



# ANIMAL SHELTERING STATISTICS

2019



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# Introduction

Shelter Animals Count (SAC) is a collaborative, independent organization formed by a diverse group of stakeholders to create and share the national database of sheltered animal statistics, providing facts, and enabling insights that will improve animal welfare throughout the country. The SAC database follows the Basic Data Matrix specified by the National Federation of Humane Societies. The following paper provides a look at the 2019 data from Shelter Animals Count. The data was limited to organizations that completed a full year of reporting in 2019. The goal of this paper is to give an overview of the current state of the national sheltered animal database developed by SAC and demonstrate progress toward a truly national database that can be used to help understand the state of companion animals in this country.

It is worth pointing out both the strengths and weaknesses of the data set. Since there is no national requirement for reporting, all the data is self-reported and contains natural under and over sampling biases in both the geographic and organization type dimensions. In other words, some areas had a greater level of reporting than others. To analyze the data, we utilized techniques that would minimize the potential bias effects of the partial dataset. The key methodologies were to aggregate at an appropriate level, which was predominately state, and to utilize ratios to normalize scale. Comparing absolute numbers is difficult because of the incomplete dataset at this point. As the dataset grows it will allow for more detailed analysis than we can do today.

# Definitions

The following definitions and abbreviations will be used throughout this paper:

## **SAC**

Shelter Animals Count

## **OIE**

owner intended euthanasia

## **RBO**

relinquished by owner

## **RTO**

return to owner

## **RTO RATE**

total RTOs divided by the total of stray intakes

## **RTF**

return to field

## **LOCATION**

unique address for services  
(organizations may have more than one location)

## **ADJUSTED INTAKE**

total intake minus transfers in

## **ADJUSTED OUTCOME**

total outcome minus transfers out

## **LIVE OUTCOMES**

sum of adoptions, RTOs, RTFs, and transfers

## **LIVE OUTCOME RATE**

live outcomes divided by all outcomes

## **EUTHANASIA RATE**

total euthanasia excluding owner intended euthanasia divided by total outcomes minus owner intended euthanasia



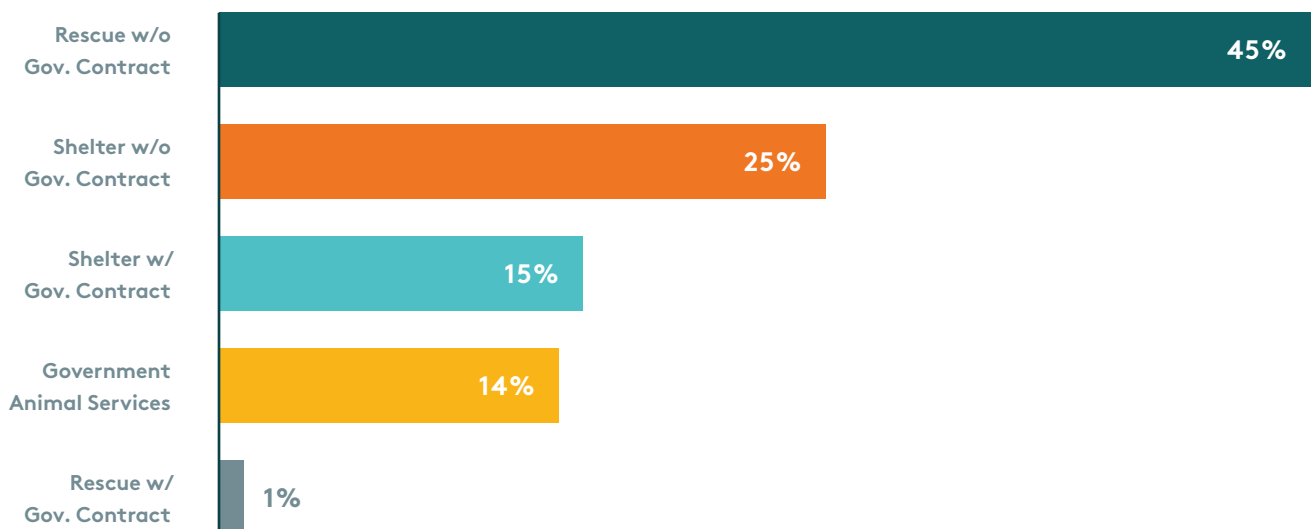
# DEMOGRAPHICS

## of Reporting Organizations

## Types of Organizations

- ▶ The top two organization types account for **70% of all locations**. These included **1,009 (45%) Rescues w/o Gov. Contract** and **553 (25%) Shelters w/o Gov. Contract**
- ▶ **Shelters w/ Gov. Contract** and **Government Animal Services** represent **29%** of all locations with 341 and 314 locations, respectively.
- ▶ **18 Rescues w/ Gov. Contract** reported a full year of data in 2019 representing **1%** of all locations.

**FIGURE 1** Distribution of Organizations by Type



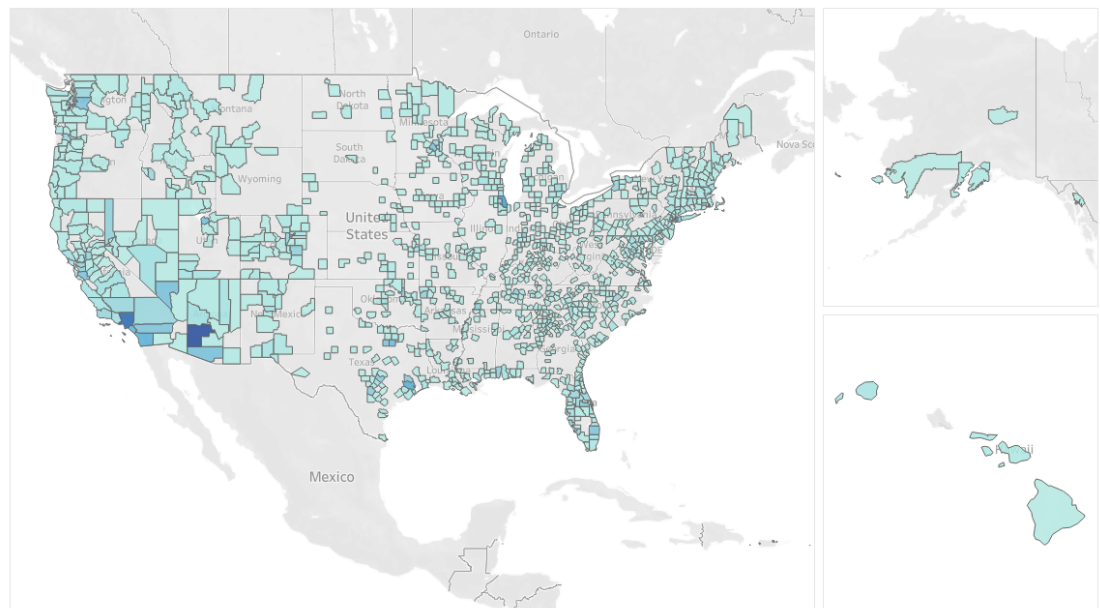
## Geographic Distribution

- ▶ **2,269 locations** reported a full year of data in 2019.
- ▶ There is sparse reporting for counties in the **Midwest** and the **South**
- ▶ **Los Angeles County** and **Maricopa County** were the two counties with the most organizations reporting a full year of data for 2019 with **43** and **35** organizations, respectively

**TABLE 1** Summary of Jurisdiction Coverage by Organizational Type

ORGANIZATION TYPE	LOCATIONS	STATES	COUNTY	CITIES	ZIP CODES
Rescue w/o Gov. Contract	1,011	52	451	774	952
Shelter w/o Gov. Contract	571	51	366	499	565
Shelter w/ Gov. Contract	353	50	288	341	349
Government Animal Services	316	42	246	300	315
Rescue w/ Gov. Contract	18	13	17	18	18
Grand Total	2,269	53	848	1,539	2,083

