

ANIMAL SHELTERING STATISTICS 2020



**SHELTER
ANIMALS
COUNT**

THE NATIONAL DATABASE

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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 2020 data from Shelter Animals Count. The data was limited to organizations that completed a full year of reporting in 2020. 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 dataset. 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.

MISSION

Shelter Animals Count is the trusted source for collecting and sharing credible and accessible data to positively impact animals and communities.



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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

JUVENILES

dogs or cats up to 5 months old

STATES

Data is included from all 50 US States, as well as US territory Puerto Rico.

N

n=Sample size. Organizations included in this paper submitted data for full year 2020: 2,386 organizations.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Of Reporting Organizations

Types of Organizations

- ▶ The top two organization types account for **69%** of all locations. These included **1,038 (44%) Rescues w/o Government Contract** and **594 (25%) Shelters w/o Govt. Contract**.
- ▶ **Shelters w/ Govt. Contract** and **Government Animal Services** represent **31%** of all locations with **374** and **364** locations, respectively.
- ▶ **16 Rescues w/ Govt. Contract** reported a full year of data in 2020 representing 1% of all locations.

Demographics of Reporting Organizations

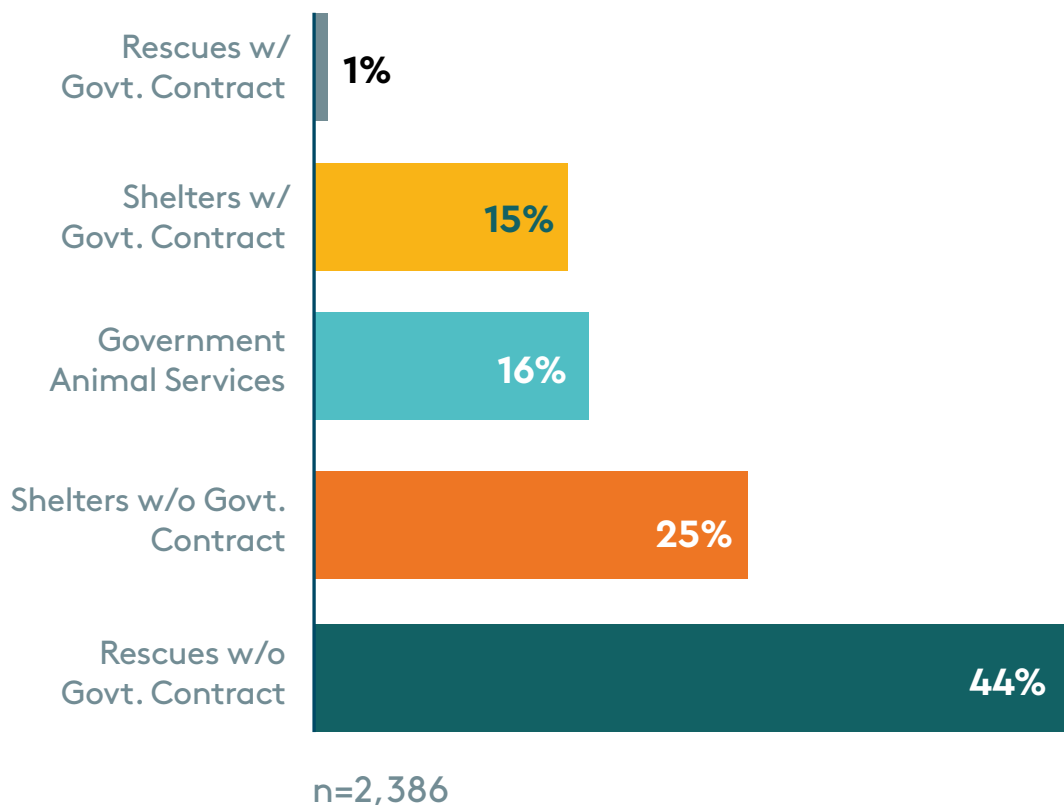


FIGURE 1 Distribution of Organizations by Type

Geographic Distribution

- ▶ **2,386 locations** reported a full year of data in 2020.
- ▶ There is sparse reporting for counties in the **Midwest** and the **South**.
- ▶ **Los Angeles County, CA** and **Maricopa County, AZ** were the two counties with the most organizations reporting a full year of data for 2020 with 42 and 39 organizations, respectively.

TABLE 1 Summary of Jurisdiction Coverage by Organizational Type

| ORGANIZATION TYPE | LOCATIONS | STATES | COUNTY | CITIES | ZIP CODES |
|----------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Rescue w/o Govt. Contract | 1,038 | 51 | 449 | 773 | 970 |
| Shelter w/o Govt. Contract | 594 | 51 | 387 | 519 | 592 |
| Shelter w/ Govt. Contract | 374 | 42 | 281 | 342 | 369 |
| Government Animal Services | 364 | 50 | 296 | 351 | 364 |
| Rescue w/ Govt. Contract | 16 | 12 | 15 | 16 | 16 |
| All Organizations | 2,386 | 53 | 858 | 1,561 | 2,167 |

Number of Organizations per county

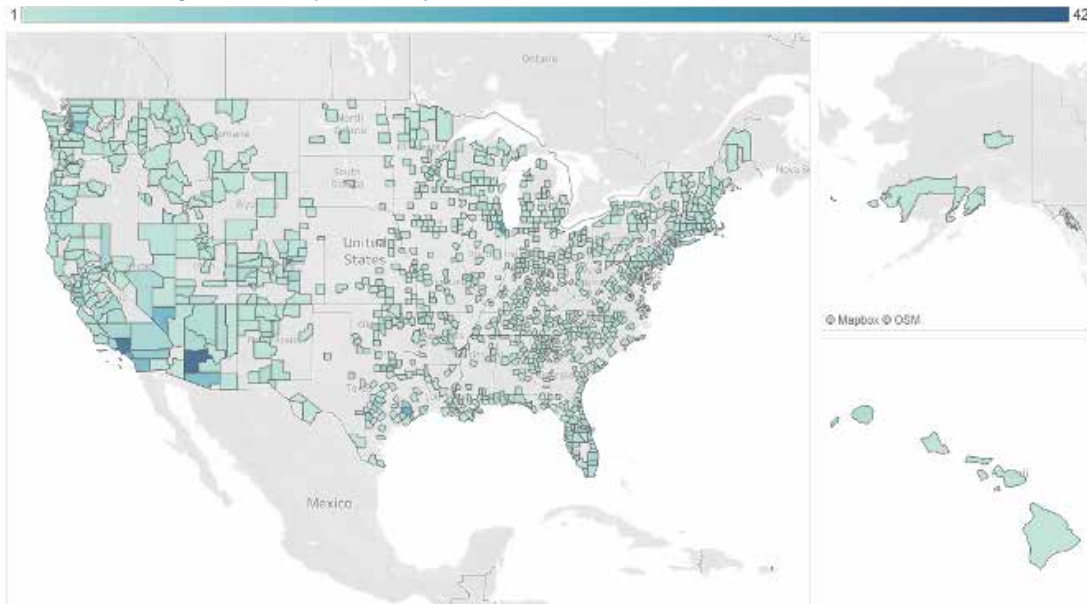


FIGURE 2 Reporting Organizations by County for 2020

Number of Animals Reported by State

- ▶ **California** reported the most intakes accounting for **12.6%** of all state intakes.
- ▶ **Government Animal Services** accounted for **41.1%** of all animal intakes – the highest number of all the organization types.

