

## 1 IN 3 BOUGHT THEIR PET DURING THE PANDEMIC AND ARE REAPING THE REWARDS

*New research from Choosi uncovers the relationship between Aussies and their furry friends*

**SYDNEY, June 2022** – Australia is undoubtedly a nation of pet lovers, with bonds so strong, most will consider breaking up with a partner if they did not get along with their pet (58%). The number of pet owners in Australia has grown significantly since COVID-19, with a third of Aussies acquiring their pet in the last two years (33%); the key decision drivers being experiences through lockdowns and coping with pressures from the pandemic.

Despite a third of owners admitting their pet purchase was an impulse decision (31%), almost all pet owners experienced a positive influence on their mental wellbeing (96%), physical health (88%), and mood and stress levels (55%).

Commissioned by Choosi in partnership with consumer research group, CoreData, the [Choosi Pet Lovers Report 2022](#) surveyed over 1,200 Australian cat and dog owners. The research investigates the experience of pet ownership over the past two years; revealing how the pandemic has affected Aussie's wellbeing, relationships, finances, living arrangements, careers, and holidays.

Overall, Australia is still a pooch-loving country, with Aussies twice as likely to identify more as a 'dog person' than a 'cat person' (56% vs 28%). Dogs tend to be favoured for the quality of the relationship they provide, while cats are preferred for their independence and low maintenance. Additionally, many pet owners believe owning a pet has been good practice for having children in the future (79%).

Most pet owners would feel lost without their pets (86%), emphasised by the fact that majority prefer the company of their pets over strangers (75%). Two-thirds of pet owners report their pet provides positive mental health benefits through feelings of companionship and connectedness (69%), unconditional love (65%) and feeling happier (62%), all of which played a pivotal role during COVID-19 lockdowns.

Further, pets have helped their owners with their mental health in other areas, with nearly two-thirds of those looking for a partner or to start a family reporting that their pet is making them less anxious (64%) or alleviating everyday pressures (59%).

According to animal behaviouralist Dr Kate Mornement, pets have been such a wonderful support for many Australians during the pandemic, particularly during lockdowns. "It is well established that pets can provide several physical and mental health benefits for their owners. The pandemic has amplified these benefits and resulted in many more people adding a pet to their family. These benefits were particularly important during lockdowns because when we couldn't spend time with our families and friends, our pets provided us with social support. They also gave us purpose and a reason to get outside for exercise.", said Dr Mornement.

Of the Australians who own pets, nearly half reported their pets have received more attention during lockdown periods compared to before (48%), with nearly as many owners seeing signs of

separation anxiety in their pets now that household members are back to work and getting out more (45%).

“Many people don’t realise that pets are not born knowing how to be by themselves. Separation anxiety, such as pacing, panting, whinging, and refusing to eat in the lead up to your departure or while you’re away, is currently one of the most common issues we are seeing with owners returning to work and study on-site, Dr. Mornement commented.

While pet owners would do anything for their closest companions, over half said that the cost of taking care of pets has become more expensive in the last two years (58%). The three toughest things about having a pet were food and medical expenses (44%), having enough time for them (31%) and cleaning up after them (31%).

“The availability of services for diagnosing and treating pets has increased in recent years as has the trend to refer pets to specialists. This, in turn, has meant an increase in the cost of veterinary services in general,” said Dr. Mornement.

Despite these obstacles, pet owners are willing to pay to make their pets happy. Over a quarter are prepared to pay over \$100 a month on discretionary items to spoil them (26%). Additionally, the average spent on the most expensive gift, toy or play area owners have bought for their pet is \$227 and spending \$193 on average on birthday parties for their pets.

While food is a given when it comes to spending money on pets, most Aussie pet owners are happy to buy the good stuff, with nearly three-quarters likely to buy expensive pet food brands occasionally (74%), and 28% only buying premium pet food brands.

“People are prepared to spend money on their pets because pets, now more than ever, are considered to be family members. For this reason, we like to spoil them with gifts, treats and whatever else we feel they may need”, Dr Mornement added.

