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For over a century, the human census has been run in Australia to gain an insight into the people that call this land home. After the success of the Petplan 2011 pet census, we decided there needed to be an update and we were thrilled at the responses and findings.

The most popular companion animals are dogs and cats with an estimated 7.5 million within Australia alone. At a time when we are learning and understanding more about the humans we live alongside, it is vitally important to learn more about our pets; how we look after them and also how they can look after us. Petplan’s Pet Census seeks to fill this void of information. The data has been collected from over 10,000 pet owners from all over Australia, quizzing them on topics including their pets’ health, the social relations that come with owning a pet and the financial costs.

We all know that pet-keeping is a widespread and well accepted phenomenon in today’s society. As a nation of self confessed animal lovers, the number of households that have a pet is greater than two thirds of the population. So what can we learn about our society from the millions of people who say that pet owning makes them happier, fitter, and more sociable and compassionate?

The census demonstrates that pets can play an enormous role in their owner’s lives. As well as providing a source of companionship, support and entertainment, there is now substantial evidence to suggest that such animals may be able to promote their owners’ physical and psychological health. Numerous studies now point to pets, and notably dogs, helping to reduce their owners’ blood pressure and heart rate, ameliorate the effects of potentially stressful life-events, reduce levels of anxiety, loneliness and depression and enhance feelings of autonomy, competence and self esteem. There are even indications that some animals might be able to ‘sniff out’ cancerous tumours and proof that dogs can warn off impending epileptic seizures and sense drops in the blood sugar levels of patients with diabetes.

The Petplan Pet Census sought to explore four main areas relating to the human-animal bond, namely health, finance, social relations and family life. This report doesn’t just present the data arising from the census but it sheds much needed light on pet-keeping practices in Australia today. As a result, Petplan has a clear mandate to steer owners towards adopting practices designed to promote positive pet welfare and, more generally, encourage a successful and happy relationship with their companion animal.

But what else does it tell us? Whilst the Petplan Pet Census highlights areas in which owners may need some guidance in keeping their pet happy and healthy, the overwhelming takeout is that in a modern world of ‘Big Society’ thinking, pets are a very helpful starting point to enable us all to show compassion, empathy and consideration for others.
About Petplan

Petplan is the largest pet insurance provider in the world, offering comprehensive lifetime pet insurance cover for dogs, cats and horses. Established initially in the UK, the brand has been in Australia for over 10 years and has remained true to its origins - by keeping more pets healthy and owners happy than any other insurance company.

For more information about petplan, please visit: www.petplan.com.au

The Petplan Pet Census 2016 can be split between five clear themes, which we have separated into parts for easy consumption. All five are outlined below:

1) General Questions
2) Health
3) Finance
4) Social relations
5) Family

General Questions

Within this section, we get to know the owners of the pets and the general demographics of the respondents. This includes their age, name, gender, relationship status as well as if they are a first time pet owner and how many do they own. This allows a general idea of the audience and makes the responses much more relatable.

Health

Within this section, we test owners’ awareness of general health issues and the much publicised issue in the news of pet obesity is addressed. We also look at the food that owners are feeding their pets and whether or not they are getting enough exercise and what the issues to that may be. In addition to this, we also have gained an insight in to what owners want when it comes to their Vet practice and the reasons why they choose that particular business.

Finance

Within this section, we explore the areas that owners purchase their pet from and how much they spend on them annually. We also dive in to the reasons and circumstances why owners are not getting more pets, as well as more personal responses relating to the owners will and the possible refusal or treatment due to the affordability.

Social relations

Within this section, we explore the social benefits surrounding pet ownership including the way we interact and make assumptions of other owners. We also take a look at the social media platforms that owners use for their pets and the way our pet or our partners pet can effect the relationship, either in a positive or negative way.

“Pets make compassionate people”

Family

Within this section, we explore how pets are valued within the family unit and how close we are to them - including sleeping arrangements. We also look at the darker aspect of pet ownership, their passing. This section explores owners reactions to the death of their pet as well as their response to this. This section also looks at horse ownership and all other animals that are considered as pets, seeking out the reasoning behind these animals and the overall costs that owners pay.
Demographics

Property

- 75% House
- 8% Unit
- 8% Farm
- 5.5% Villa/Duplex
- 3.5% Apartment

Relationship Status
- Married (34.3%)
- Single (19.7%)
- De Facto (19.1%)
- Married with kids (17.8%)
- Divorced (4.2%)
- Widow (2%)
- Divorced with kids (1.6%)
- Single with kids (1.4%)

Age

- under 18: 1%
- 18 - 24: 5.9%
- 25 - 35: 25.3%
- 36 - 45: 22.8%
- 46 - 55: 23%
- 56 - 65: 14.7%
- 65+: 7.4%

82.5% Female
1 in 5 pet owners have both a cat and a dog

How many cats or dogs do you own?