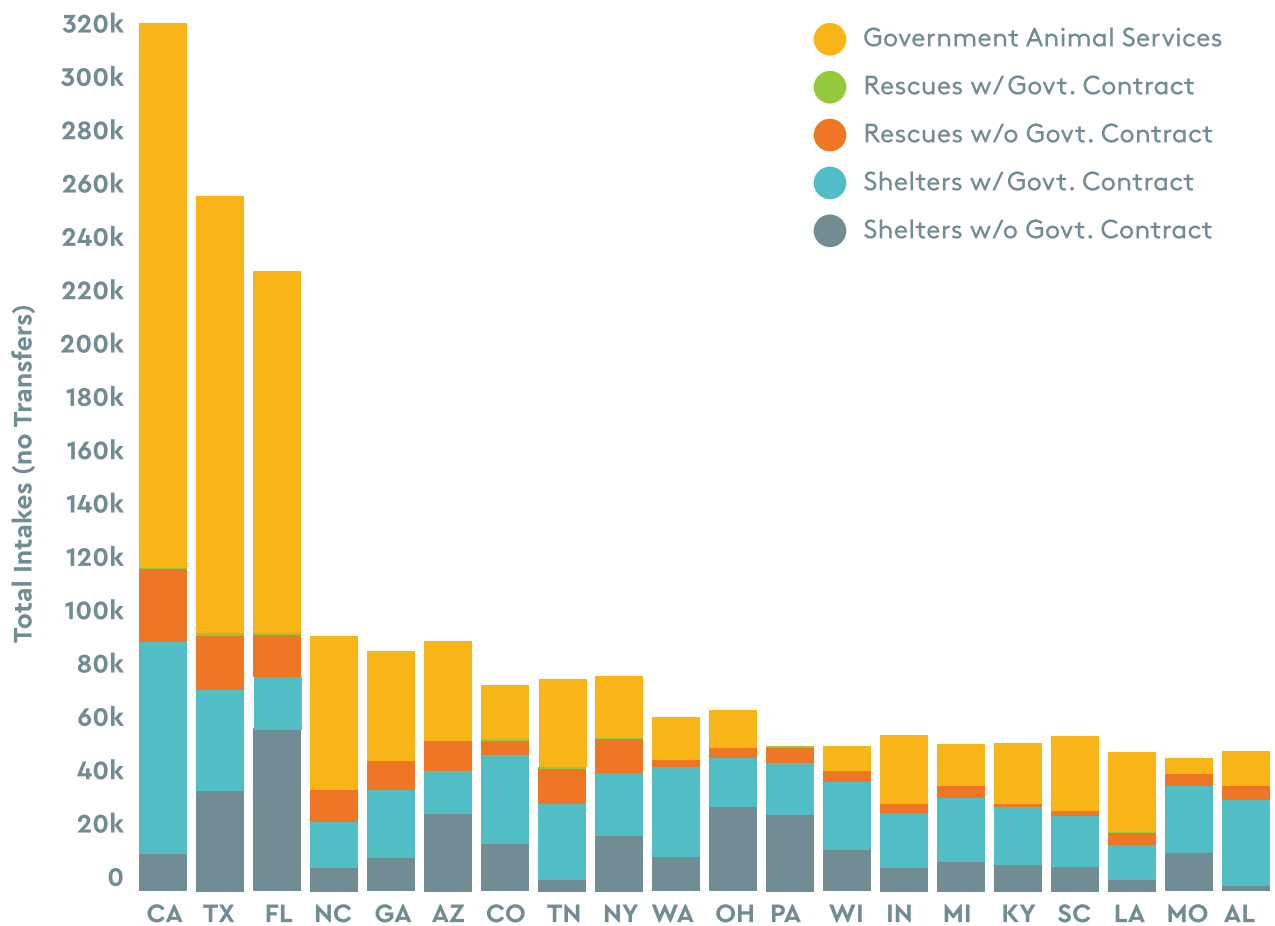


FIGURE 3 States With Highest Number of Animals Reported

Organizational Size

- ▶ Most organizations (**81.2%**) reported **less than 2,000** intakes per year.
- ▶ **100%** of Rescues w/o Govt. Contract reported **less than 2,000** intakes per year.
- ▶ **57.4%** of Shelters w/ Govt. Contracts reported **less than 2,000** intakes per year.

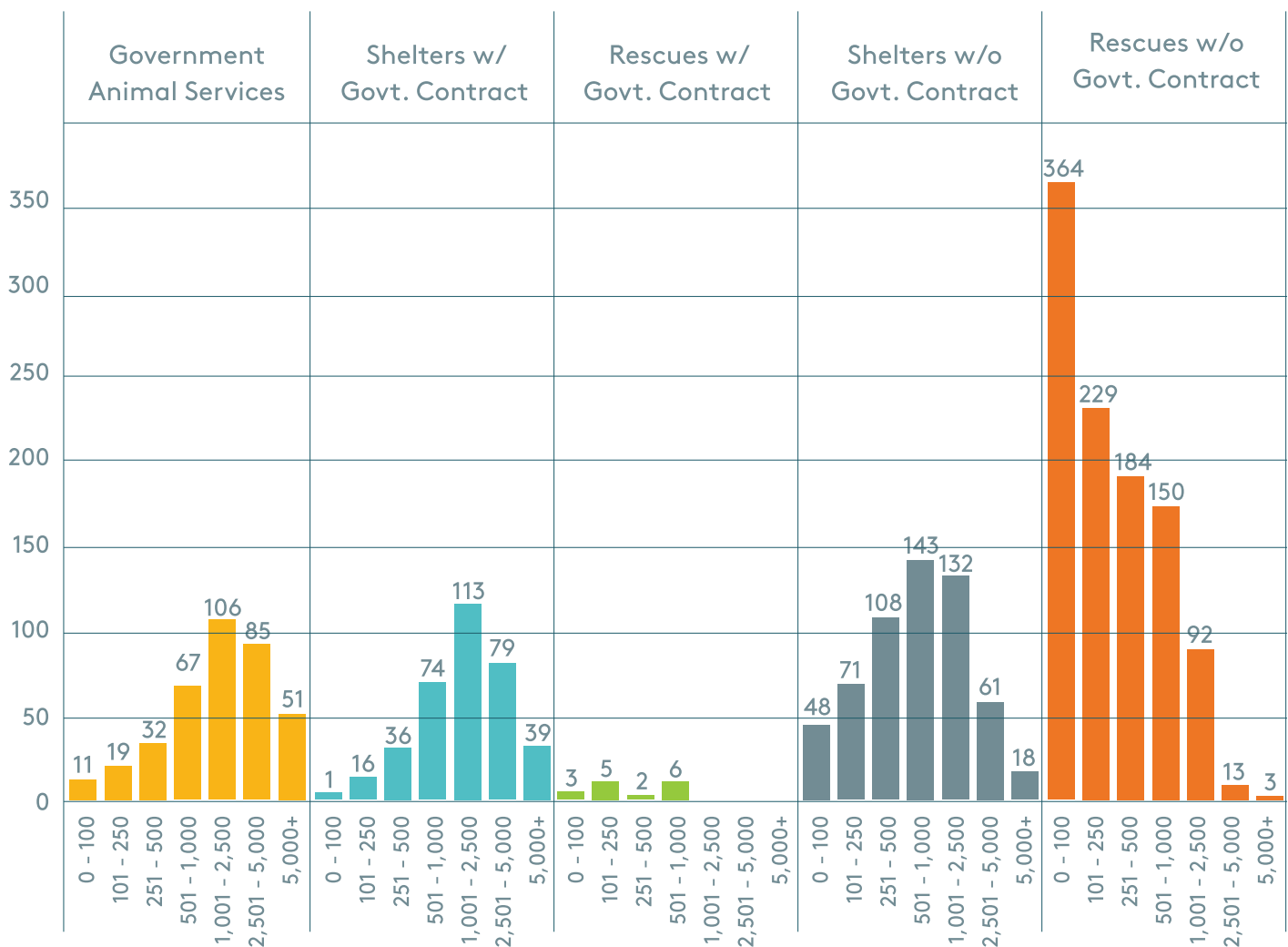


FIGURE 4 Distribution of Organizations by Annual Intake Numbers

INTAKES



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Intake Summary

- ▶ **Government Animal Services** is the category of shelters with the highest intake numbers, with an average intake that is **18%** higher than the second largest category, **Shelters w/Govt. Contract**.
- ▶ The most common type of intakes is **Strays** with **1.5M intakes** or **46.9%** of all intake sources.

TABLE 2 Summary of Statistics by Organization Type

| ORGANIZATION TYPE | AVG. INTAKES | MEDIAN INTAKES | MIN. INTAKES | MAX INTAKES |
|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|
| Government Animal Services | 2,834 | 1,707 | 23 | 27,337 |
| Shelters w/Govt. Contract | 2,458 | 1,487 | 58 | 23,144 |
| Shelters w/o Govt. Contract | 1,236 | 704 | 0 | 15,492 |
| Rescues w/o Govt. Contract | 415 | 193 | 0 | 13,942 |
| Rescue w/Govt. Contract | 392 | 236 | 6 | 904 |
| Grand Total | 2,386 | 548 | 0 | 27,337 |

TABLE 3 Summary of 2020 Intake Data

| ORGANIZATION TYPE | STRAY | RELINQUISHED | TRANSFER IN | OIE | OTHER | TOTAL |
|-----------------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------|---------|-----------|
| Government Animal Services | 708,365 | 209,071 | 19,514 | 23,247 | 99,845 | 1,060,042 |
| Shelters w/Govt. Contract | 458,506 | 223,768 | 117,815 | 25,924 | 68,861 | 894,874 |
| Shelters w/o Govt. Contract | 189,703 | 237,452 | 248,826 | 18,959 | 39,434 | 734,374 |
| Rescues w/o Govt. Contract | 109,399 | 82,504 | 203,334 | 482 | 35,379 | 431,098 |
| Rescue w/Govt. Contract | 1,489 | 1,052 | 2,802 | 0 | 931 | 6,274 |
| Grand Total | 1,467,462 | 753,847 | 592,291 | 68,612 | 244,450 | 3,126,662 |

Species Distribution by Organization Type

- ▶ The number of intakes excludes transfers in.
- ▶ Cat intakes account for **50.7%** of all intakes while Dog intakes account for **49.3%**.
- ▶ The largest difference between dog and cat intakes occurs in **Shelters w/o Govt. Contract** with **35.1%** more cat than dog intakes.
- ▶ The second largest difference occurs in **Government Animal Services** with **21.8%** more dog than cat intakes.

