members of the family – and the behaviors backing up this claim could well be helping along those aforementioned great (sales) expectations:

- 45% of pet owners say they've frequently or occasionally bought birthday presents for their pets, up 5 points from 2012 and 8 points since 2007.
- Three in ten (31%) say they frequently or occasionally cook especially for their pets, up 7 points since 2012 and 8 points since 2007.

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll® of 2,205 U.S. adults, of whom 1,323 have at least one pet, surveyed online between May 20 and 26, 2015.

Americans with kids in the household are more likely to have at least one pet than those without (73% vs. 57%) – and kids in those households may themselves be more likely to be the pet owners of the future, as Americans who had a pet when they were growing up are more likely than those who didn't to have one now (66% vs. 41%).

- Congress' [ratings](#) may be in the dog house, but looking at Americans by their political beliefs, Republicans may be more likely than either Democrats or Independents to have a dog house in their backyard as they're more likely to have at least one pet in the household (68% Rep, 59% Dem, 60% Ind).

Who's top dog

When it comes to *what* pets are in these households, dogs come out on top with 71% of pet owners saying they have at least one dog; half (49%) have cats, while one in ten have fish (11%) and less than one in ten pet owners have a bird (8%) or some other type of pet (9%).

- Interestingly, dogs may have a leg up in "crossover" pet ownership as well: half (49%) of cat owners also say they have a dog, while only a third (34%) of dog owners also have a cat.

The majority of dog owners have just one pooch in the house (61%), and the average number of dogs in these households is 1.6. Cat owners are somewhat less likely to limit their home to just one kitty (53%), and the average number of cats under those roofs is 2.0.

Showing the love

In addition to the aforementioned growing percentages of pet owners frequently or occasionally buying birthday presents for their pets (45%) and cooking for them (31%), majorities of pet owners frequently or occasionally let their pets sleep in bed with them (71%) and buy them holiday presents (64%). Just over two in ten at least occasionally dress their pet in some type of clothing (22%), while just over one in ten at least occasionally bring their pets to work (12%).

- Cat owners are more likely than dog owners to let their pets sleep on the bed (81% vs. 73%), but dog owners are more likely to "paws" and show their love in all of the other tested manners, including buying holiday (70% dog owners, 61% cat owners) and birthday (52% and 40%, respectively) presents and cooking for them (38% and 26%, respectively).
- Women are more likely than men to say they at least occasionally buy their pets holiday presents (70% vs. 58%), while men are more likely to at least occasionally bring their pet to work (16% vs. 9%).
- Millennials are more likely than any other generation to say they at least occasionally buy their pets birthday presents (54% vs. 40% Gen X, 42% Baby Boomers and 27% Matures) and dress their pets in some type of clothing (31% vs. 19%, 14% and 13%).

Of course, pet owners also show their love through their wallets, reporting that they spend nearly a combined \$1,200 per year on food/treats (\$476.6), medical costs (\$425.7), pet sitting/boarding (\$128.5), toys (\$63.7) and other equipment (\$97.4). Women spend more on these items and services for their pets than men (nearly \$1,400 vs. less than \$1,000).

Pet protection

Over one in ten pet owners (12%) have taken out health/medical insurance policies or any of the pets they own.

- These policies are most common among Millennials (19%, vs. 9% Gen X, 8% Baby Boomers and 9% Matures).
- Additionally, men (15%) are more likely than women (9%) to have such a policy.

TABLE 1a

HAVING A PET - TREND

"Do you currently have a pet?"

Base: All Adults

	2007	2011	2012	2015
	%	%	%	%
Yes	63	62	60	62
No	37	38	40	38

TABLE 1b

WHICH AMERICANS HAVE PETS?

"Do you currently have a pet?"

Percent answering "Yes"

Base: All Adults

	Total 2015
	%
All Adults	62
Gender	
Men	60
Women	63
Region	

East	60
Midwest	57
South	63
West	66
Metro Status	
Urban	57
Suburban	61
Rural	70
Age	
Millennials (18-37)	65
Gen X (38-49)	71
Baby Boomers (50-68)	59
Matures (69+)	41
Children (<18) in Household	
Yes	73
No	57
Had a Pet Growing Up	
Yes	66
No	41
Political Party	
Republicans	68
Democrats	59
Independents	60
Income/Household	
\$34,999 or less	54
\$35,000 – \$49,999	64
\$50,000 – \$74,999	65
\$75,000 – \$99,999	66
\$100,000+	68

TABLE 2

TYPE OF PET

"What type of pet do you have?"

Base: Has a pet

	Total 2007	Total 2011	Total 2012	2015		
				Total	Dog owners	Cat owners
	%	%	%	%	%	%

Dog	70	69	67	71	100	49
Cat	52	51	52	49	34	100
Fish	15	11	12	11	11	10
Bird	7	7	7	8	8	9
Other	12	8	9	9	7	10

Note: Multiple responses allowed

TABLE 3
NUMBER OF PETS

"How many of each type of pet do you have?"

Base: Has the type of pet specified

	Dog(s)	Cat(s)	Bird(s)*	Fish	Other
	%	%	%	%	%
1	61	53	53	25	47
2	27	29	23	13	19
3	7	8	11	9	12
4	3	4	9	13	7
5	2	2	3	10	6
6 or more	1	3	5	31	10
MEAN	1.6	2.0	2.8	7.5	2.9

Percentages may not add up exactly to 100 percent due to rounding

*Low base (N<100); results should be interpreted as directional in nature

TABLE 4
PET AS MEMBER OF FAMILY
By Year & Type of Pet

"Do you consider your pet(s) to be a member of your family?"