- 1: 52.8%
- 2: 29%
- 3: 9.6%
- 4: 4.6%
- 5 to 9: 3.7%
- 10 or more: 1.8%

Desexed: 93.7%
Microchipped: 91.1%
Registered: 80%
Pure Breed: 53.5%
A Parent: 3.4%
Part 2
Health
Eating

Food quantities are generally carefully controlled by the owners and they understand that illnesses and obesity can come portion sizes. In line with this, only 18.7% of respondents worried that they were over feeding their pets, possibly leading to signs of an unhealthy pet.

This overfeeding can be due to a number of reasons including the pet seeking extra snacks, not being educated on the amount you should feed a pet of their size, or due to feeding by packaging sizes which can differ from each company. We asked the respondents what food they normally fed their pets with 87.2% saying along with other things, they fed their pet commercial pet food. There were also a large amount of owners (30.6%) who also fed their pet’s homemade food and there are a fair few of respondents (27.5%) who fed their pets a raw diet as well.

With the option for multiple answers, the most popular place to buy pet food was from a Pet Store with 60% of owners agreeing. This was followed with almost 40% of people buying it from a supermarket and 27.6% visiting the vet to buy their food. Quite surprisingly, 26.5% of respondents made their pets food at home with 1 in 10 owners choosing ‘other’ as an option for where they get their pet food from.

Illness and obesity

Causes of obesity

With obesity within Australia on the rise in the last couple of years, we wanted to know if it was a problem with the pet world. Astonishingly, we found out that over 3 quarters of respondents had someone comment that their pet was overweight. Most commonly, obesity in pets can be related to overfeeding or other causes such as illnesses or injuries.

In saying this, almost two thirds of owners said that an illness wasn’t related to their cat or dog being overweight. The other one third of owners were split as they believed a range of illnesses have led to obesity in their pets, which include:

- Arthritis (19.9%)
- Decreased life expectancy (18.2%)
- Depression (9.7%)
- Diabetes (17.4%)
- Heart Disease (17.3%)
- Breathing Difficulties (16.3%)

Walkies

When it comes to walking your dog, many people can become lazy as the years progress and slack off. However, we were happy to know that almost 50% of respondents regularly walk their dog without fail, while 1 in 100 owners get other people to exercise their dog. A little more than a third of respondents (34%) said they tried to walk their dogs as often as possible but said there often isn’t enough time.

- 17.1% of owners admitted that their dog should be walked more.

With Australia as such a wide open country, there are multiple places to exercise your dog, which is why respondents gave multiple answers. The areas that are used commonly are:

- Parks (64.4%)
- Streets (62.8%)
- Backyard (44.7%)
- Beach (38.9%)
- Farm (4.1%)

85.2% of cats spend most of their time indoors
Vets

When it comes to choosing a Veterinary Practice, we may just choose whatever is closest because they are all the same, right? Many of our respondents (32.5%) believed this to be the case, however there were others who chose their vets for a variety of different reason. Almost 30% of owners chose their vet due to a recommendation from someone they knew, while 11.2% chose their vet based purely on reputation and 10.4% of owners chose the ‘other’ option.

- 6.1% of respondents have always had the same vet
- Experience was a key for some with 3.9% of owners backing the vet who had seen some years
- 5.4% work at a practice or know someone that does
- Only a small amount of owners went on price (0.7%)

Due to our pets being very inquisitive and adventurous, they can find themselves in trouble from time to time. Because of this, we may be doing multiple trips to the Vets each year. Only 6.7% of owners said they didn’t go to the vets at all in 2016 with almost a quarter of respondents (23.1%) going twice. 17.6% and 16.7% went 1 and 3 times respectively last year, followed by 12% of owners visiting 4 times. Five visits to the vet in a year was answered by 7.4% of owners and there was 13.1% who had to make the trip 6 to 10 times.