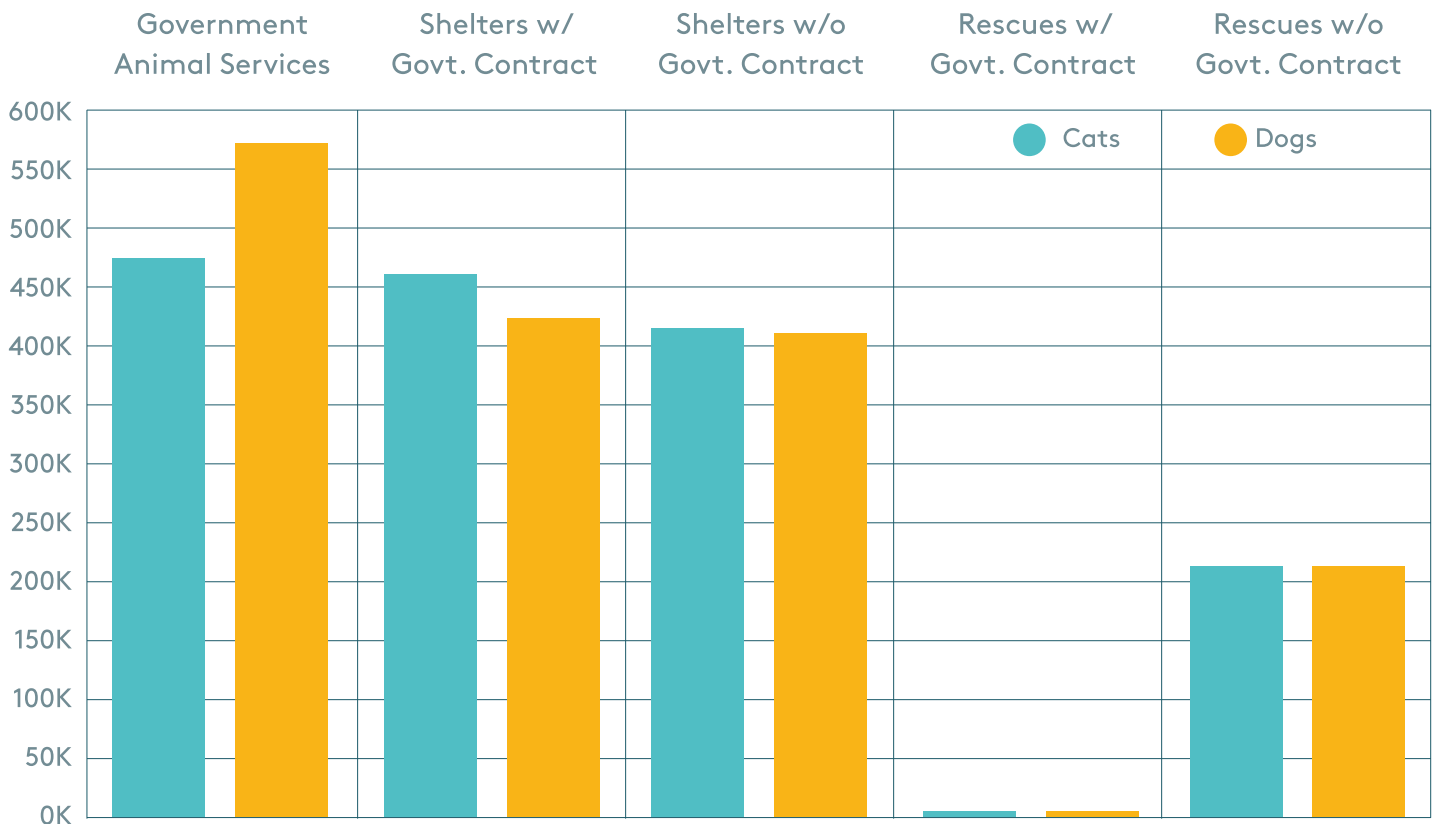


FIGURE 5 Adjusted Intake by Species and Organization Type

Community Need Indicator¹

- ▶ The number of juvenile animals entering the system serves as a proxy for community need by suggesting a higher birth 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/Govt. Contracts** reported the highest juvenile ratio, at **55.2%**.

TABLE 4 Summary of 2020 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 | 469,661 | 186,368 | 39.70% | 570,867 | 78,609 | 13.80% | 25.50% |
| Shelters w/Govt. Contract | 413,775 | 178,310 | 43.10% | 363,284 | 59,743 | 16.40% | 30.60% |
| Shelters w/o Govt. Contract | 306,561 | 151,477 | 49.40% | 178,987 | 40,051 | 22.40% | 39.40% |
| Rescues w/o Govt. Contract | 113,320 | 81,071 | 60.80% | 94,444 | 34,981 | 37.00% | 51.00% |
| Rescues w/Govt. Contract | 2,326 | 1,474 | 63.40% | 1,146 | 443 | 38.70% | 55.20% |
| Grand Total | 1,325,643 | 598,700 | 45.20% | 1,208,728 | 213,827 | 17.70% | 32.10% |

¹ 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

- ▶ **Puerto Rico, Mississippi, 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.
- ▶ **69%** of the variability in juvenile ratios across the country is driven by each state's Kitten Intake Ratio.

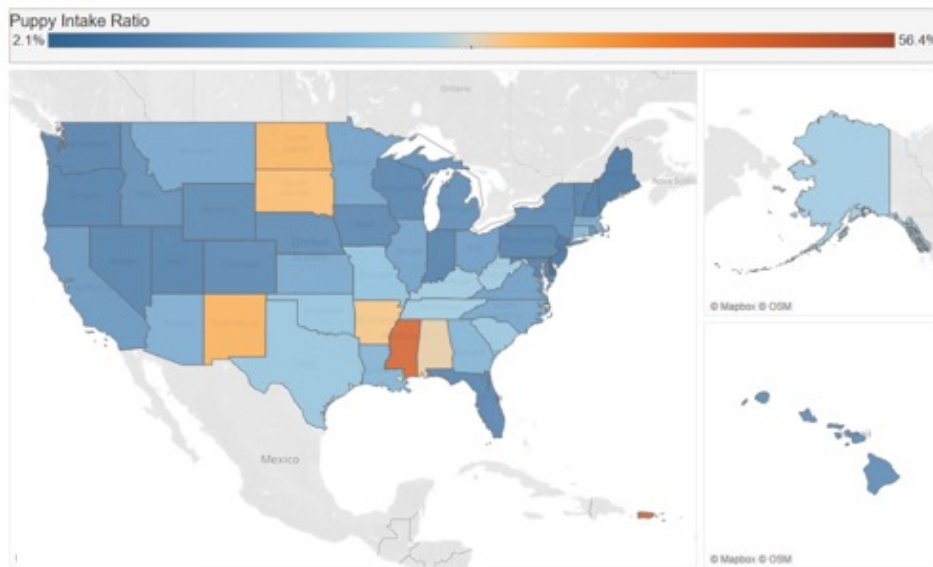


FIGURE 6 Average Puppy Intake Ratio by State

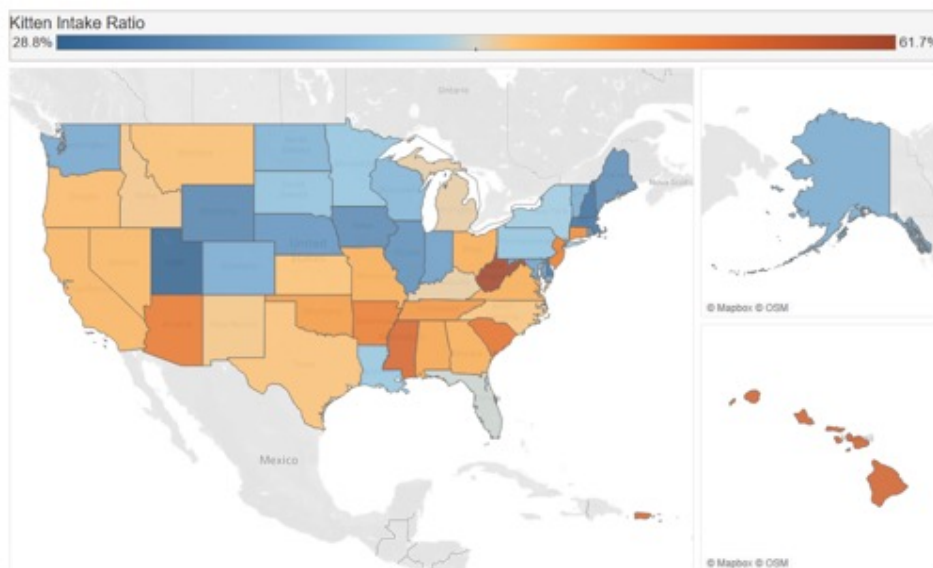


FIGURE 7 Average Kitten Intake Ratio by State

Seasonality

- ▶ There is higher seasonal variability in cat intakes than dog intakes in spite of the rapid decline in both species' intakes at the beginning of the global pandemic in March and April.
- ▶ Dog intakes showed a difference of **109%** between the highest and lowest intake months.
- ▶ Cat intakes showed a difference of **115%** between the highest and lowest intake months.
- ▶ Intakes exclude transfers in.