Base: Has a pet

	Total	Total	Total	Total	Type of Pet	
	2007	2011	2012	2015	Dog	Cat
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	88	91	91	95	96	93
No	7	7	6	4	3	5
Not sure	4	2	3	1	1	2

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100 percent due to rounding

TABLE 5
THINGS PET OWNERS DO FOR THEIR PETS

"How often have you done any of the following?"

Base: Has a pet

	Frequently/ Occasionally	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely/ Never	Rarely	Never	Not sure
	(NET)			(NET)			
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Allowed my pet to sleep in the bed with me	71	54	18	28	10	18	*
Bought my pet a holiday present	64	36	28	36	15	21	*
Bought my pet a birthday present	45	24	21	55	14	41	*
Cooked especially for my pet	31	11	20	69	19	49	*
Dressed my pet in some type of clothing	22	7	14	78	21	57	*
Took my pet to work with me	12	7	5	88	9	79	*

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100 percent due to rounding

* signifies less than 1%

TABLE 6a
THINGS PET OWNERS DO FOR THEIR PETS – TREND

"How often have you done any of the following?"

Percent saying "Frequently" or "Occasionally"

Base: Has a pet

	Total 2007	Total 2011	Total 2012	Total 2015	

	%	%	%	%	
Allowed my pet to sleep in the bed with me	69	70	67	71	
Bought my pet a holiday present	65	60	61	64	
Bought my pet a birthday present	37	36	40	45	
Cooked especially for my pet	23	24	24	31	
Dressed my pet in some type of clothing	18	16	19	22	
Took my pet to work with me	10	11	10	12	

TABLE 6b

THINGS PET OWNERS DO FOR THEIR PETS

By Generation, Gender, Children in Household & Type of Pet

"How often have you done any of the following?"

Percent saying "Frequently" or "Occasionally"

Base: Has a pet

	Total 2015	Generation				Gender		Children (<18) in HH		Type of Pet	
		Millennials (18-37)	Gen X (38-49)	Baby Boomers (50-8)	Matures (69+)	Male	Female	Yes	No	Dog	Cat
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Allowed my pet to sleep in the bed with me	71	73	68	72	71	69	73	68	74	73	81
Bought my pet a holiday present	64	67	61	64	56	58	70	69	61	70	61
Bought my pet a birthday present	45	54	40	42	27	45	44	47	43	52	40

birthday present											
Cooked especially for my pet	31	32	27	32	36	29	33	32	30	38	26
Dressed my pet in some type of clothing	22	31	19	14	13	21	22	31	16	28	19
Took my pet to work with me	12	16	11	11	3	16	9	14	11	16	11

TABLE 7

PET HEALTH/MEDICAL INSURANCE

By Generation, Gender, Children in Household & Type of Pet

"Do you have a health/medical insurance policy for any of the pets you own?"

Base: Has a pet

	Total	Generation				Gender		Children (<18) in HH		Type of Pet	
		Millennials (18-37)	Gen X (38-49)	Baby Boomers (50-68)	Matures (69+)	Male	Female	Yes	No	Dog	Cat
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	12	19	9	8	9	15	9	16	10	15	11
No	88	81	91	92	91	85	91	84	90	85	89

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100 percent due to rounding

TABLE 8

ANNUAL SPENDING ON PETS

By Generation, Gender, Children in Household & Type of Pet

"Approximately how much would you estimate you spend annually on your pets in each of the following categories? Please enter your response to the nearest dollar."

Summary of Mea Annual Spending

Base: Has a pet

	Total	Generation				Gender		Children (<18) in HH		Type of Pet	
		Millennials (18-37)	Gen X (38-49)	Baby Boomers (50-68)	Matures (69+)	Male	Female	Yes	No	Dog	Cat
Food/Treats	476.6	422.8	460.3	573.3	382.3	360.9	578.4	558.3	429.6	535.9	529.9
Medical costs (e.g., vet appointments, medications, procedures)	425.7	358.0	358.4	567.1	376.5	377.0	468.5	349.4	472.5	477.3	390.0
Pet sitting/boarding	128.5	118.1	82.9	177.8	120.3	92.0	160.6	129.1	128.7	159.8	113.6
Toys	63.7	80.9	57.8	55.3	35.1	61.3	65.9	70.8	59.7	66.9	58.5
Other equipment (e.g., habitats, collars, litter)	97.4	107.5	93.9	97.1	60.6	82.0	110.9	103.9	93.4	71.8	136.9
TOTAL	1191.9	1015.8	1053.3	1470.6	974.8	973.2	1384.3	1211.5	1183.9	1311.7	1228.9

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100 percent due to rounding

TABLE 9
HAD A PET WHEN GROWING UP

"Did you have a pet when you were growing up?"

Base: All Adults

	Total
	%
Yes	84
No	16

Methodology

This **Harris Poll** was conducted online, in English, within the United States between May 20 and 26, 2015 among 2,225 adults (aged 18 and over) of whom 1,323 have a pet. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, The Harris Poll avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in our panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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By Larry Shannon-Missal, Managing Editor, *The Harris Poll*

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