- Only 3.2% of owners went to the vets more than 10 times

Alone time...

Whether it be going to work or getting groceries, there is a point where we all have to leave our pet home alone. It’s in these minutes or hours where the dog or cat can get up to some serious mischief and possibly wreak havoc. Although 44.2% or respondents said they had nothing occur when they left their pet alone, many owners had experienced the worst outcomes, which included:

- The most common was having your pet chew or scratch furniture which had 29.1% of all respondents
- 22.7% had their furry friend leave a present in the house in the form of a wee or poo
- Not only is inside a problem, 22.1% of owners had their dog dig up the garden when left alone
- A group of owners (13.7%) said that they had heard excess barking, howling, or meowing when leaving

- 7.7% of pets had tried to escape
- Only 1.8% of respondents had witnessed aggressive or unusual behaviour from their pet upon leaving them alone

Typically, a lot of pets are left alone for extended periods of time due to their owners work commitments. Although, we found that it was pretty even across the board for the amount they spend alone. The most responses (30.6%) said they left their pet alone between 5 and 8 hours a day, closely followed by 28.2% who were less than 2 hours and 28% who left them alone for 2 to 5 hours a day. There was still a substantial amount (13.1%) who left their pets alone for more than 8 hours a day, allowing ample time for their four legged friend to get up to mischief.

- 56.6% of respondents worry about leaving their pet alone

27.4% of respondents sourced more information/advice from online resources outside of their vet
Part 3
Finance
Pet purchasing and purchases

Pets can be very expensive, however we found out that a vast majority (94%) do still buy/pay for their pets. This of course still includes those who pay for adoption fees from shelters, which on a positive note, equated to 20.9% of places where people purchase their pet from. Breeders were a large market as just over half of respondents (55.4%) said this is where they purchased their four legged friend from, while pet shops are slowly declining with only 8.4% of the answers.

- Friends and family contributed to 8% of pet purchases
- Advertisements lead to 5.3%
- 1.2% purchased their pet through a veterinary practice
- 0.9% said they purchased their pet from ‘other’.

When it comes to our favourite little felines or canines, it seems to be very hard to stop at just one! However, many owners out there tend to have 2, 3 and even more pets. But when do you get to the point that you have enough to keep you company and keep you busy? What is stopping you from getting more? The most common reasons stopping people from getting another pet are:

- 6 in every 10 responses stated basically that they didn’t “want another pet”
- 24.7% of owners felt the expenses were just too much with another pet
- Almost 1 in 5 people (19.2%) said that their living arrangements had stopped them from getting another pet
- There was 13.4% of respondents who believed their work commitments stopped them from another pet
- A small number of owners (1.6%) stated that their health and allergies were the reason

Pitch fees can come at the worst time with the amounts sky rocketing without you knowing. However, only 6.6% of respondents said that they had to refuse treatment from the vets for their pet due to not being able to afford it. This may be directly linked to the fact that every 4 in 5 owners have Pet Insurance, allowing them not to worry when the unexpected happens and the bills start coming through.

An astonishing amount of respondents (85.1%) said that they had donated to an animal charity of some sort, proving the generosity and caring nature of today’s society.

23.9% of owners have included their pet in their will
As pet owners, we tend to spoil our furry little friends every once in a while. Although many of us would admit, we can get carried away with treats, toys and some unnecessary expenditures.

When it comes to buying things for our pets, at the top of the list was pet accessories with 95.4% of respondents confirming that they have bought items such as leads, kennels, collars, toys and much more. With a similar number, 9 out of 10 owners have paid for pet healthcare professionals for their pets.

- Birthday presents and Christmas presents for pets were also a popular choice with more than half of respondents (56%) agreeing they have bought them
- Many owners (38.9%) paid to adapt their house in order to accommodate their pet

* 38.2% of people have spent money on kennel or cattery accommodations
* Almost a quarter of the respondents (23.6%) said they changed their holiday plans for their pet
* 14.4% have paid for dog walkers or cat sitters
* Surprisingly, 9% of people have moved homes to accommodate their pet
* Only 0.4% of owners have done none of the above

How much do you spend on your pets?

- Less than $750: 32%
- $750 - $1500: 49.3%
- $1500 - $3000: 7.1%
- $3000 - $5000: 7.1%
- $5000+: 4.4%
The social aspects of owning a pet should not be underestimated. More than half (60%) of the respondents believe they are more socially connected due to talking to other while out with their pet.