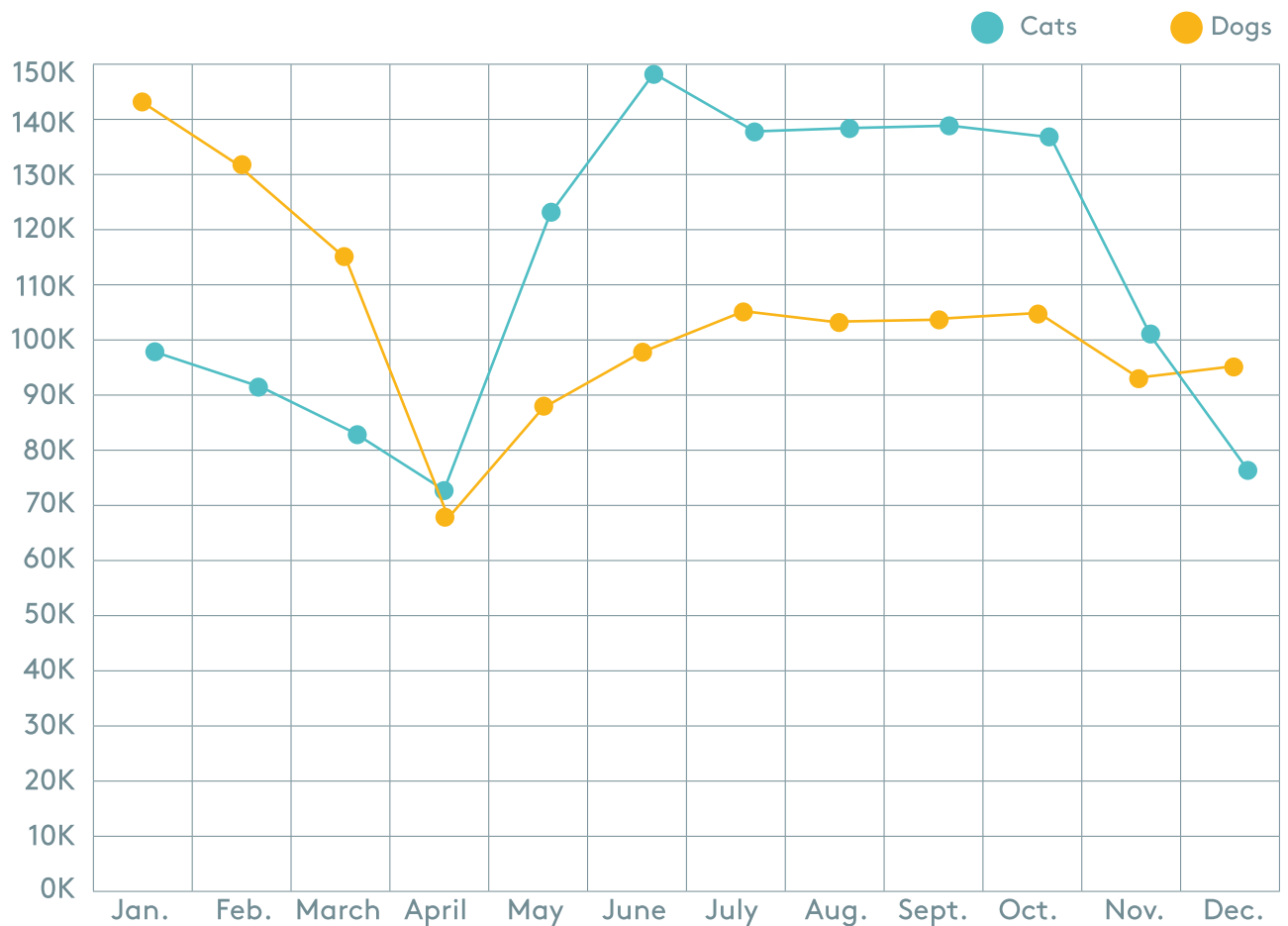


FIGURE 8 Adjusted Intake by Month for Cats and Dogs

Transfers In

- ▶ **Texas, California, and Illinois** showed the highest numbers of dogs transferred in.
- ▶ **California, Texas, and Virginia** showed the highest numbers of cats transferred in.
- ▶ It is important to remember that many of these transfers could be **intra-state**.
- ▶ When compared to other organizations, **Shelters w/o Govt. Contract** had the largest percentage of animals transferred in at **42.0%**.

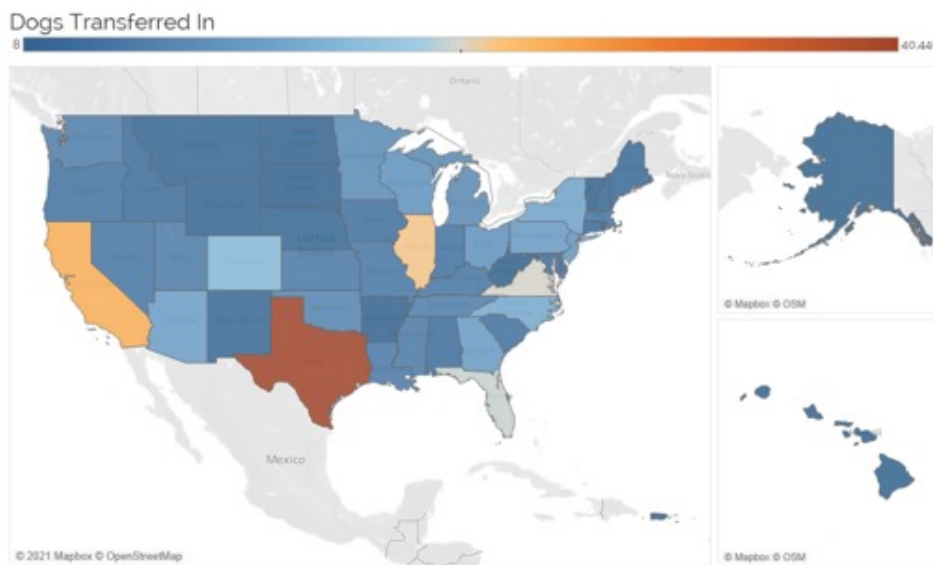


FIGURE 9 Dogs Transferred in By State

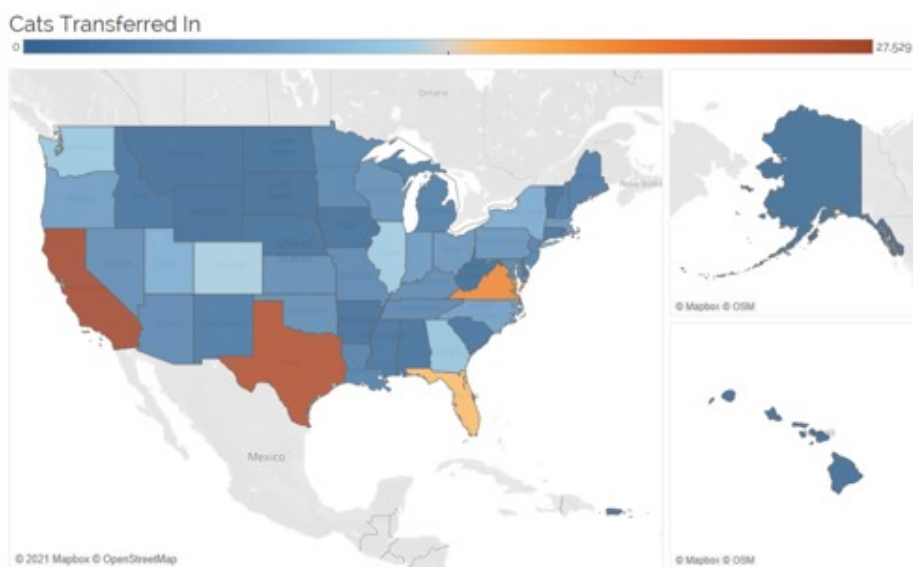


FIGURE 10 Cats Transferred in By State

Relinquishments

- ▶ **Relinquishments** were the second most common form of intake after Strays at **24%**.
- ▶ The **relinquishment rate** is calculated by dividing relinquishments by total intake for each species.