**FIGURE 2** Reporting Organizations by County for 2019

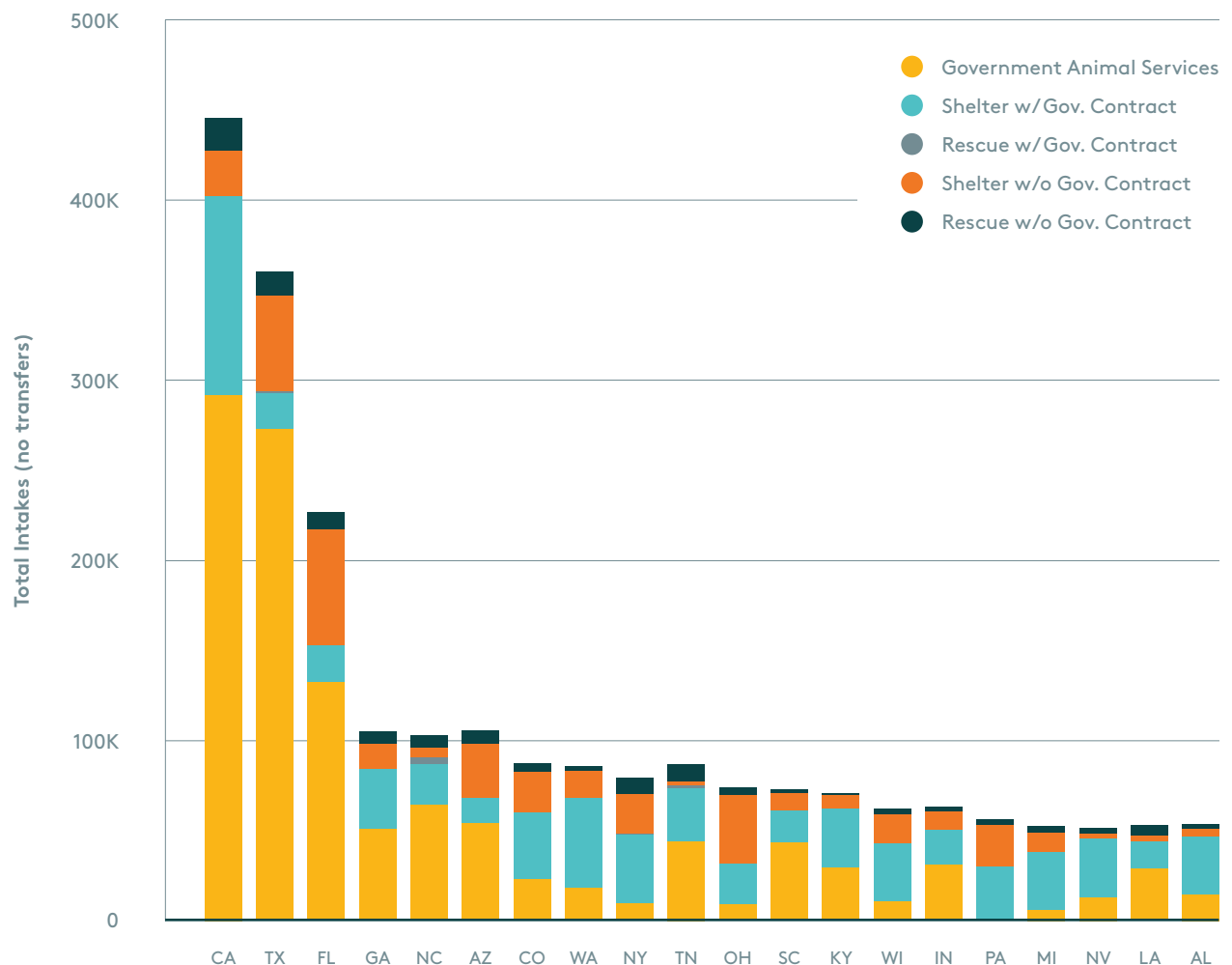


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## Number of Animals Reported by State

- ▶ **California** reported the most number of intakes accounting for **15.1%** of all intakes
- ▶ **Government and Animal Services** accounted for **44.5%** of all animal intakes – the highest number of all the organization types

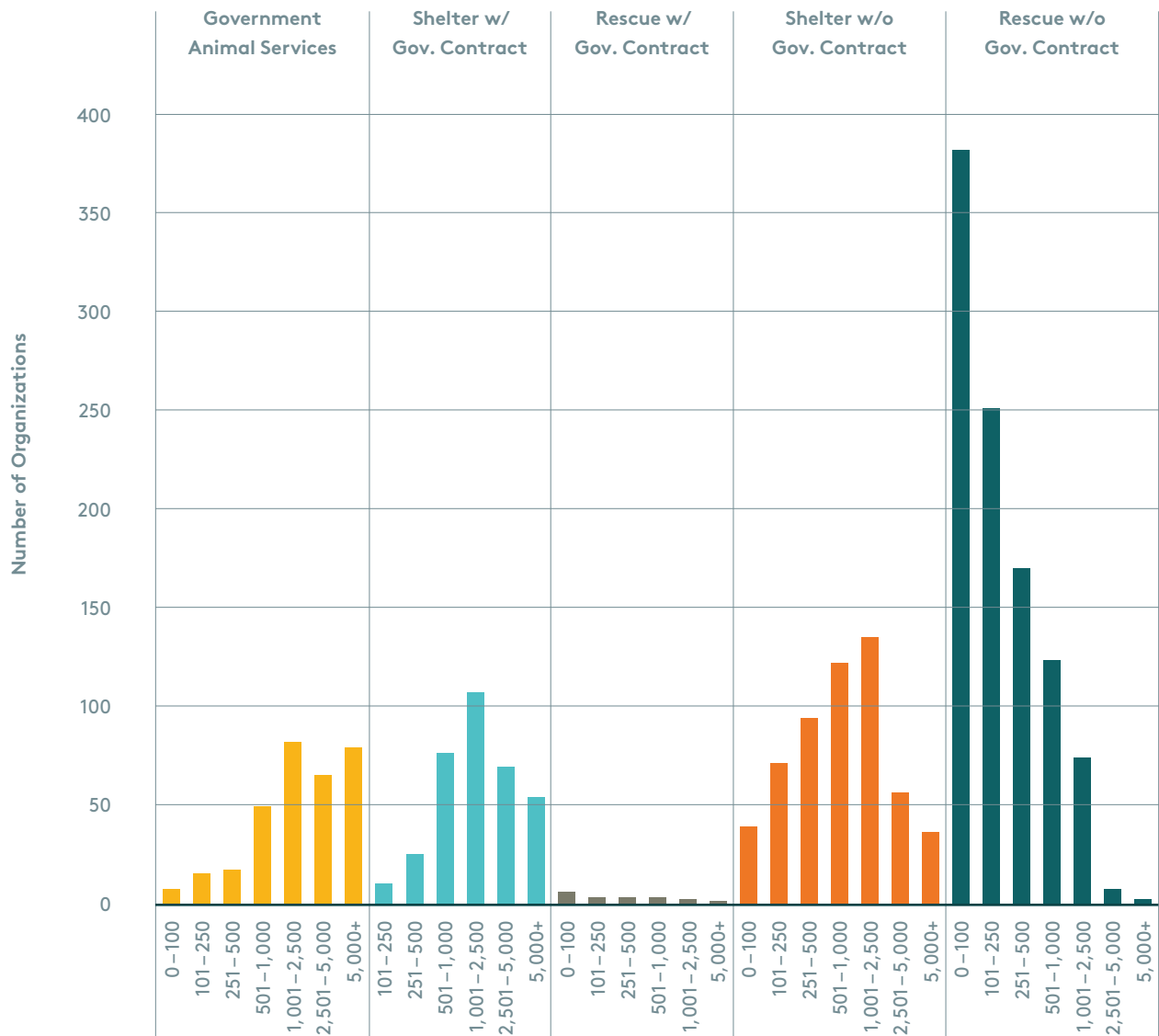
**FIGURE 3** States with Highest Number of Animals Reported



## Organizational Size

- ▶ Most organizations (**91.8%**) reported **less than 2,000** intakes per year
- ▶ **100%** of Rescues w/o Gov. Contract reported **less than 2,000** intakes per year
- ▶ **82.9%** of Shelters w/ Gov. Contracts reported **less than 2,000** intakes per year

**FIGURE 4** Distribution of Organizations by Annual Intake Numbers



# INTAKES

- ▶ Government Animal Services are on average the largest intake facilities with an average intake that is 48% higher than the second largest facilities (Shelters w/ Gov. Contract)
- ▶ The most common source of intakes are Strays with 1.7M intakes or 48.4% of all intake sources

