



CATS (Cats and Their Stats) 2020 NI[©]
www.cats.org.uk/stats-regional



**Cats.
Northern Ireland
loves them.
It's official!**

There are over **290,000 owned cats in Northern Ireland** – that’s one for almost every six people! Northern Ireland is truly a nation of proud cat lovers.

As the cat experts, Cats Protection is excited to share with you the amazing and fascinating stats from the CATS (Cats and Their Stats) 2020 Northern Ireland report, the first of its kind.

This independent research project involved speaking to hundreds of people from across Northern Ireland, making it the largest and most comprehensive report on cats.

The survey was carried out in early spring 2020 and the results already showed us just how much joy cats bring to people. We know that the subsequent COVID-19 pandemic, with its lockdown and restrictions has made many of us appreciate the joy and comfort cats give us even more.

This report gives us a new, robust and unique insight into the world of cats as well as their owners. It provides compelling evidence that cats are complex, with varied needs that we must meet, and it resoundingly shows just how much we love our cats. Cats Protection will use these statistics to inform everything we do, from rehoming strays to promoting the benefits of neutering and microchipping. It will also help us to speak up for cats with legislators, decision makers and anyone with influence over cat welfare.

I hope you find CATS 2020 Northern Ireland useful – together we can make a better world for cats.



James Yeates BVSc, FRCVS
Chief Executive

James with his cat, Monkey



COVER PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/PAVLINA POPOVSKA / ILLUSTRATIONS: RUS HUDDA



Methodology

We commissioned an external and independent agency, Basis Research, to conduct the research contained in this report. An online survey was used to collect information among a nationally representative audience of over 18s in the UK, allowing us to identify the proportion of cat owners in the UK. We also conducted a more detailed survey among cat owners. This was carried out between 28 February 2020 and 5 April 2020.

The sample consisted of a nationally representative sample of N=3,520, of which we collected N=75 living in Northern Ireland. We interviewed N=370 cat owners and N=58 non owners in Northern Ireland in total.

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Welcome to the CATS (Cats and Their Stats) 2020 Northern Ireland[©] first annual report

People love cats in Northern Ireland. It's official! Over one in five households in Northern Ireland has a cat (22%).

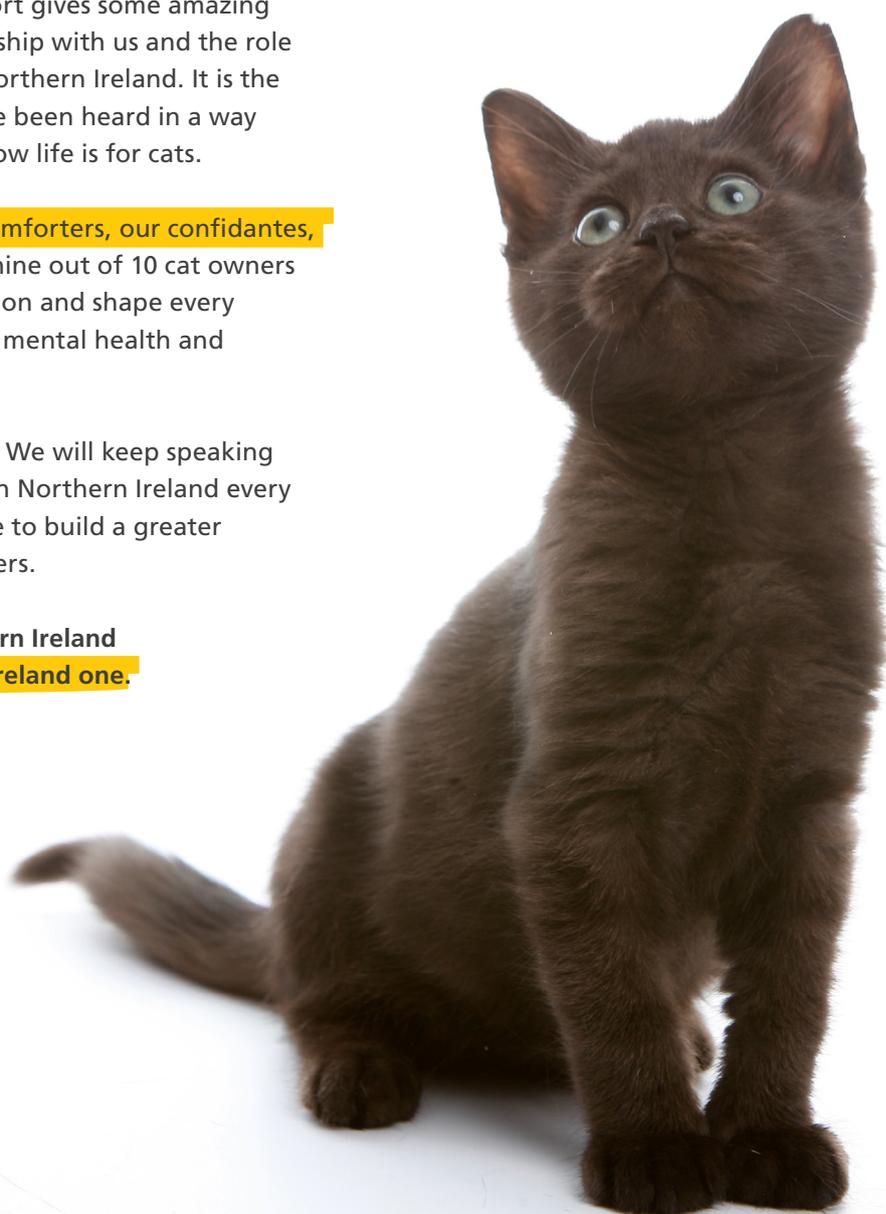
This report is the most comprehensive picture of owned cats in Northern Ireland based on **speaking to over 400 people** in Northern Ireland – both those who already own cats but also those that would like to. It is an analysis for Northern Ireland taken from the UK-wide CATS (Cats and Their Stats) 2020 survey by Cats Protection, the leading feline welfare charity.