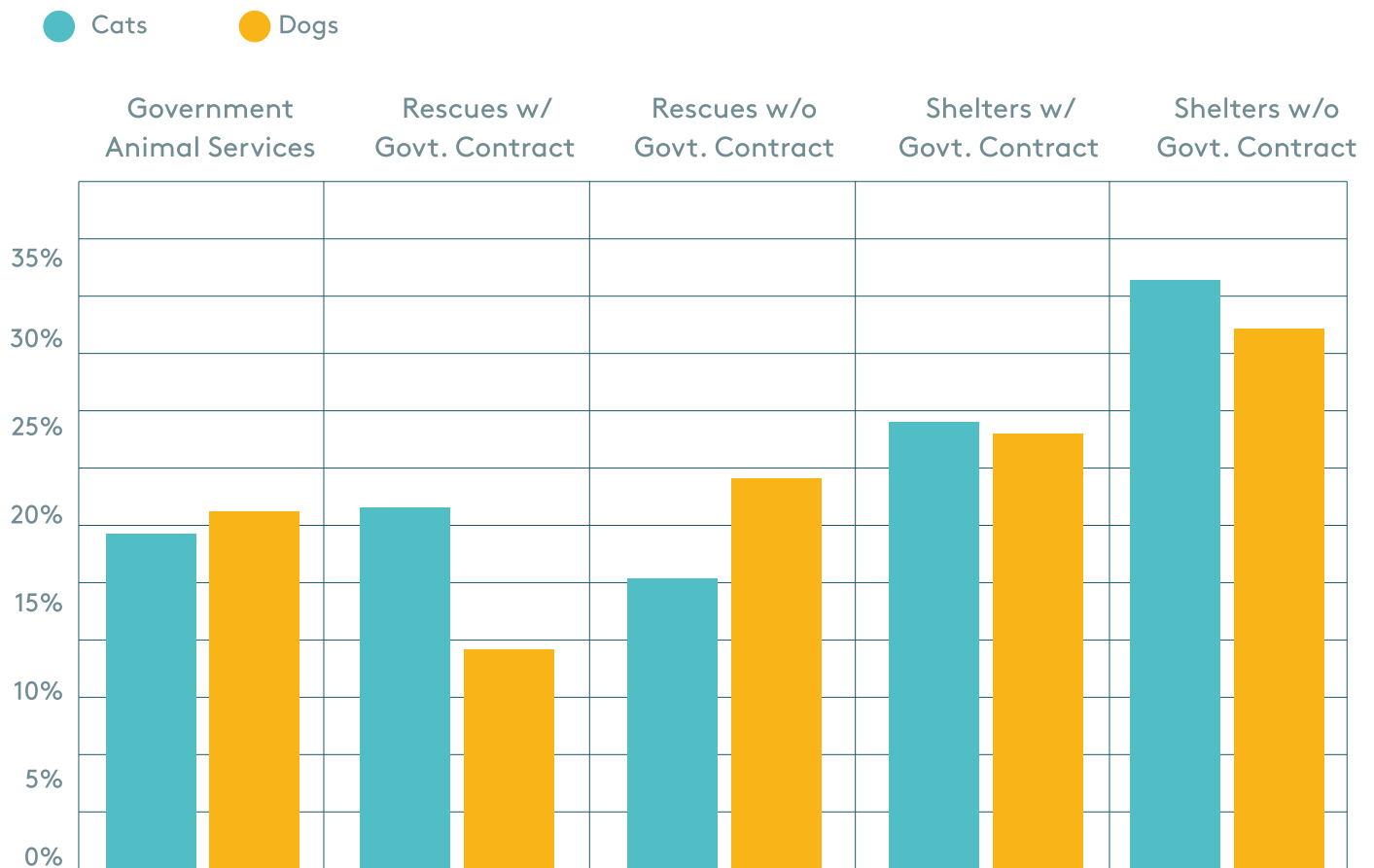


FIGURE 11 Relinquishments as a Percent of Total Intake by Species and Organization Type

OUTCOMES



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Outcomes by Species & Organization Type

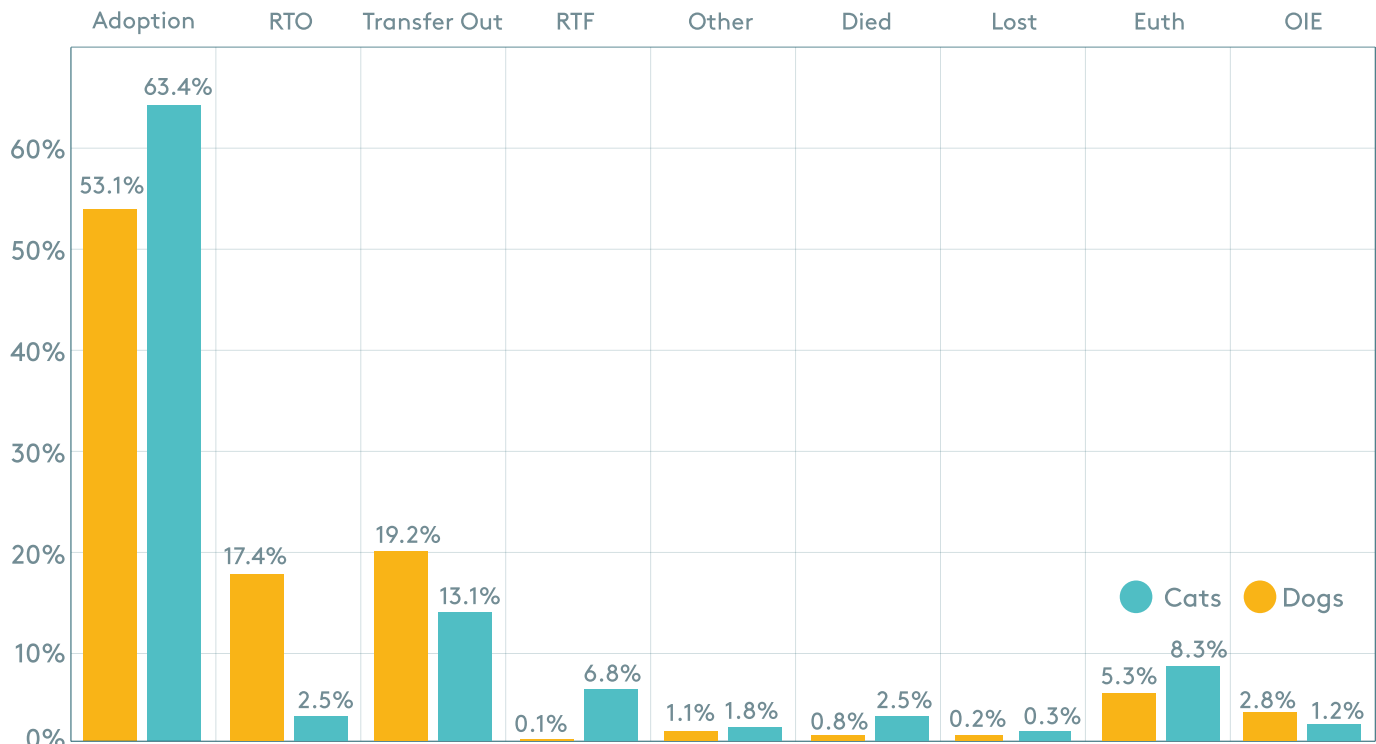


FIGURE 12: Percent of Total Outcomes by Outcome Method

- **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 **8.3%** than dogs at **5.3%**.
- **RTO** was more common for dogs at **17.4%** than cats at **2.5%**.

TABLE 5 Summary of Outcomes by Organization Type

| ORGANIZATION TYPE | ADOPTION | RTO | TRANSFER OUT | RTF | OTHER | DIED | LOST | EUTH | OIE | TOTAL |
|-----------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Government Animal Services | 407,185 | 167,932 | 266,400 | 63,804 | 17,043 | 15,011 | 5,431 | 103,044 | 21,733 | 1,067,583 |
| Shelters w/Govt. Contract | 501,139 | 109,835 | 133,039 | 26,436 | 19,478 | 16,006 | 1,401 | 77,429 | 23,793 | 908,556 |
| Shelters w/o Govt. Contract | 591,334 | 30,199 | 44,222 | 10,828 | 7,385 | 11,192 | 591 | 29,034 | 17,916 | 742,701 |
| Rescues w/o Govt. Contract | 337,687 | 3,902 | 65,673 | 9,942 | 3,129 | 10,677 | 361 | 5,517 | 168 | 437,056 |
| Rescues w/Govt. Contract | 5,687 | 80 | 474 | 41 | 1 | 147 | 1 | 90 | 0 | 6,491 |
| Grand Total | 1,843,002 | 311,948 | 509,808 | 111,051 | 47,036 | 53,033 | 7,785 | 215,114 | 63,610 | 3,162,387 |

1 Euthanasia and RTO figures represent the outcomes as a percent of total outcomes. Euthanasia and RTO rates are calculated by the following formulas: Euthanasia/(Total Outcomes – OIE) and RTO/Stray Intakes.

Live Outcomes

- ▶ **Live outcomes** are considered **adoptions, RTO, transfer out, and RTF**.
- ▶ **Live outcome rate** was calculated by dividing live outcomes by total outcomes.
- ▶ **Rescues w/ Govt. Contract** had the highest live outcomes at **96.3%**.
- ▶ **Shelters w/ Govt. Contract** had the lowest live outcomes at **84.79%**.
- ▶ **North Dakota** had the highest live outcome rate at **96.4%**.
- ▶ **Puerto Rico** had the lowest live outcomes at **54.4%**.