**TABLE 2** Summary Statistics by Organization Type

ORGANIZATION TYPE	AVG. INTAKES	MED. INTAKES	MIN. INTAKES	MAX. INTAKES
Government Animal Services	4,208	2,075	45	55,579
Shelter w/ Gov. Contract	2,836	1,576	0	38,169
Shelter w/o Gov. Contract	1,550	794	2	18,875
Rescue w/ Gov. Contract	749	273	9	6,263
Rescue w/o Gov. Contract	336	161	0	5,286
Grand Total	1,573	526	0	55,579

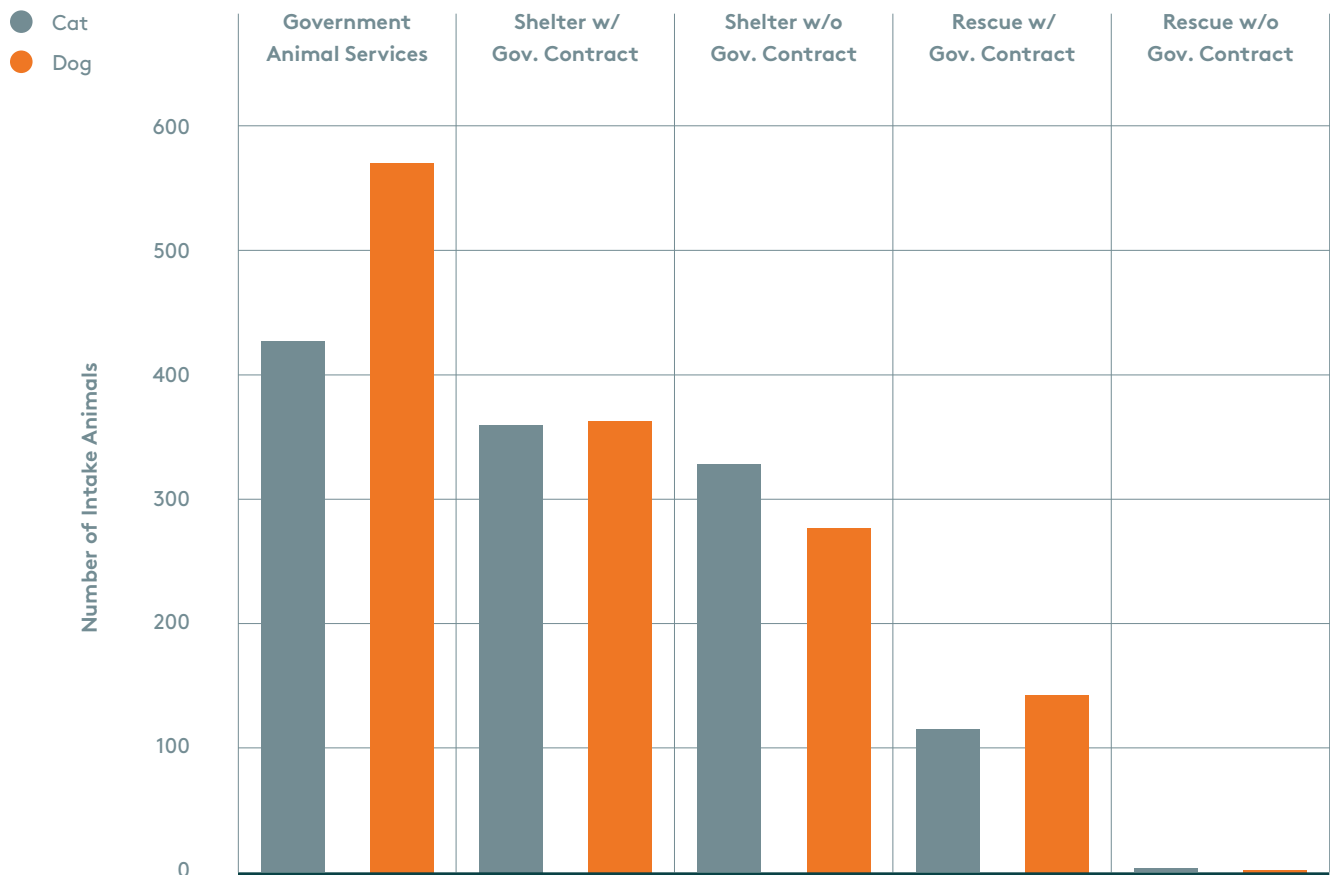
**TABLE 3** Summary of 2019 Intake Data

ORGANIZATION TYPE	STRAY	RELINQUISHED	TRANSFER IN	OIE	OTHER	TOTAL
Government Animal Services	900,485	281,946	16,058	25,999	105,213	1,329,701
Shelter w/ Gov. Contract	528,597	249,659	120,760	30,207	71,904	1,001,127
Shelter w/o Gov. Contract	213,265	281,629	315,147	24,817	50,194	885,052
Rescue w/o Gov. Contract	81,598	68,515	159,656	510	29,806	340,085
Rescue w/ Gov. Contract	4,589	3,541	4,825	10	512	13,477
Grand Total	1,728,534	885,290	616,446	81,543	257,629	3,569,442

## Species and Age Distribution

- ▶ Number of intakes excludes transfers in
- ▶ Cat intakes account for **48.5%** of all intakes while Dog intakes account for **51.5%**
- ▶ The largest difference between dog and cat intakes occurs in **Government Animal Services** with **27.9%** more dog than cat intakes
- ▶ The second largest difference occurs in **Rescues w/o Gov. Contract** with **16.1%** more dog than cat intakes
- ▶ Conversely, **Shelters w/o Gov. Contract** reported **17.3%** more cat intakes than dog intakes

**FIGURE 5** Adjusted Intake by Species and Organization Type



## Community Need Indicator<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ The number of juvenile animals entering the system serves as a proxy for community need by suggesting a higher fertility rate in the local animal population
- ▶ The juvenile ratio is calculated by dividing puppy/kitten intakes by total dog/cat intakes
- ▶ The ability for facilities to absorb homeless animals is assumed to be compromised when juvenile ratio is high
- ▶ **Rescues w/o Gov. Contracts** reported the highest Juvenile Ratio at **48.6%**

**TABLE 4** Summary of 2019 Intake Data

ORGANIZATION TYPE	ADJ. CAT INTAKE	ADJ. KITTEN INTAKE	KITTEN RATIO	ADJ. DOG INTAKE	ADJ. PUPPY INTAKE	PUPPY RATIO	JUVENILE RATIO
Government Animal Services	576,449	241,425	41.90%	737,194	96,308	13.10%	25.70%
Shelter w/ Gov. Contract	462,000	197,634	42.80%	418,367	60,503	14.50%	29.30%
Shelter w/o Gov. Contract	344,548	163,721	47.50%	225,357	52,239	23.20%	37.90%
Rescue w/o Gov. Contract	94,504	55,106	58.30%	85,925	32,548	37.90%	48.60%
Rescue w/ Gov. Contract	4,826	2,895	60.00%	3,826	1,043	27.30%	45.50%
Grand Total	1,482,327	660,781	44.60%	1,470,669	242,641	16.50%	30.60%

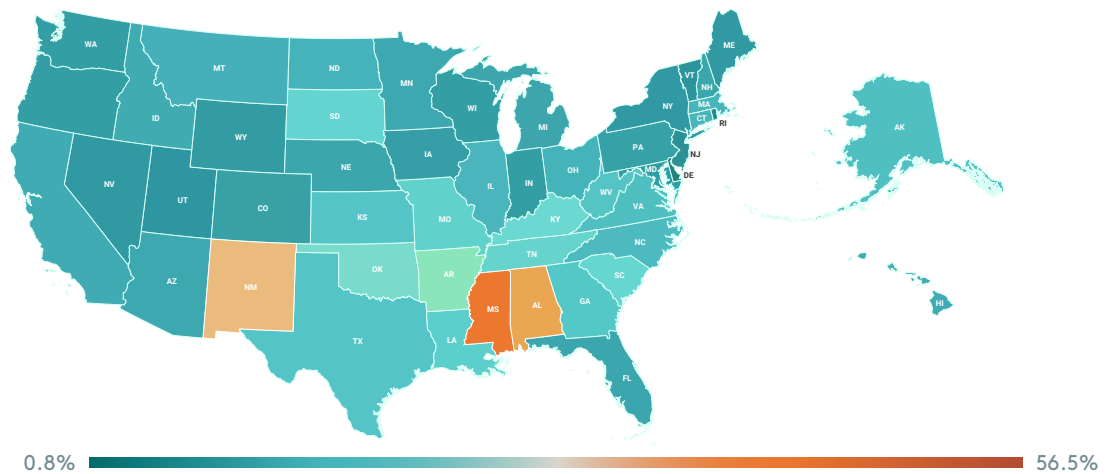
<sup>1</sup> Transfers were excluded from all juvenile ratio calculations to avoid any bias due to oversampling from organizations that take in juveniles from outside their community