The CATS 2020 Northern Ireland report gives some amazing insights into their lives, their relationship with us and the role they play in modern society within Northern Ireland. It is the first time that cat owners' voices have been heard in a way that allows us to really understand how life is for cats.

The report shows that **cats are our comforters, our confidantes, our entertainers** and our joy (nearly nine out of 10 cat owners said so). They speak to every generation and shape every aspect of our lives. They improve our mental health and reduce our stress.

This first report is just the beginning. We will keep speaking to cat owners (and non-cat owners) in Northern Ireland every year from now on so we can continue to build a greater understanding of cats and their owners.

If you need a cat fact/stat for Northern Ireland then **make it a CATS 2020 Northern Ireland one.**



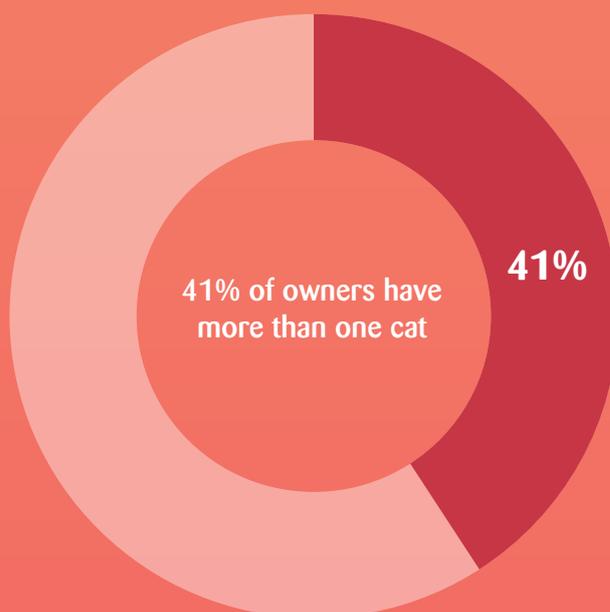
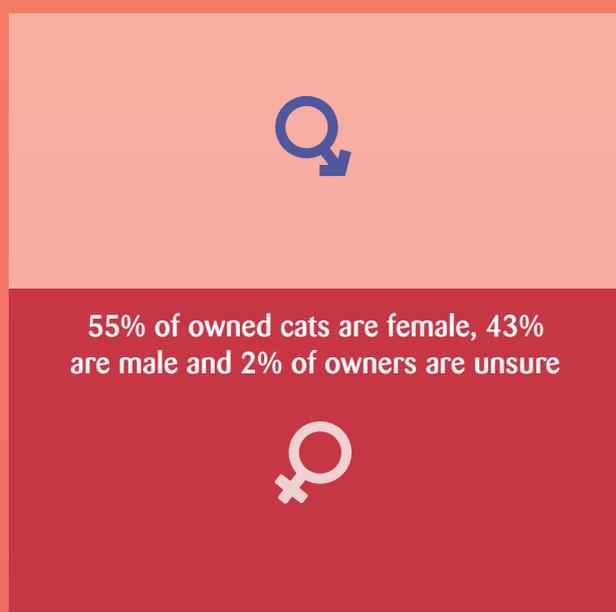
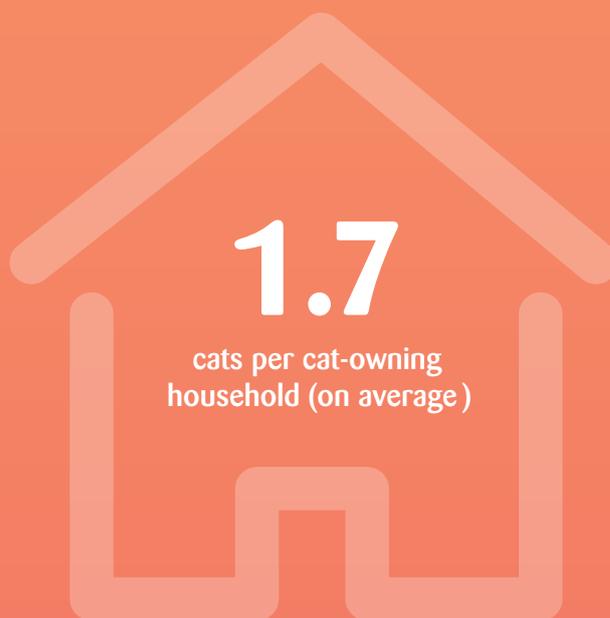
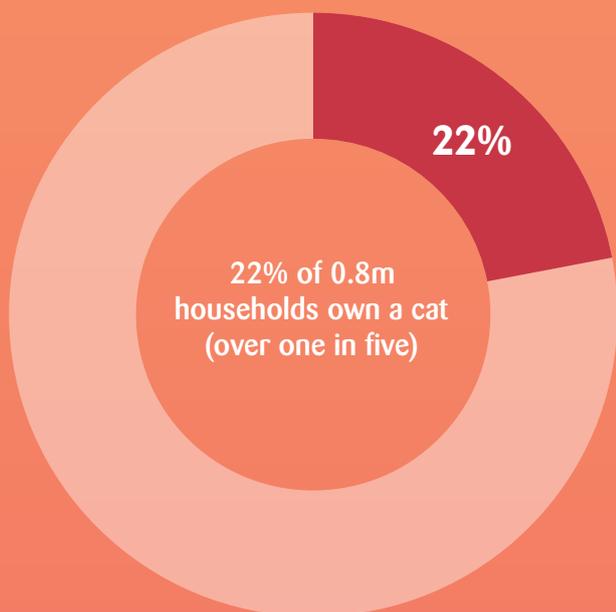
People and cats

Population

Did you know that there are over

290,000 owned cats in Northern Ireland?

That's almost one for every six people!



Age is just a number

When you're a cat you're considered 'mature' from the age of seven (that's 44 in human years). **37% of owned cats in Northern Ireland are mature.** Many adopters opt for the cute kitten as first choice but anyone with an older cat can tell you their many virtues.

Cat owners in Northern Ireland are more likely to adopt (26%) rather than buy a cat (14%).



So much to love

Cats bring joy. Ok so we might be biased, but **87% of owners in Northern Ireland agreed!** And there's also joy to be had from other people's cats with over two thirds (**71%**) regularly going online to view funny and cute cat pics and videos.

Cats are great companions and can relieve stress or loneliness; **53% agreed.**

91% said that their cats are part of the family, **82%** talk to their cats (how is this not more?!) and **60%** love to spoil them. Nearly half (**49%**) admitted to putting their cat's needs ahead of their own.