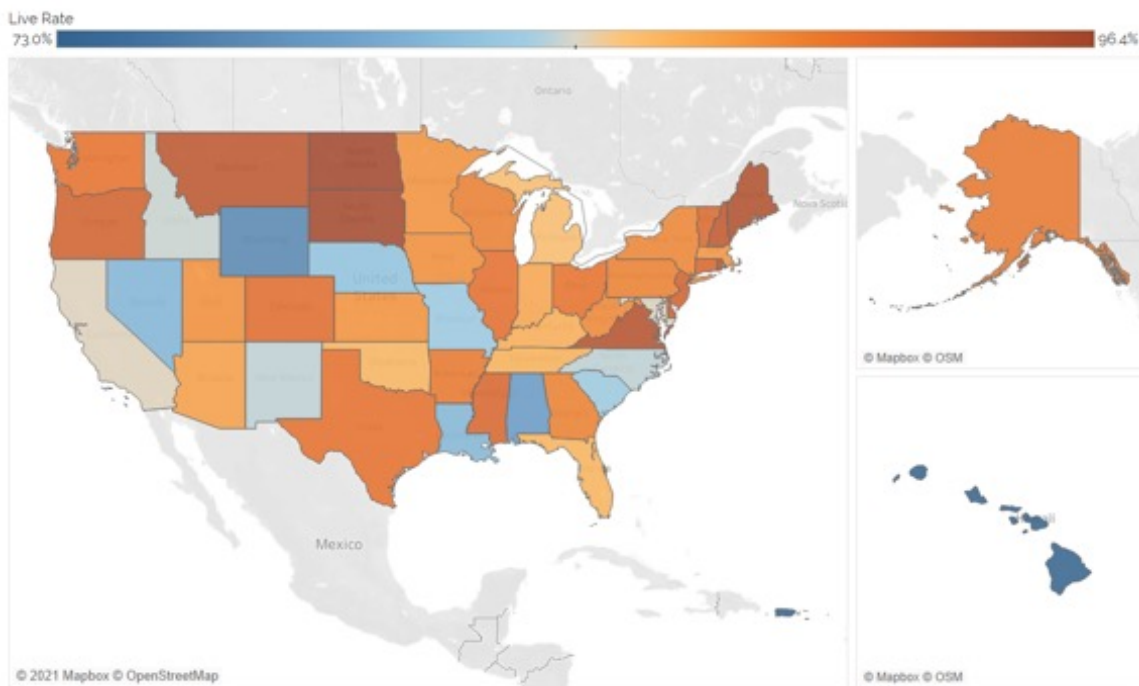


FIGURE 13 Live Outcome Rates by State

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 | 517,229 | 88.0% | 388,092 | 80.90% | 905,321 | 84.80% |
| Shelters w/Govt. Contract | 379,495 | 87.0% | 390,954 | 82.70% | 770,449 | 84.79% |
| Shelters w/o Govt. Contract | 290,599 | 91.80% | 385,984 | 90.60% | 676,583 | 91.10% |
| Rescues w/o Govt. Contract | 212,412 | 96.70% | 204,792 | 94.20% | 417,204 | 95.50% |
| Rescues w/Govt. Contract | 2,925 | 98.30% | 3,327 | 94.70% | 6,252 | 96.30% |
| Grand Total | 1,402,660 | 89.70% | 1,373,149 | 85.90% | 2,775,809 | 87.80% |

Total Adoptions

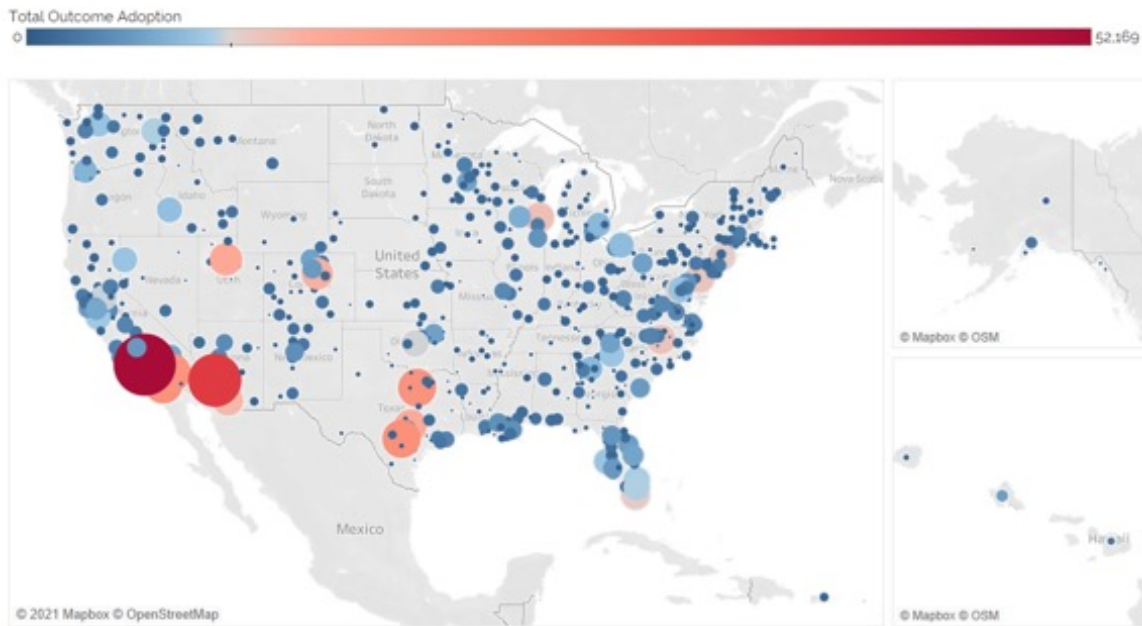


FIGURE 14 Total Annual Adoptions by County

- ▶ **Los Angeles County, CA** and **Maricopa County, AZ** had the highest number of adoptions at **52,169** and **38,139**, respectively.
- ▶ The number of adoptions by county is highly skewed with **50%** of counties reporting less than **753 annual adoptions**.



Community Adoption Rate

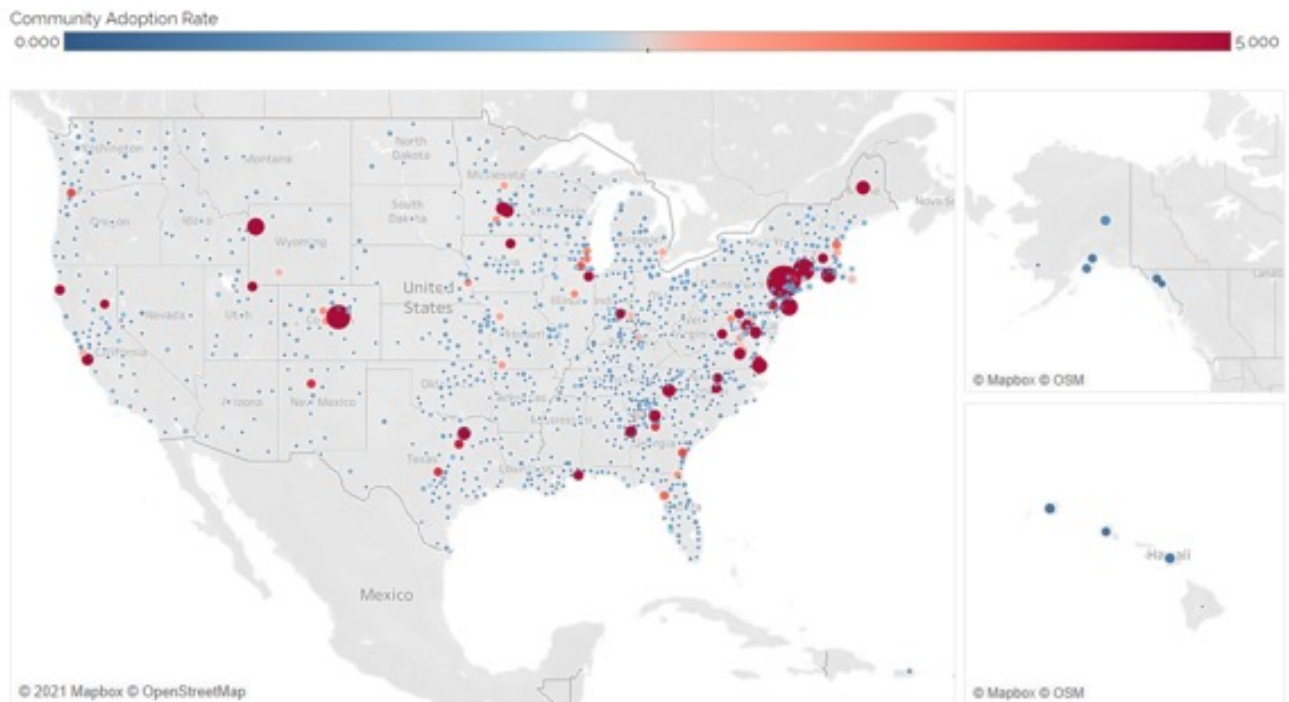


FIGURE 15 Annual Community Adoption Rate by County

- ▶ **Community adoption rate** is calculated by dividing total adoptions by intakes minus OIE and transfers in.¹
- ▶ 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.**