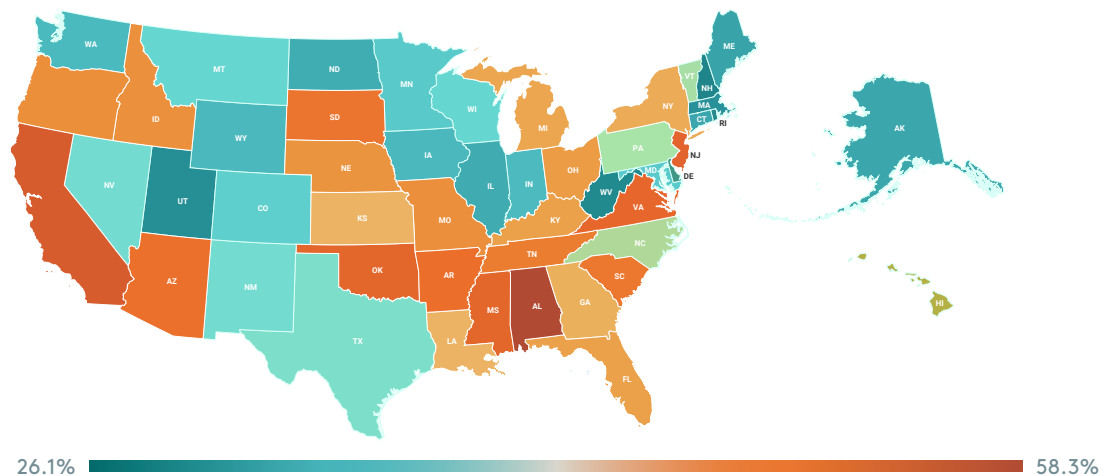
## Juvenile Ratios

- ▶ The **Mississippi, Alabama, and New Mexico** had the **highest puppy ratios** suggesting areas of high community need
- ▶ **Kitten ratios** were substantially **higher** than puppy ratios across the US
- ▶ **73%** of the variability in Juvenile Ratios across the country is driven by each state's Kitten Intake Ratio

**FIGURE 6** Average Puppy Intake Ratio by State



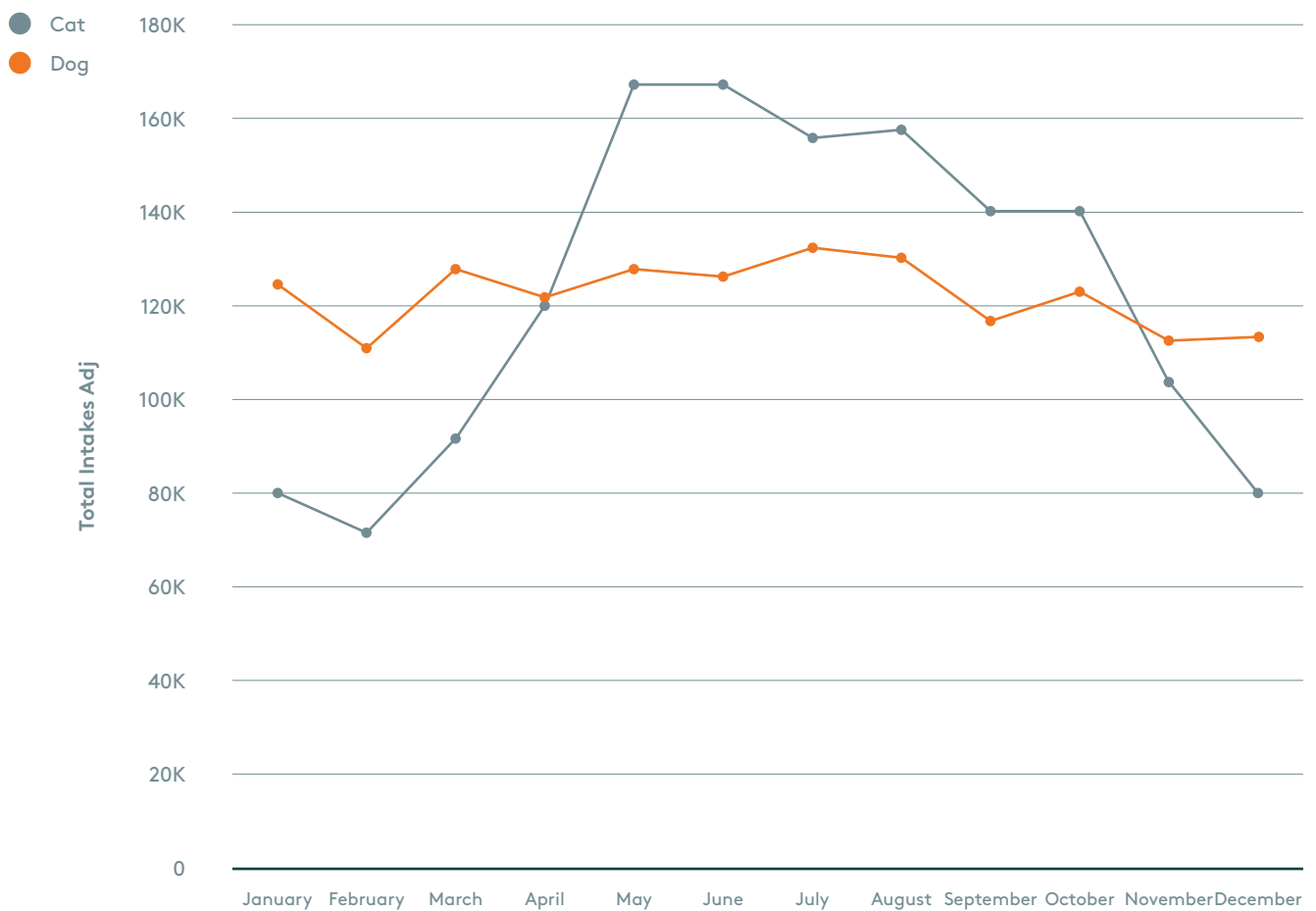
**FIGURE 7** Average Kitten Intake Ratio by State



## Seasonality

- ▶ There is much higher seasonal variability in Cat intakes than Dog Intakes
- ▶ Dog Intakes showed a difference of **20%** between the highest and lowest intake months
- ▶ Cat Intakes showed a difference of **133%** between the highest and lowest intake months
- ▶ Intakes exclude transfers in

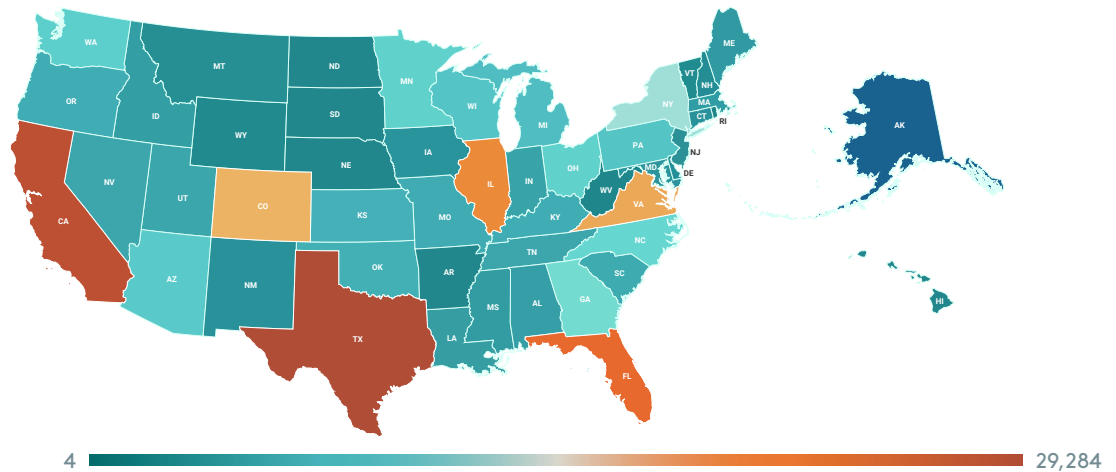
**FIGURE 8** Adjusted Intake by Month for Cats and Dogs