Cats and their people

One of the best things about having a cat is sitting down with them after a hard day or when you just feel like relaxing and giving them a stroke. **91% of owners said they did this every day** and **62%** actively play with their cat every day. Overall, **75%** considered themselves to be heavily involved with their cat; feeding, playing and generally being there for them.

The **majority of cats enjoy both outdoor and indoor life (69%),** coming and going more or less as they please. But **26%** live exclusively indoors. This is more common where owners live in a flat or densely populated urban environment.

91% stroke their cat every day!

62% actively play with their cat every day

75% are heavily involved with their cat



Did you know that some cats have to live indoors for their own safety, due to medical conditions such as FIV, or having a disability such as poor eyesight or hearing? Learn more about what indoor cats need [here](#).

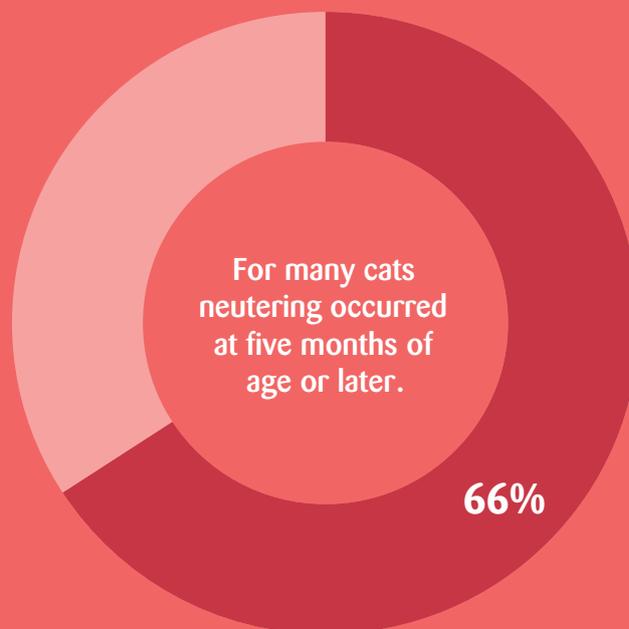
Cats and their welfare

Neutering

87% of cat owners in Northern Ireland said that their cats are neutered or spayed.

Cats Protection recommends that cats should be neutered from four months old as this is when they can become sexually mature and begin to get pregnant with kittens. However, for many cats in Northern Ireland (66%) neutering occurred at five months of age or later. 18% of neutered females have a first litter before they are spayed.

Indoor cats were less likely to be neutered (81%). However, cats are veritable Houdinis and can escape through the smallest crack in an open window or door. So, Cats Protection recommends neutering indoor-only cats as well as cats that have access to the outdoors. There are additional health benefits from neutering as well as controlling the population so it should be considered for all cats.



Did you know that **unneutered** female cats can have up to three litters a year and 18 kittens a year?

Microchips reunite

Microchipping is a **safe, permanent and low-cost** way of identifying an owned cat, and gives a lost cat the best chance of being reunited with their owner.