1 Community adoption rate = total adoptions / (intakes - OIE - transfers in)

Transfers Out

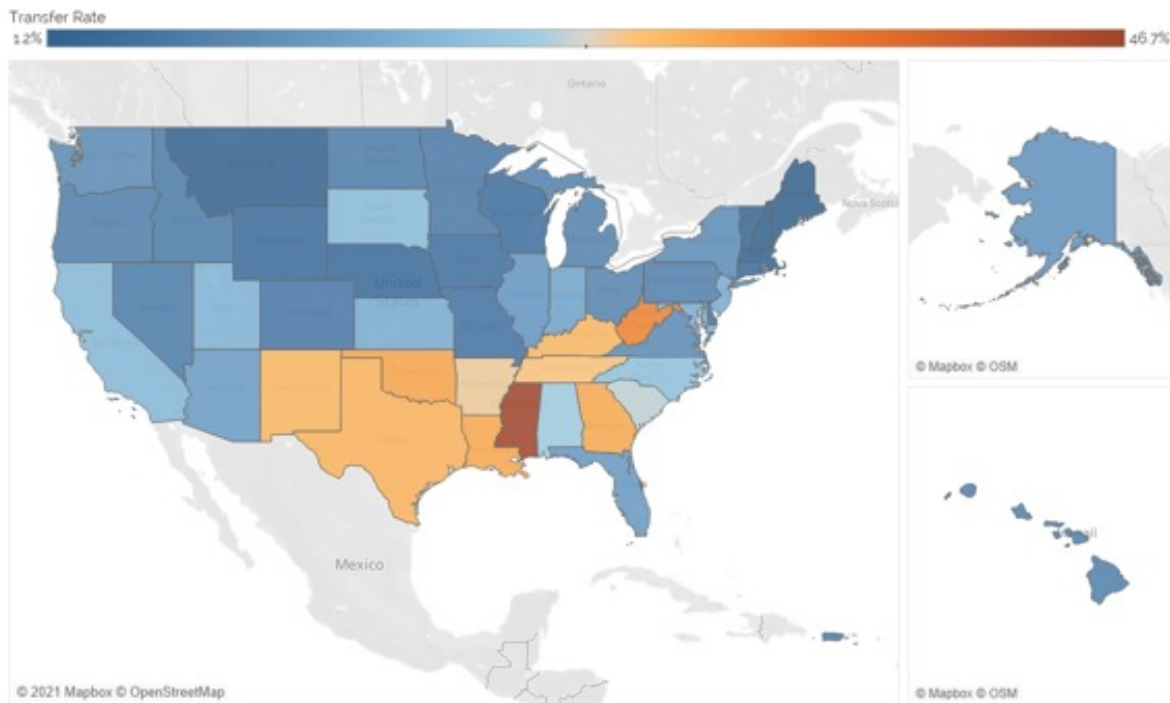


FIGURE 16 Transfer Rates by State

- ▶ The **transfer rate** is calculated by dividing transfers out by total intakes.
- ▶ Dogs represent **59.0%** of all transfers.
- ▶ Cats represent **41.0%** of all transfers.
- ▶ **Government Animal Services** had the highest transfer rate at **25.1%**.
- ▶ High rates of transfer signify the importance of transfers as a mechanism to maximize live outcomes.
- ▶ **Mississippi, West Virginia, and Oklahoma** had the top 3 transfer out rates at **46.7%, 33.4%, and 29.7%**, respectively.

TABLE 7 Transfer Out Rate by Organization Type

| ORGANIZATION TYPE | TRANSFER RATE DOG | TRANSFER RATE CAT | TOTAL TRANSFER RATE |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Government Animal Services | 26.50% | 23.50% | 25.10% |
| Rescue w/Govt. Contract | 4.50% | 10.20% | 7.60% |
| Rescue w/o Govt. Contract | 20.60% | 9.90% | 15.20% |
| Shelter w/Govt. Contract | 17.70% | 12.30% | 14.90% |
| Shelter w/o Govt. Contract | 8.40% | 4.30% | 6.00% |
| All Organizations | 19.50% | 13.20% | 16.30% |

Return to Owner

- ▶ **Return to Owner** rates were calculated by dividing RTO by total number of stray intakes.
- ▶ RTO rate for dogs was **40.7%**.
- ▶ RTO rate for cats was **5.1%**.
- ▶ Rhode Island had the highest RTO rate at **61.6%**.
- ▶ Puerto Rico had the lowest RTO rate at **2.9%**.

TABLE 8 RTO Rates by Organization Type and Species

| ORGANIZATION TYPE | RTO DOG | RTO RATE (DOG) | RTO CAT | RTO RATE (CAT) | TOTAL RTO | RTO RATE (TOTAL) |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Government Animal Services | 152,140 | 40.40% | 15,792 | 4.80% | 25.10% | 23.70% |
| Rescue w/Govt. Contract | 58 | 11.10% | 22 | 2.30% | 7.60% | 5.40% |
| Rescue w/o Govt. Contract | 2,225 | 7.30% | 1,677 | 2.10% | 15.20% | 3.60% |
| Shelter w/Govt. Contract | 94,909 | 46.20% | 14,926 | 5.90% | 14.90% | 24.00% |
| Shelter w/o Govt. Contract | 21,189 | 40.20% | 8,342 | 6.20% | 6.00% | 15.90% |
| All Organizations | 271,189 | 40.70% | 40,759 | 5.10% | 16.30% | 21.30% |

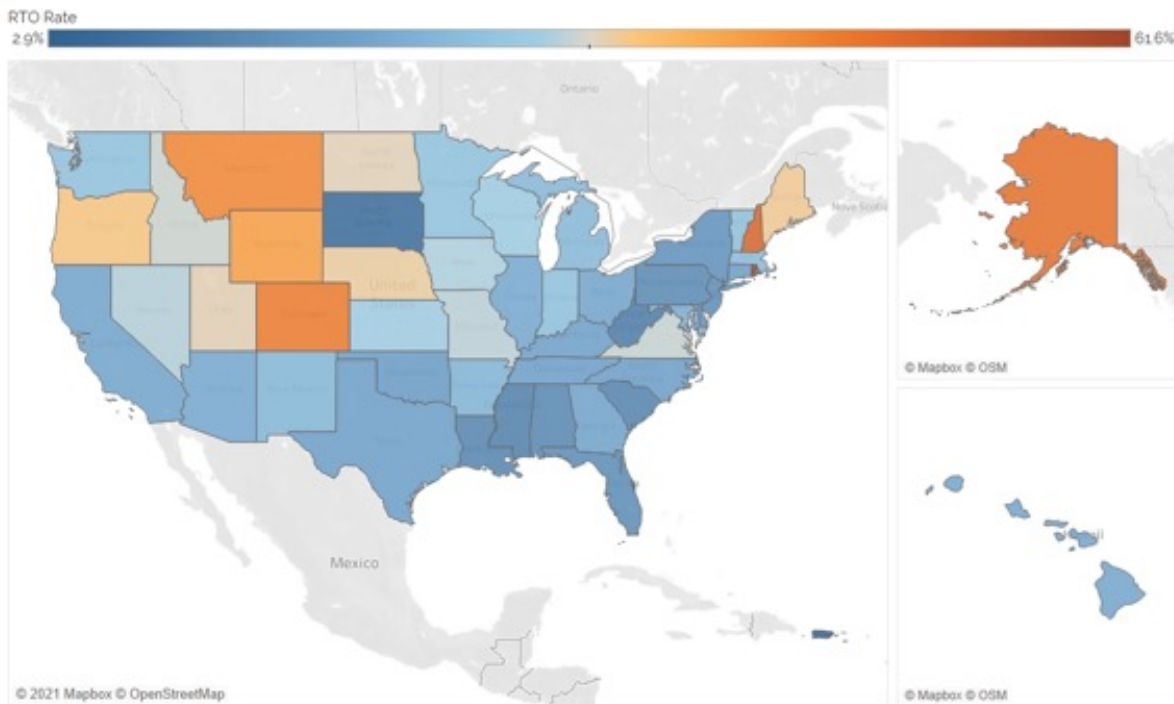


FIGURE 17 RTO Rates by State

Return to Field¹

- ▶ Cat RTF accounted for **98.5%** of all RTF outcomes.
- ▶ Large number of RTF outcomes for cats is an indication of growth in RTF programs around the country.
- ▶ In 2020, **Rhode Island** had the highest RTF percentage at **39.2%**.
- ▶ **National RTF Rate** for 2020 is **13.7%**.
- ▶ **Rescues w/o Govt. Contracts** had the highest RTF rates at **18.8%**.

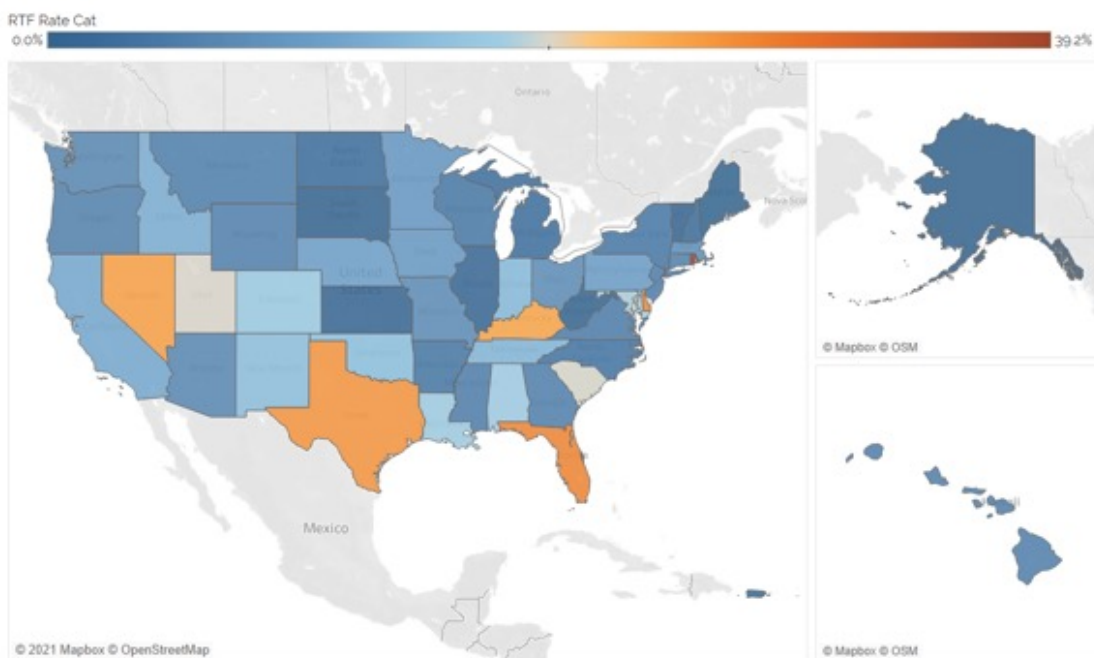


FIGURE 18 Feline RTF Rates by State

TABLE 9 Feline RTF Outcomes and Rates by Organization Type

| ORGANIZATION TYPE | FELINE RTF OUTCOMES | FELINE RTF RATE |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Government Animal Services | 62,533 | 18.80% |
| Rescue w/ Govt. Contract | 41 | 4.20% |
| Rescue w/o Govt. Contract | 9,914 | 12.50% |
| Shelter w/ Govt. Contract | 26,082 | 10.30% |
| Shelter w/o Govt. Contract | 10,790 | 8.00% |
| Grand Total | 109,360 | 13.70% |