Those who took part in the survey proved to be the sort of responsible pet owners who do understand the impact of their pets in a wider social context. They generally agreed that they adored their pet so much, that 78.1% would pay an additional fee to have their pet stay with them in their hotel room when on vacation or travel through work.

Surprisingly, many of the respondents (84.7%) are not involved in any pet club with the highest member rate being a breeders club with 9.3% of respondents followed by obedience clubs with 2.1%. The rest of the answers were closely made up of Agility clubs (0.6%), training clubs (1.1%), Equestrian clubs (0.3%) and online clubs (1.9%).

The majority of respondents (60%) feel more connected socially due to their pet. This is directly related to the fact that your dog can be an opening when interacting with someone that you may not know, or they could be used as a safeguard when meeting someone new, allowing you to feel comfortable due to your companion.

Pet or partner

When it comes to someone’s love life, it is important to note that some people have had some issues in their relationships due to their own pet or their partners pet. However, overall the results linked strongly too many of the respondents (93%) never having a pet affect their relationship or decided who they were going to date.

• 1.5% of respondents said they had dated someone because of their partner’s pet

Although some owners have started a relationship because of a pet, the other end of the scale, breaking up with a partner, is much more represented in the results.

• Only a small percentage of respondents (0.2%) ended a relationship because they didn’t like their partner’s pet

• A larger group of owner’s (1.2%) broke it off with their partner due to the fact that their pet didn’t like the partner

• 4.1% of respondents ended a relationship because their significant other didn’t like their pet

This data shows that many people would rather go with their pet then a potential partner, linking to the fact that a lot of owners have an extremely strong bond/relationship with their four legged friend.
Part 4
Social Relations
Social petworking

When it comes to new age ways of showing family and friends your new pet, many people take to social media as a way of letting everyone see their new friend. Social media’s allow for a quicker and vaster audience to show off your pet, meaning more and more people are posting photos of their dogs and cats online. However, not everyone creates a social media account specifically for their pet, the following respondents have:

- 548 owners (7% of respondents) have created a Facebook page for their pet
- Instagram had a larger rate of users with 665 respondents (8.5%) making an Instagram account for their cat or dog
- The amount of respondents who had created a twitter account for their pet was 0.5%
- 0.8% of owners had created a blog for their pet
- 0.5% of answers had ticked ‘other’ in response to social media and their pets
- The overwhelming figure of 84.7% of responses had done none of the above

Do you take your pet to work...

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>None of the above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67.4%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gateway to a better social life

Be prepared to be judged because 35.2% of respondents admit making assumptions about an owner based on their choice of pet. However there is good news if you are an owner, as two thirds of all respondents prefer to make friends with other pet owners!

The debate about whether or not we should allow pets on public transport has been going on for years. Through the respondents there was an overwhelming amount (69.8%) of owner’s who believe Australia should introduce pets on public transport and commuting.

- Almost 40% of respondents have avoided walking on grass to prevent stepping on poo
- 9% of owners fear certain animals due to a bad experience
- One third of respondents deliberately avoided crossing the path of a dog in public
- 28.9% have said that their pet has been injured by another animal
- 43% of answers have been or know someone who has been intimidated by a dog in a public place
- More than half of respondents (54.5%) have heard an unattended dog barking for extended periods of time
- Only 22.5% of people answered none of the above
Part 5
Family
Family values

Almost all pet owners thought their pet was like a family member. In fact, 99.3% of respondents considered their four legged friends an integral part of the family. In saying this, the same percentage of answers included they would also take their pets on holidays with them, strengthening the connection between human and animal.

Being a part of the family usually brings along benefits in the form of sleeping arrangements. From the overall amount of responses, a whopping 62.8% said that they allow their pet to sleep in their bed. This being almost two thirds of the total responses shows either how much we love and adore our pets, or how we, as owners, give in to the needs and pleas from our furry family members.

- The next largest answer was inside/lounge room with 15.3% of respondents
- 14.6% of owners only allow their pets to sleep outside
- The Laundry was another somewhat common sleeping area for pets with 5.7% of answers
- 0.9% of owners answered ‘other’ in relation to their pets sleeping area
- With 0.7% of respondents, the garage was the least popular sleeping option for our pets

When it comes to purchasing a pet, people can have a variety of reasons for doing so. According to our survey, the most popular reason for purchasing a pet was for the companionship due to being lonely, with half of the respondents selecting this answer.