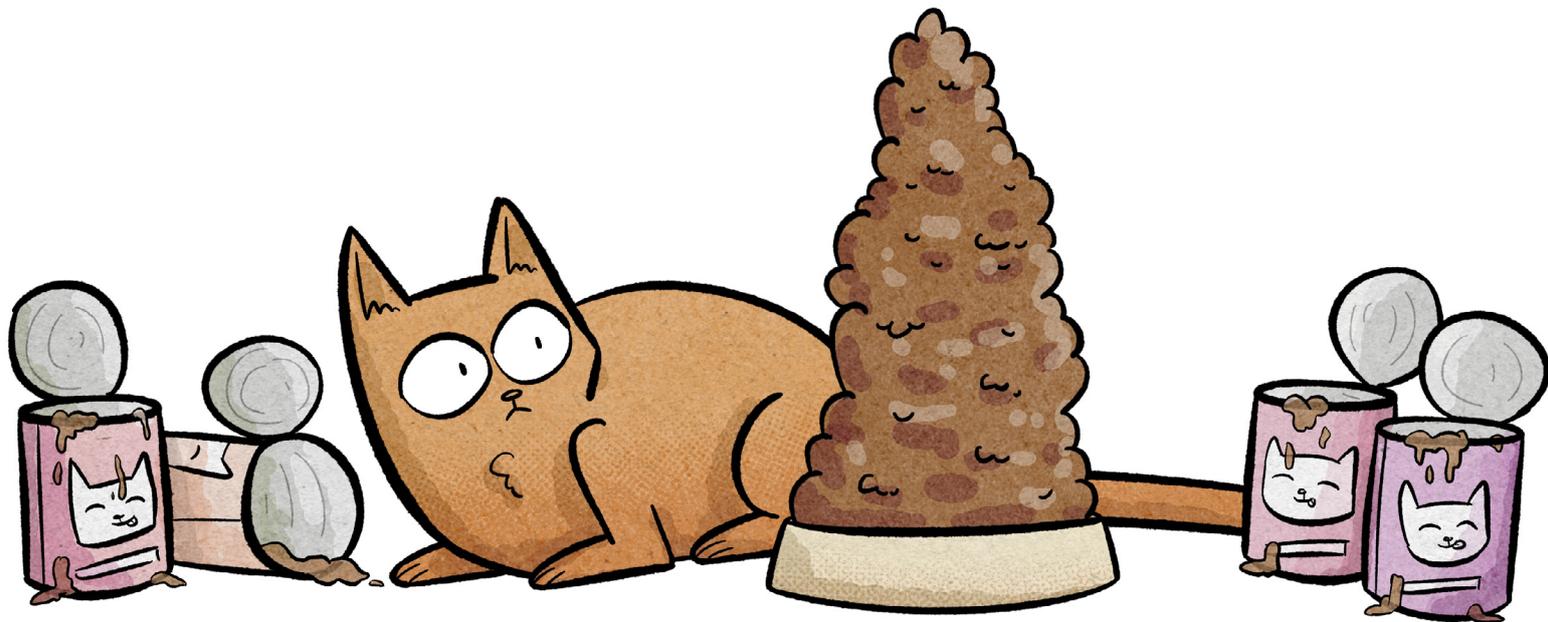
110,000

38% of owned cats are not microchipped

57% of cats in Northern Ireland have a microchip, compared to 71% in the UK. This means that over **110,000 owned cats in Northern Ireland are still not microchipped** (38% of owned cats are not microchipped, 57% are, 4% don't know).

Thankfully 94% of cats in Northern Ireland with a microchip have up-to-date microchip details.

Cats Protection is calling for compulsory microchipping of owned cats in Northern Ireland and across the UK. To find out more visit www.cats.org.uk/microchippingpetition



A weighty issue

Weight is a growing problem in cats across the UK and Northern Ireland is no exception. Based on a series of picture prompts and descriptions:

- 36% of cat owners in Northern Ireland believed their cats to be overweight, compared to 32% in the UK
- 31% of cat owners in Northern Ireland believed their cats to be an ideal weight
- 28% of cat owners in Northern Ireland believed their cats to be underweight
- 5% didn't know

It's always good to get your cat's weight regularly checked!

Vet checks

Despite their good intentions, 50% of cat owners in Northern Ireland said they miss out on regular vet check-ups, with cost being the greatest barrier to cats being taken to the vet more frequently (33%).

34% and 37% of cats aren't regularly treated for worms and fleas respectively. Indoor cats are less likely to be regularly treated for fleas.

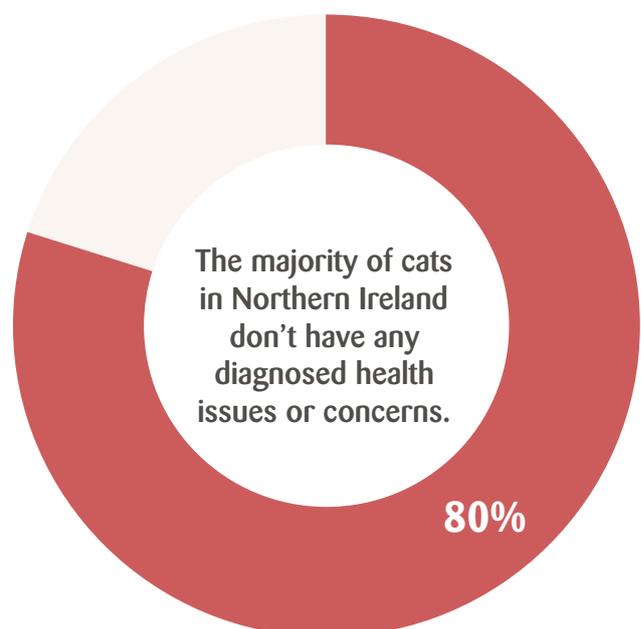
Whether indoor or outdoor, Cats Protection recommends all cats are microchipped, neutered, vaccinated and regularly treated for fleas and worms, and that they should have regular vet check-ups, at least once yearly.