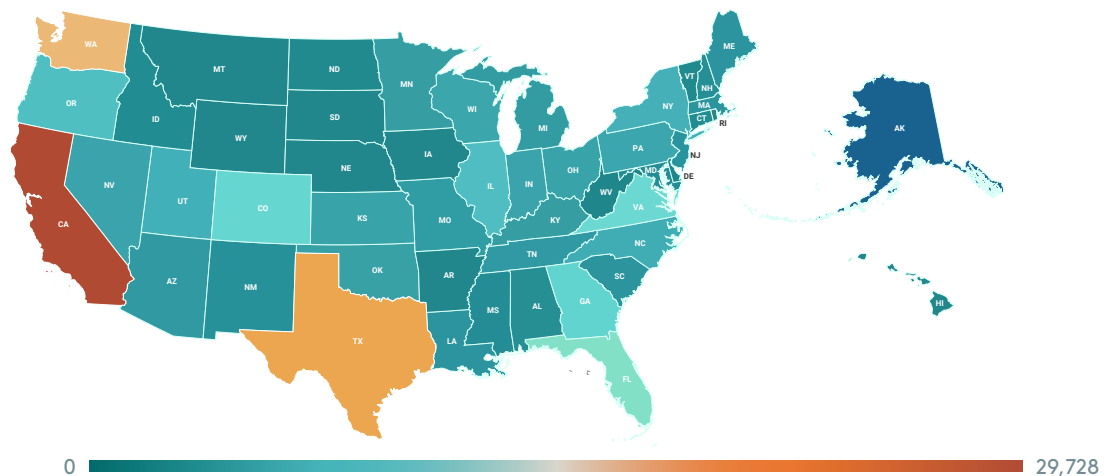
## Transfers In

- ▶ **Texas, California, Florida, and Illinois** showed the highest numbers of dogs transferred in
- ▶ **California, Texas, and Washington** showed the highest numbers of cats transferred in
- ▶ It is important to remember that many of these transfers could be **intra-state**
- ▶ **Shelters w/o Gov. Contract** had the largest proportion of animals transferred in at **51%**

**FIGURE 9** Dogs Transferred in by State



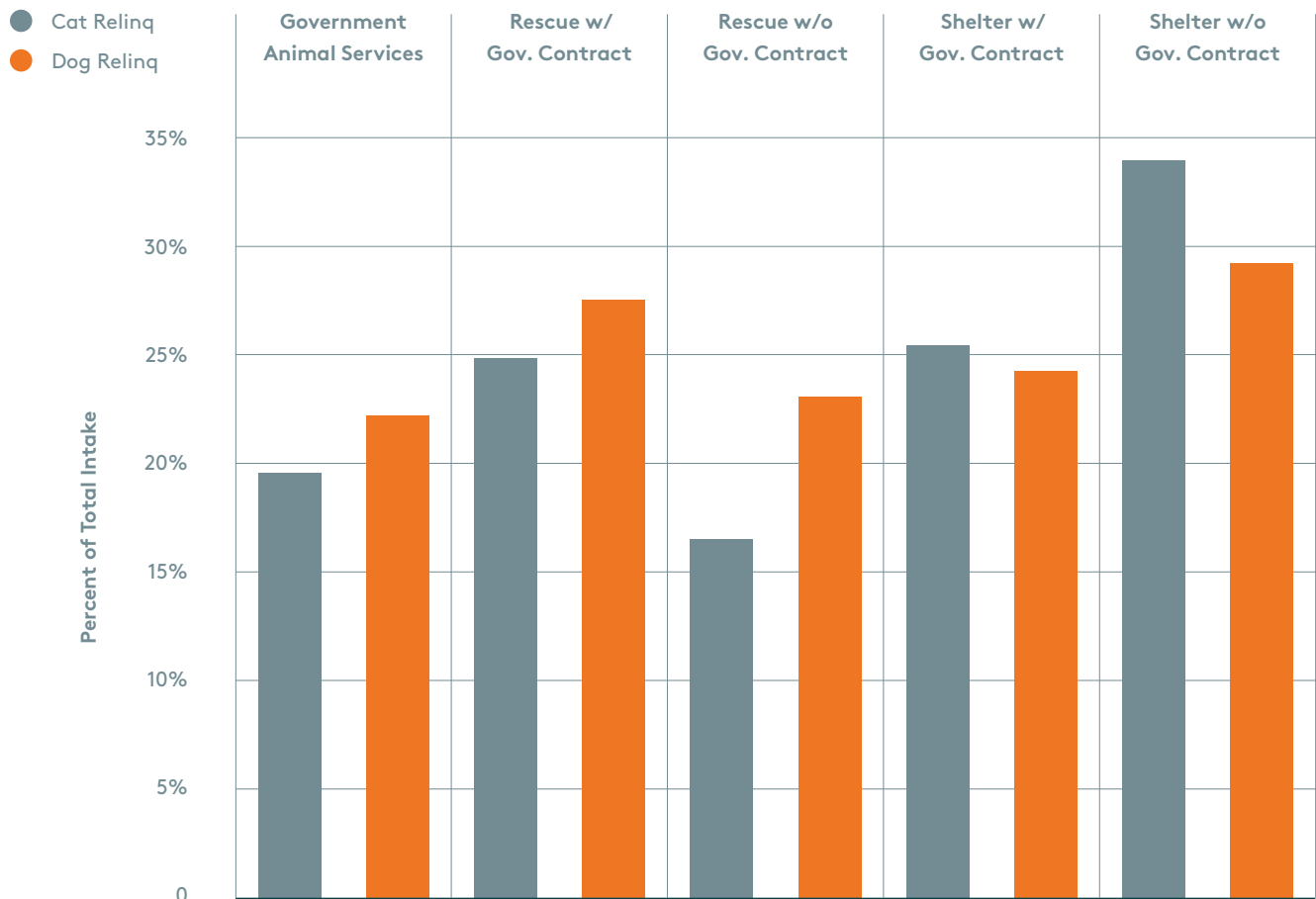
**FIGURE 10** Cats Transferred in by State



## Relinquishments

- ▶ **Relinquishments** were the second most common form of intake at **25%**
- ▶ **The relinquishment Rate** is calculated by dividing relinquishments by total intake for each species