Just over one-third (37%) spend over \$500 a year on pet medical costs, with nearly two-thirds (65%) willing to spend \$1,000 or more to take care of a pet medical emergency. Many pet owners are considering pet insurance to cover costs (17%), with almost one-third of owners reporting they already have pet insurance (29%).

The top perceived benefits of pet insurance include peace of mind should anything happen (36%), saving money on treatment costs (32%) and helping with unexpected costs (31%). Of those with pet insurance, nearly half report having made an average claim of up to \$1,536 (41%). Moreover, of those who have made a claim, a third state they did so as vet costs would have been a struggle to cover (34%), with nearly a tenth saying they would not have been able to afford the treatment (9%).

## ***Choosi Pet Lovers Report 2022***

### ***Further key findings from the research***

#### **Acquiring a pet:**

- Our choice of breed tends to go for both looks (43%) and personality (46%).
- Pet owners purchased their pet from a breeder (42%), a rescue shelter (38%) or from a pet shop (17%).

### **Cost of owning a pet:**

- 22% of pet owners are paying over \$1,000 for their pet (65%), and 36% at least \$500.
- 43% of pet owners buying from a breeder spend \$1,000 or more.
- 22% are willing to spend \$1,000 or more to take care of a pet medical emergency. 31% are prepared to pay over \$500 to have their pet buried or cremated.

### **Real estate and pets:**

- 61% of pet owners feel the needs of their pet(s) influence their choices when deciding where to live and the type of home to choose.
- 79% feel owning a pet makes it more difficult for them to find a suitable rental property to live in. (\*Data only refers to renters\*)
- 35% of pet owners feel they must make a compromise on the type of pet they have because of their living arrangements.
- Top 5 considerations for apartment dwellers: must be a pet-friendly building (55%), must have enough internal space (49%), must have a balcony (39%), must be a pet-friendly neighbourhood (34%) and must be close to parks and pet amenities (34%).
- Top 5 considerations for house dwellers: must have a secure fence (64%), must have a garden (58%), must have enough internal space (42%), must be a pet-friendly neighbourhood (32%) and must be close to parks and park amenities (27%).
- 68% of pet owners support the change in tenant and strata regulations to stop the ability to ban pets.

### **Career and pets:**

- 36% of Australian pet owners feel their pet influences their choice of career and workplace.
- Top 3 career and workplace decisions directly impacted by pets: must be able to get leave if pet is sick or needs care (36%), must not force them to travel or move (30%) and must be able to have flexible hours and working conditions (24%).

### **Holidays with pets:**

- 74% report their pet limits the frequency or length of the holidays they wish to take.
- 64% state that their pet limits holiday destinations.
- 68% would love to bring their pets with them on holidays, however there are limited options for them to do so.
- Ideal pet accommodation options: ability to let pets stay in rooms (59%), pet-friendly staff and guests (53%), areas where pets can safely roam free (52%), no additional charges for accommodating pets (44%) and ability to house pets indoors overnight (42%).

For access to the full Choosi Pet Lovers Report 2022, infographics or any additional supporting information, please [visit the Choosi website](#).

**ENDS**

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**About *Choosi Pet Lovers Report 2022***

The **Choosi Pet Lovers Report 2022** is a part of the Choosi Research Series. This most recent in-depth study investigates the cost and benefit of having/buying a pet in Australia. The report explores the relationship between pet owners and their willingness to spend money and time on their pet, sometimes at the expense of their own financial stability and potentially their relationships and the time spent with other people in their life.

The report is compiled based on research commissioned by Choosi and conducted by CoreData between the 30<sup>th</sup> of March and the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2022. The research was conducted via a quantitative online survey, gathering 1,240 responses from Australians aged 18 years and above who own a cat or dog.

**About Choosi**

Choosi's free comparison service lets you compare the benefits and prices of a range of popular insurance products, online and over the phone, so you can confidently choose cover that suits your needs, budget and lifestyle. Choosi does not compare the whole market.