- Another popular answer, with 35.9% of respondents, was due to the owners loving pets and they simply “wanted a pet”
- 7.9% of respondents purchased a pet to become more active and get outdoors
- 2% of owners got the pet as a working animal
- On an extremely positive note, 2.2% of respondents purchased a new puppy in order to rescue them from a shelter or the streets
- 1.9% of respondents received their new pet as a gift from a loved one or friends

The loss of a pet...

It’s every pet owners worst thought, what happens when your beloved cat or dog sadly passes away one day. What do you do? How will you cope? Will you ever be able to move on? It is all these questions that we have put forward to the respondents in order to gain an understanding in to what the average pet owner feels and does when it comes to that unfortunate time.

A vast majority of respondents (90.2%) believed that a compassionate leave day from their employer was acceptable to mourn the death of a pet. This percentage is backed up when alongside the 99.3% of respondents who considered their pet an integral part of the family.

When asking pet owners what they will do when their pet passes, a mixed response was expected as it can be a hard question to think about let alone process. In saying this, the majority of respondents (59.5%) would have their pet properly cremated to either keep their ashes or scatter them in their pet’s favourite place.

- A quarter of owners (25.8%) said that they would hold a burial service to remember their pet
- 7.3% of owners said that they would adopt or purchase a new pet (although not immediately)
- A substantial number (4.3%) of people said they wouldn’t know what to do if their pet wasn’t with them anymore and couldn’t bare thinking about it
- A group of owners (1.9%) believed that they wouldn’t purchase another pet again in respect to their beloved furry friend
- Only 1.3% of respondents said that they would only grieve/mourn their pets passing and nothing else
The Petplan Pet Census 2016 was not only to find out about cats and dogs and what their owners preferences were, we also wanted to know about all the pets that Australian citizens own. Out of all the respondents, 24.9% said that they own a pet other than a cat or a dog.

As you could imagine, an abundance of different pets were named with fish (23.7%) and horses (20.5%) being the most popular. Not far behind the two front runners were birds (17.6%) and chickens (15.5%), followed closely by:

- Rabbits (4.9%)
- Reptiles (4.5%)
- Other (4.3%)
- Guinea Pigs (3.5%)
- Farm Animals (3.4%)
- Turtles (2%)

From the responses we received, these ‘nontraditional’ pets were purchased due to a number of reasons. The main reason for purchase was because the owner loves animals with 30.4% or respondents preferring this option. This was closely followed with 19.1% of respondents purchasing their pet via adoption or to rescue them. Many owners had received the pet as a gift (11.4%) while just over 1 in 10 people (10.8%) used the pet for eggs or farming purposes. The straight answer of “I always wanted another pet” was used by 8.7% of respondents with 6.8% of owners getting the pet for their children. The final three answers to round out the question were that they always had pets (5.2%), due to their living arrangements (4.6%), and to use their pet for competition (3.1%).

Horsing around...

From the 20.5% of respondents who owned a horse, a bit over half of them did not have horse insurance and the majority (58%) used their horse for personal enjoyment. Of these horse owners only 14% used them for competition alone while 28% said they used their horse for both personal enjoyment and competition.

Treats

Giving a pet treats seems to be the normal thing to do, with owners handing them out for training, after completing a command, special occasions and sometimes just for the sake of spoiling their feline/canine friend.

This is backed up when we asked the respondents what they thought of spoiling their pet with treats, with more than two thirds of owners (68.8%) believing that giving their pets treats is normal, as they are like any other member of the family.

- 6.9% of answers believed treats are necessary because they want to give their pet the very best of everything
- A similar group of respondents (6.6%) thought of treats as a good thing as it shows how much we care about them
- The second largest segment of respondents (17.7%) believed spoiling their pets with treats was a bad thing

Expenses are once again a major factor when it comes to owning an animal, and not surprisingly, the majority of respondents (48%) said they spend between $1,500 and $5,000 on their animals annually. The next group of owners (19.2%) say they spend between $750 and $1,500 for the year. 18% of owners spend less than $750 annually while 5.9% spend $5,000 - $10,000. There were 6.8% of respondents who spent between $10,000 and $20,000 annually on their pets with the final 2.1% of owners spending more than $20,000 on all their animals in a yearly period.