**FIGURE 11** Relinquishments as a Percent of Total Intake by Species and Organization Type

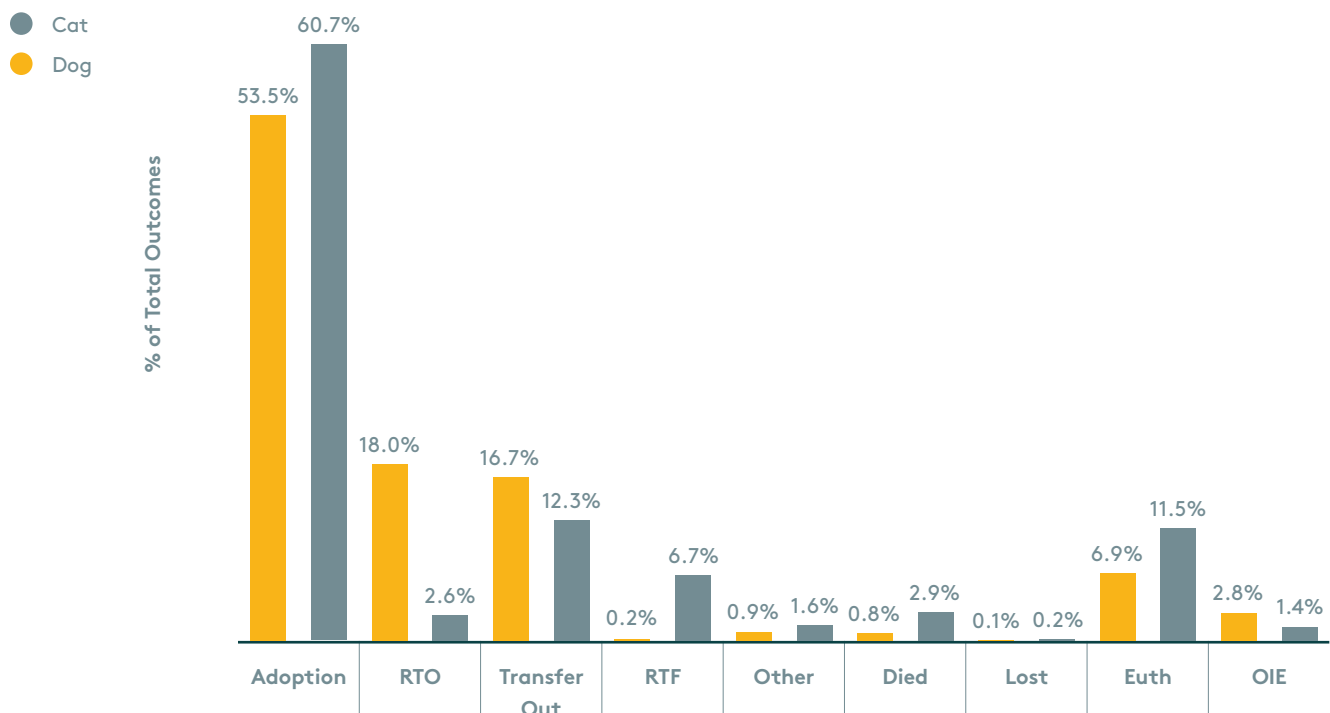


# OUTCOMES

## Outcomes by Species and Organization Type

- ▶ **Adoption** was the most common outcome at **53.5%** for dogs and **60.7%** for cats
- ▶ **Euthanasia** was a more common outcome for cats at **11.5%** than dogs at **6.9%**
- ▶ **RTO** was more common for dogs at **18.0%** than cats at **2.6%**

**FIGURE 12** Percent of Total Outcomes by Outcome Method



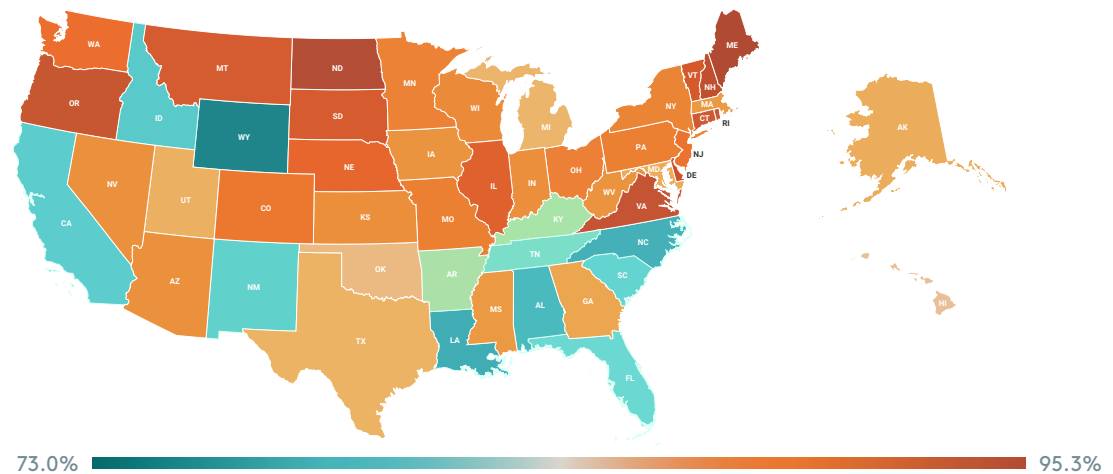
**TABLE 5** Summary of Outcomes by Organization Type

ORGANIZATION TYPE	ADOPTIONS	RTO	TRANSFER OUT	RTF	OTHER	DIED	LOST	EUTH	OIE	TOTAL
Government Animal Services	520,980	208,860	283,951	62,774	24,569	22,116	4,183	172,325	25,185	1,324,943
Shelter w/ Gov. Contract	552,206	126,402	131,820	29,959	9,732	19,612	1,520	101,563	28,996	1,001,810
Shelter w/o Gov. Contract	684,730	34,820	56,447	17,836	8,072	13,793	815	45,853	21,587	883,953
Rescue w/o Gov. Contract	263,734	3,418	43,907	8,098	3,188	9,543	293	3,862	484	336,527
Rescue w/ Gov. Contract	8,079	1,169	1,759	66	158	514	20	1,698	3	13,466
Grand Total	2,029,729	374,669	517,884	118,733	45,719	65,578	6,831	325,301	76,255	3,560,699

## Live Outcomes

- ▶ **Live outcomes** are considered adoptions, RTO, transfer out, or RTF
- ▶ **Live outcome rate** was calculated by dividing live outcomes by total outcomes
- ▶ **Rescues w/o Gov. Contract** had the highest live outcomes at **94.8%**
- ▶ **Government Animal Services** had the lowest live outcomes at **81.3%**
- ▶ **Maine** had the highest live outcomes at **95.3%**
- ▶ **Puerto Rico** had the lowest live outcomes at **32.6%**

**FIGURE 13** Live Outcome Rates by State



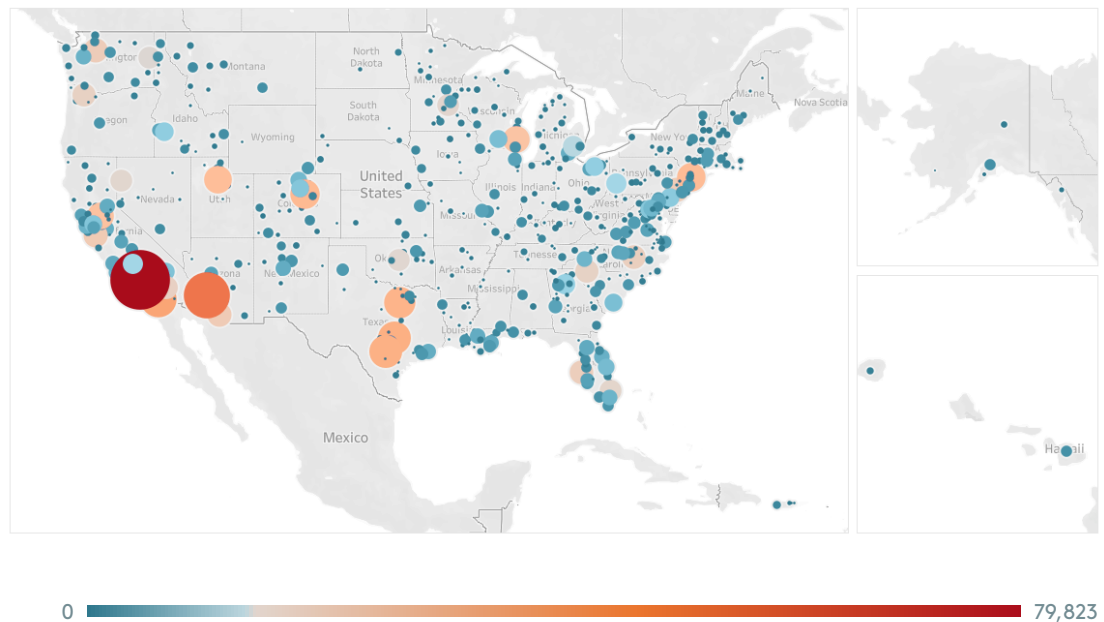
**TABLE 6** Summary of Live Outcomes and Rates by Organization Type