A clean bill of health

The majority of cats in Northern Ireland (80%) don't have any diagnosed health issues or concerns, which is great news!

For those that do, the most frequently occurring health issues for cats in Northern Ireland are:

- 3% obesity
- 2% dental disease
- 2% lower urinary tract disease (eg cystitis, bladder problems)
- 2% overgrooming
- 2% feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV)



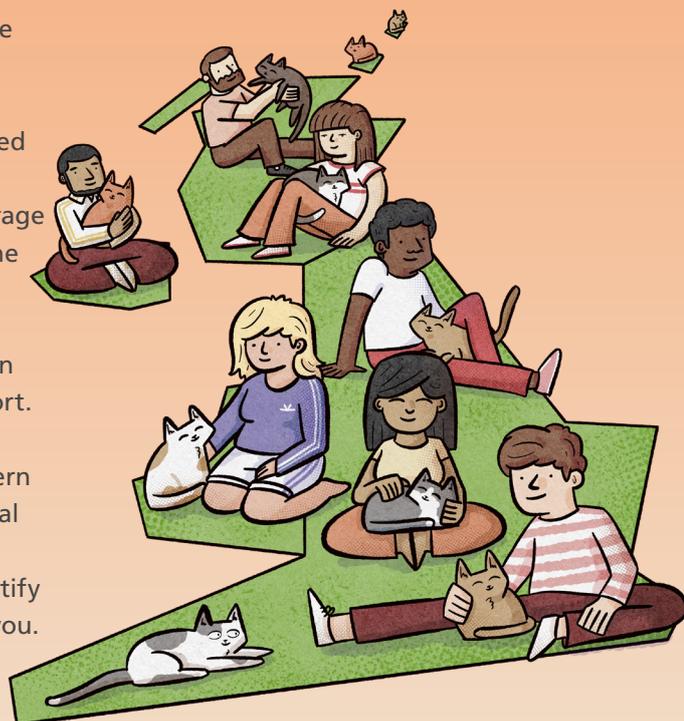
So what have we learned?

In this survey of cat owners and non-cat owners across Northern Ireland we've learned that Northern Ireland is a nation of cat lovers with over one in five households owning a cat. Owners really enjoy their cats with 91% saying they sit down and stroke their cat to relax after a hard day. Our survey also reveals that despite good intentions cat owners in Northern Ireland visit the vet less frequently than other UK owners with 50% (43% UK) missing out on regular vet check-ups. Owners stated costs as the greatest barrier to frequent vet visits.

Only 57% of cats in Northern Ireland have a microchip, compared to 71% in the UK. With over 110,000 owned cats in Northern Ireland still not microchipped more needs to be done to encourage owners to microchip their cats. Microchipping gives a lost cat the best chance of being identified and reunited with their owner.

Every year from now on Cats Protection will go out and build on this first CATS (Cats and Their Stats) 2020 Northern Ireland report. By building up a regular and comprehensive body of statistical evidence we can work together with the government in Northern Ireland, local government, veterinary professionals, other animal welfare charities, professional organisations and influencers to ensure a better world for cats in Northern Ireland. We can identify trends, tailor advice, build up understanding and be there for you. Use us and CATS 2020 Northern Ireland for all things cat!

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Cats Protection is the UK's leading cat welfare charity

Our network in Northern Ireland includes five volunteer-run branches, one adoption centre and eight education volunteers*. In 2019 the charity rehomed 1,000 cats in Northern Ireland and helped neuter 11,000 cats.

* as of 21 October 2020

For further information contact: stats@cats.org.uk

To view CATS 2020 Northern Ireland online visit:

www.cats.org.uk/stats-regional

To read the full UK report visit: www.cats.org.uk/stats

Reg Charity 203644 (England and Wales) and SC037711 (Scotland)