ORGANIZATION TYPE	DOG	DOG LIVE OUTCOMES	CAT	CAT LIVE OUTCOMES	TOTAL LIVE OUTCOMES	TOTAL LIVE OUTCOME RATE
Government Animal Services	641,817	85.90%	434,748	75.20%	1,076,565	81.30%
Shelter w/Gov. Contract	429,508	86.70%	410,879	81.10%	840,387	83.90%
Shelter w/o Gov. Contract	371,820	91.40%	422,013	88.50%	793,833	89.80%
Rescue w/o Gov. Contract	175,122	96.40%	144,035	93.10%	319,157	94.80%
Rescue w/Gov. Contract	5,739	87.70%	5,334	77.00%	11,073	82.20%
Grand Total	1,624,006	88.40%	1,417,009	82.20%	3,041,015	85.40%

## Total Adoptions

- ▶ **LA County** and **Maricopa County** had the highest number of adoptions at **79,823** and **47,382**, respectively
- ▶ The number of adoptions by county is highly skewed with **50%** of counties reporting less than **713 annual adoptions**

**FIGURE 14** Total Annual Adoptions by County

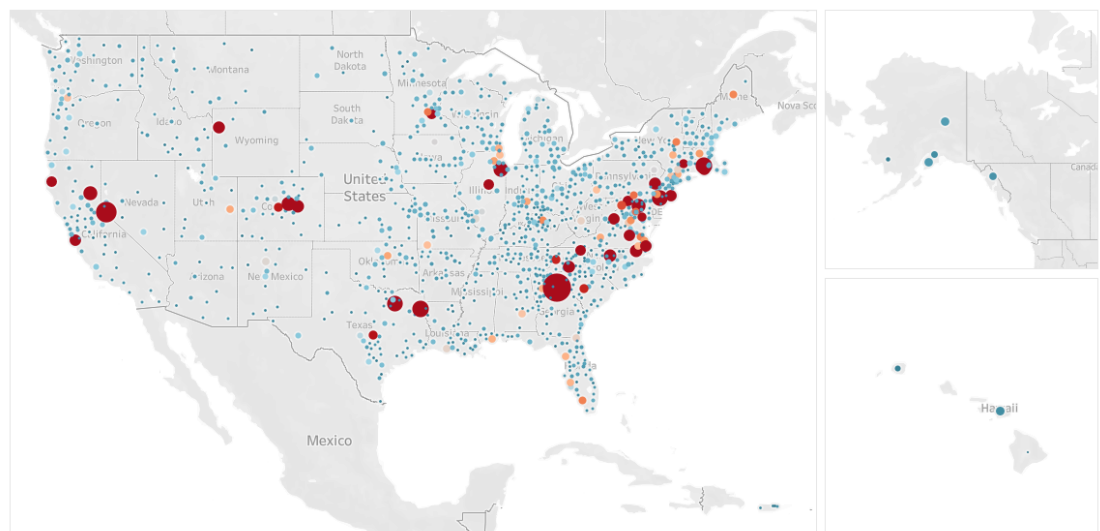




## Community Adoption Rate

- ▶ **Community Adoption Rate** is calculated by dividing total adoptions by intakes minus OIE and transfers in
- ▶ Counties with high community adoption rates indicate a higher demand for adoptions than the community can supply
- ▶ Regions of high community adoption rate include the **East Coast**, **parts of TX, CO**, and **Northern CA**

**FIGURE 15** Annual Community Adoption Rate by County

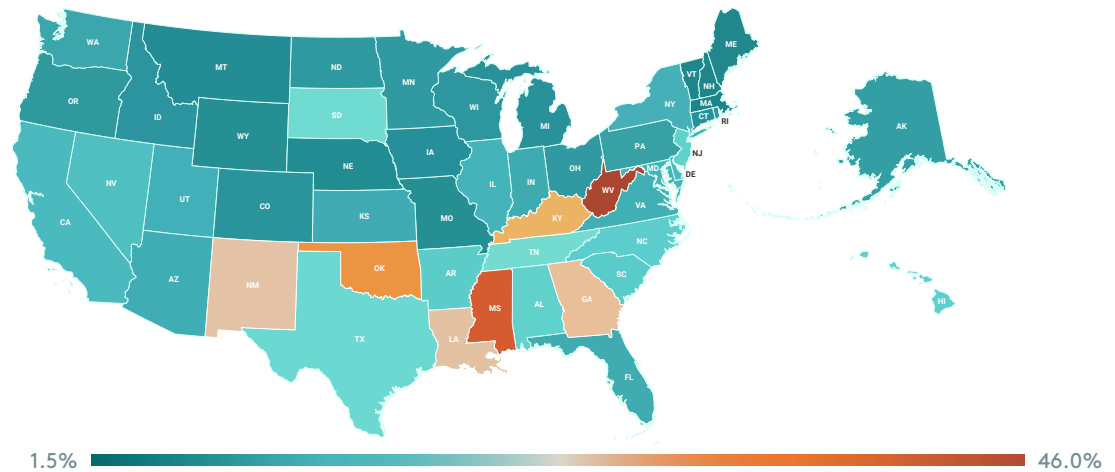


0.000  5.000

## Transfers Out

- ▶ The **Transfer Rate** is calculated by dividing transfers out by total intakes
- ▶ Dogs represent **59.1%** of all transfers
- ▶ Cats represent **40.9%** of all transfers
- ▶ **Government Animal Services** had the highest transfer rate at **21.4%**
- ▶ High rates of transfer signify the importance of transfers as a mechanism to maximize live outcomes
- ▶ **West Virginia, Mississippi** and **Oklahoma** had the top 3 transfer out rates at **46.0%**, **40.1%**, and **30.0%**, respectively

**FIGURE 16** Transfer Rates by State



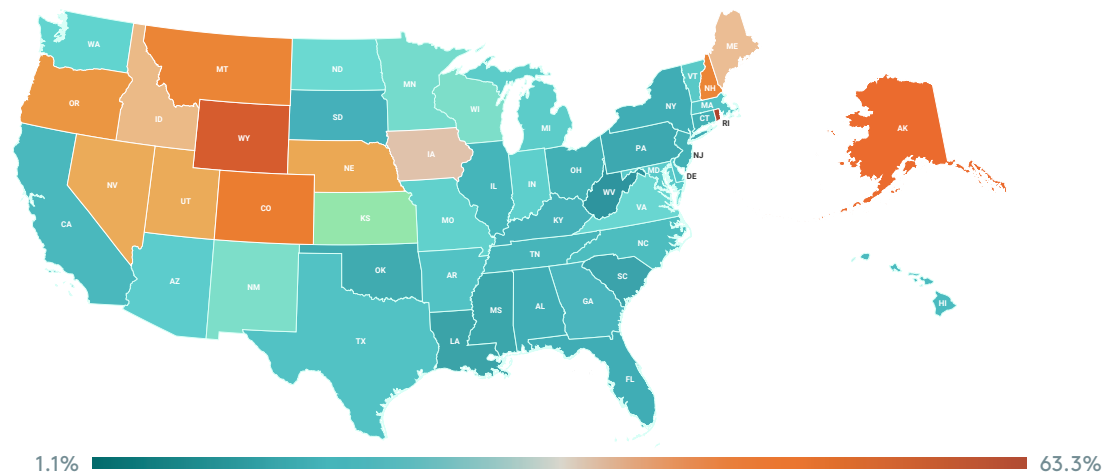
**TABLE 7** Transfer Out Rates by Organization Type

ORGANIZATION TYPE	TRANSFER RATE DOG	TRANSFER RATE CAT	TOTAL TRANSFER RATE
Government Animal Services	22.10%	20.40%	21.40%
Rescue w/ Gov. Contract	16.10%	10.30%	13.10%
Rescue w/o Gov. Contract	17.10%	8.00%	12.90%
Shelter w/ Gov. Contract	14.80%	11.60%	13.20%
Shelter w/o Gov. Contract	8.80%	4.40%	6.40%
Grand Total	16.70%	12.20%	14.50%

## Return to Owner

- ▶ **Return to Owner rates** were calculated by dividing RTO by total number of stray intakes
- ▶ RTO for dogs was **40.1%**
- ▶ RTO for cats was **4.9%**
- ▶ **Rhode Island** had the highest RTO Rate at **63.3%**
- ▶ **Puerto Rico** had the lowest RTO Rate at **1.1%**

**FIGURE 17** RTO Rates by State



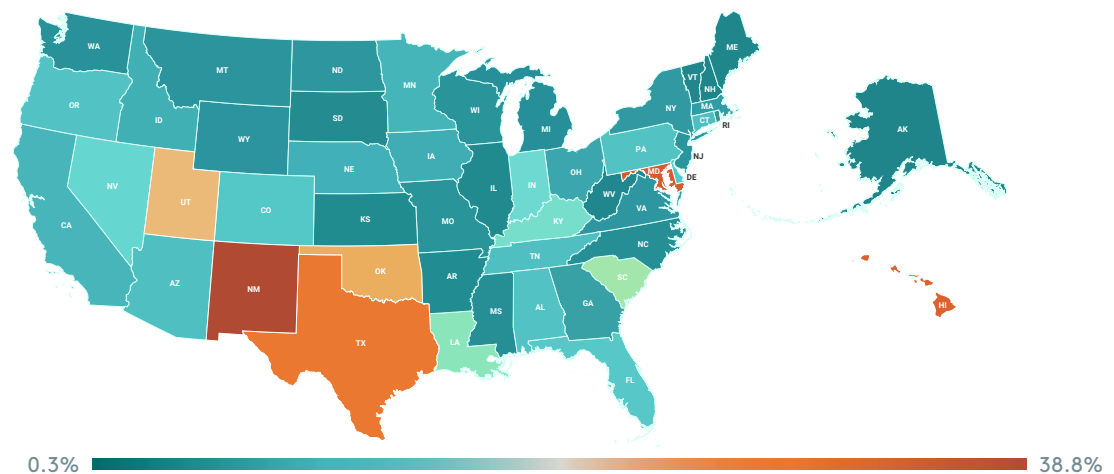
**TABLE 8** RTO Rates by Organization Type and Species

ORGANIZATION TYPE	RTO DOG	RTO RATE DOG	RTO CAT	RTO RATE CAT	TOTAL RTO	TOTAL RTO RATE
Government Animal Services	190,755	39.30%	18,105	4.40%	208,860	23.20%
Rescue w/ Gov. Contract	1,062	58.60%	107	3.90%	1,169	25.50%
Rescue w/o Gov. Contract	1,951	7.20%	1,467	2.70%	3,418	4.20%
Shelter w/ Gov. Contract	110,542	46.10%	15,860	5.50%	126,402	23.90%
Shelter w/o Gov. Contract	25,862	37.80%	8,958	6.20%	34,820	16.30%
Grand Total	330,172	40.10%	44,497	4.90%	374,669	21.70%

## Return to Field

- ▶ Cat RTF accounted for **96.5%** of all RTF outcomes
- ▶ Large number of RTF outcomes for cats is an indication of growth in RTF programs around the country
- ▶ In 2019, **New Mexico** had the highest RTF ratio at **38.8%**
- ▶ National RTF Rate for 2019 is **12.7%**
- ▶ **Rescues w/o Gov. Contracts** had the highest RTF rates at **14.7%**

**FIGURE 18** Feline RTF Rates by State



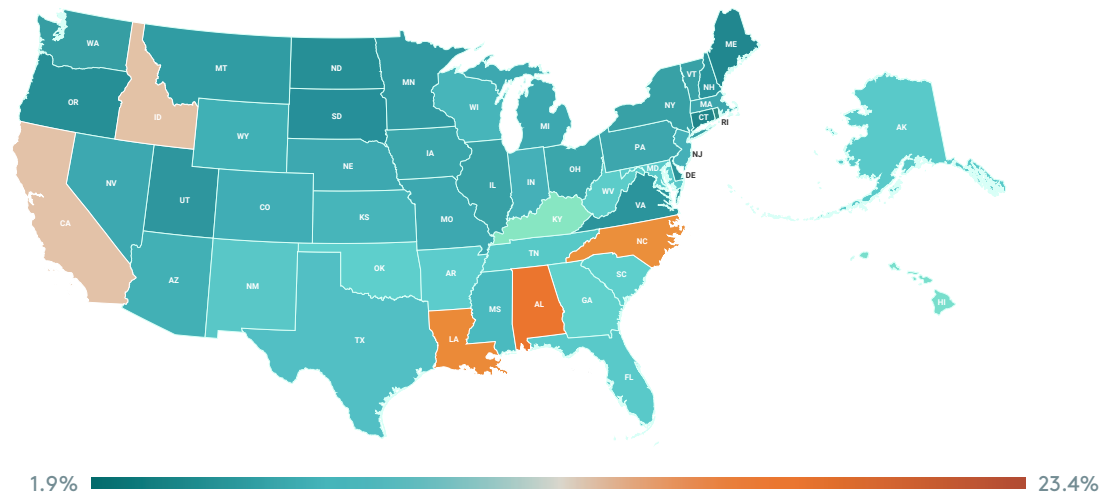
**TABLE 9** Feline RTF Outcomes and Rates by Organization Type

ORGANIZATION TYPE	FELINE RTF OUTCOMES	FELINE RTF RATE
Government Animal Services	59,348	14.3%
Rescue w/ Gov. Contract	38	1.4%
Rescue w/o Gov. Contract	8,014	14.7%
Shelter w/ Gov. Contract	29,837	10.3%
Shelter w/o Gov. Contract	17,389	12.0%
Grand Total	114,626	12.7%

## Euthanasia Rate

- ▶ The **Euthanasia Rate** was calculated by dividing the number of animals euthanized by the total outcomes
- ▶ **Puerto Rico, Alabama and Louisiana** had the top three euthanasia rates at **56.8%**, **17.4%**, and **16.4%**, respectively
- ▶ **Government Animal Services** and **Rescue w/Gov. Contracts** had the highest euthanasia rates at **13.0%** and **12.6%**, respectively

**FIGURE 19** Euthanasia Rates by State



**TABLE 10** Euthanasia Rates by Species and Age

ORGANIZATION TYPE	Canine				Feline			
	PUPPY	UNKNOWN	ADULT	TOTAL	KITTEN	UNKNOWN	ADULT	TOTAL
Government Animal Services	3.60%	11.70%	10.00%	9.50%	15.30%	24.50%	18.00%	18.10%
Rescue w/ Gov. Contract	2.30%	0.00%	14.30%	11.50%	8.60%	30.80%	19.60%	13.70%
Rescue w/o Gov. Contract	0.50%	0.60%	1.40%	1.10%	1.00%	0.40%	1.70%	1.30%
Shelter w/ Gov. Contract	4.40%	12.60%	8.40%	8.10%	10.60%	29.00%	10.60%	12.70%
Shelter w/o Gov. Contract	1.40%	5.80%	5.40%	4.20%	5.00%	15.00%	6.60%	6.20%
Grand Total	2.50%	10.80%	7.90%	7.10%	9.40%	23.90%	10.90%	11.70%

# Summary

The 2019 Shelter Animals Count data set highlights the importance and significance of continuing to build the national animal sheltering database. The current dataset has both an organization type and geographic bias which is evidenced from the distribution of size and number of organizations.

A key point to make about the dataset and its use is that it has limitations in analysis as it is not comprehensive of all animal sheltering organizations. Its primary value comes from seeing the macro and geographic trends in things like juvenile intake ratio and transfer volumes.

There are important trends that can be seen throughout the country ranging from species differences to geographic differences. As the database continues to grow, we anticipate be able to do much more detailed analysis and assessments to key community trends across the country.

## Credits

Alex Castelazo  
Marie Abbondanza  
Michael Blackwell  
Lauren Bluestone  
Jodi Buckman  
Christa Chadwick  
Lena DeTar

Janelle Dixon  
Sharon Harvey  
Roger Haston  
Mary Ippoliti-Smith  
Ed Jamison  
Sara Kent  
Michael Keiley

Vicki Kilmer  
Jan McHugh-Smith  
Amy Nichols  
Anne Reed  
Jim Tedford  
Shelly Thompson  
Gary Weitzman

# Appendix

**Shelter Animals Count:** <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org>

**Basic Data Matrix:** <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/data/basic-data-matrix>

**Explore the Data:** <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/data/explore-the-data>

**Request the Data:** <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/data/request-the-data>

**Frequently Asked Questions:** <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/who-we-are/about>

**Contact Us:** [info@shelteranimalscount.org](mailto:info@shelteranimalscount.org)