Euthanasia Rate

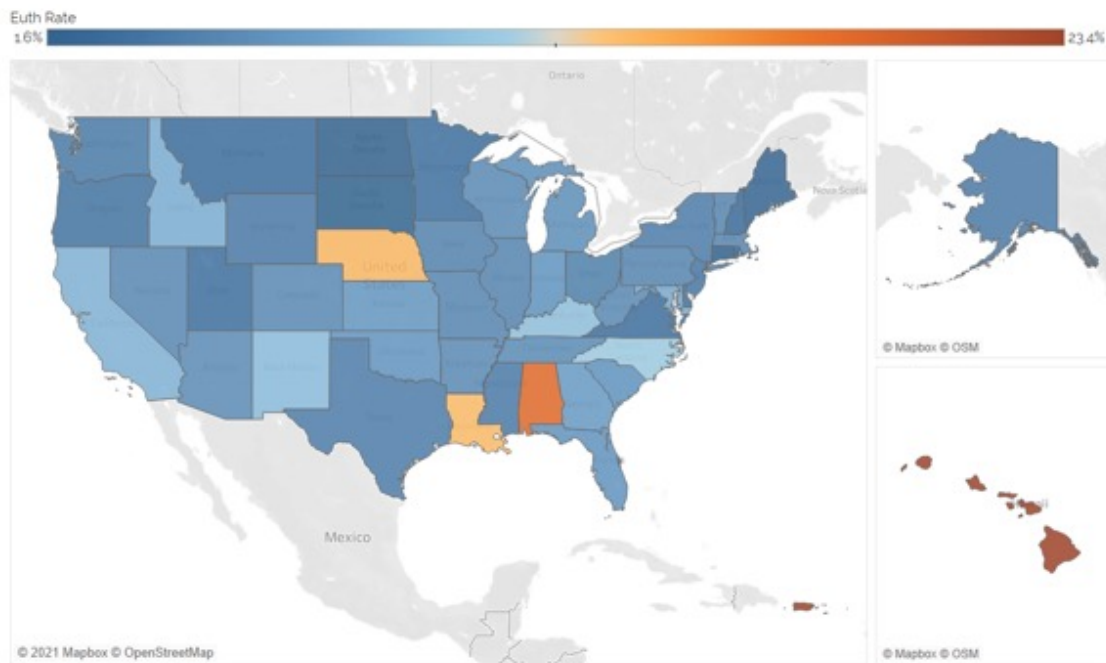


FIGURE 19 Euthanasia Rates by State

- ▶ The **euthanasia rate** was calculated by dividing the number of animals euthanized by the total number of outcomes.
- ▶ **Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alabama** had the top three euthanasia rates at **26.1%, 24.3%, and 18.7%**, respectively.
- ▶ **Government Animal Services** and **Shelters w/Govt. Contract** had the highest euthanasia rates at 13.1% and 10.5%, respectively.

TABLE 10 Euthanasia Rates by Species and Age

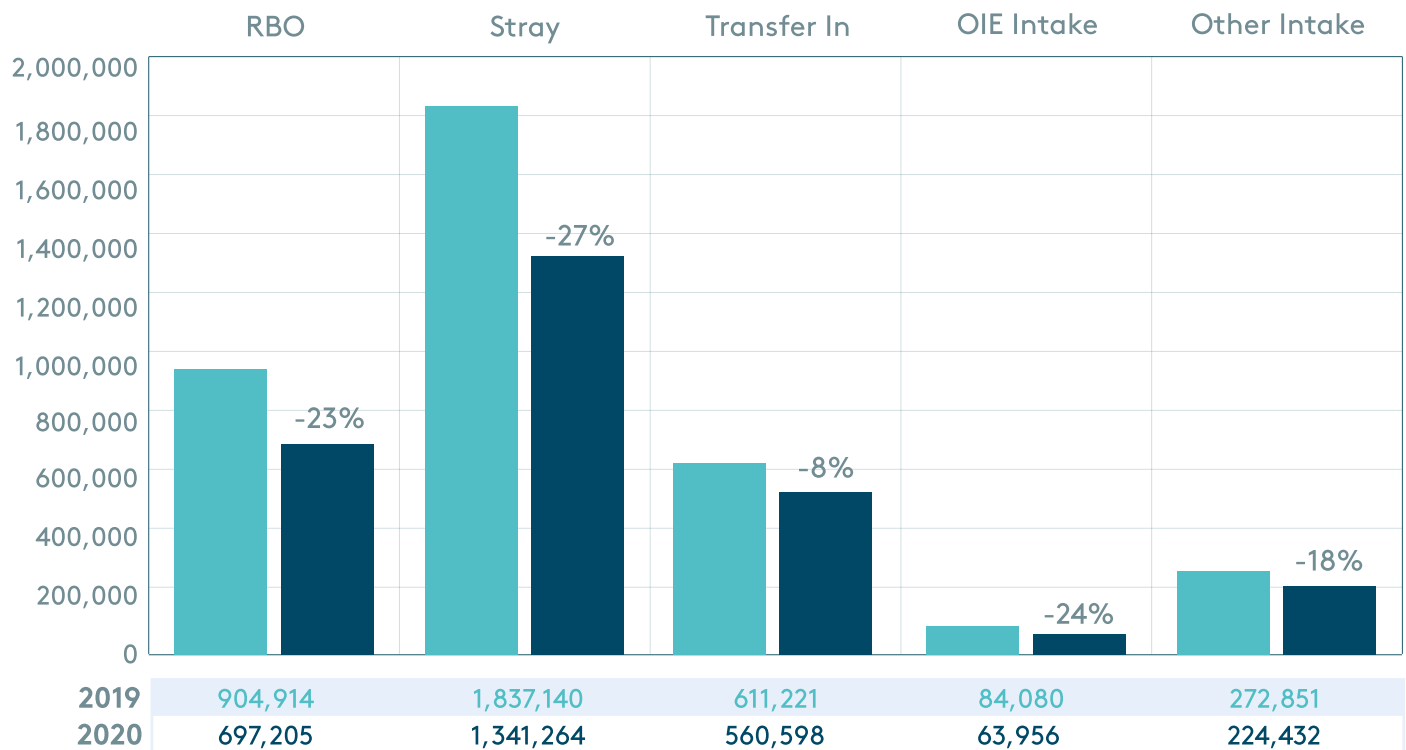
| ORGANIZATION TYPE | CANINE | | | | FELINE | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| | <i>Puppy</i> | <i>Unknown</i> | <i>Adult</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Kitten</i> | <i>Unknown</i> | <i>Adult</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| Government Animal Services | 2.60% | 10.0% | 7.50% | 7.20% | 8.70% | 20.80% | 13.60% | 13.10% |
| Rescues w/Govt. Contract | 0.30% | 0.0% | 1.10% | 0.70% | 2.10% | 0.00% | 1.70% | 1.90% |
| Rescues w/o Govt. Contract | 0.60% | 0.30% | 1.90% | 1.30% | 0.80% | 0.50% | 1.80% | 1.20% |
| Shelters w/Govt. Contract | 3.40% | 9.50% | 7.40% | 6.90% | 8.10% | 21.10% | 10.10% | 10.50% |
| Shelters w/o Govt. Contract | 1.00% | 4.40% | 4.00% | 3.20% | 3.20% | 15.60% | 5.00% | 4.60% |
| All Organizations | 1.90% | 8.40% | 6.10% | 5.40% | 5.60% | 19.20% | 8.60% | 8.40% |

COVID-19 Impact¹ – Intake Impact

- ▶ Full year over year (YOY) impact of **COVID-19** (2020 vs. 2019).
- ▶ The largest percentage decline in intakes YOY was in the category of **Strays**, with a **27% reduction**.
- ▶ The smallest percentage of change YOY was in the category of **Transfers In**, with an **8% reduction**.
- ▶ **Total Intakes** decreased by **22%** from **3.71M in 2019 to 2.89M in 2020**.

FIGURE 20 COVID-19 Intakes Impact

● 2019 ● 2020



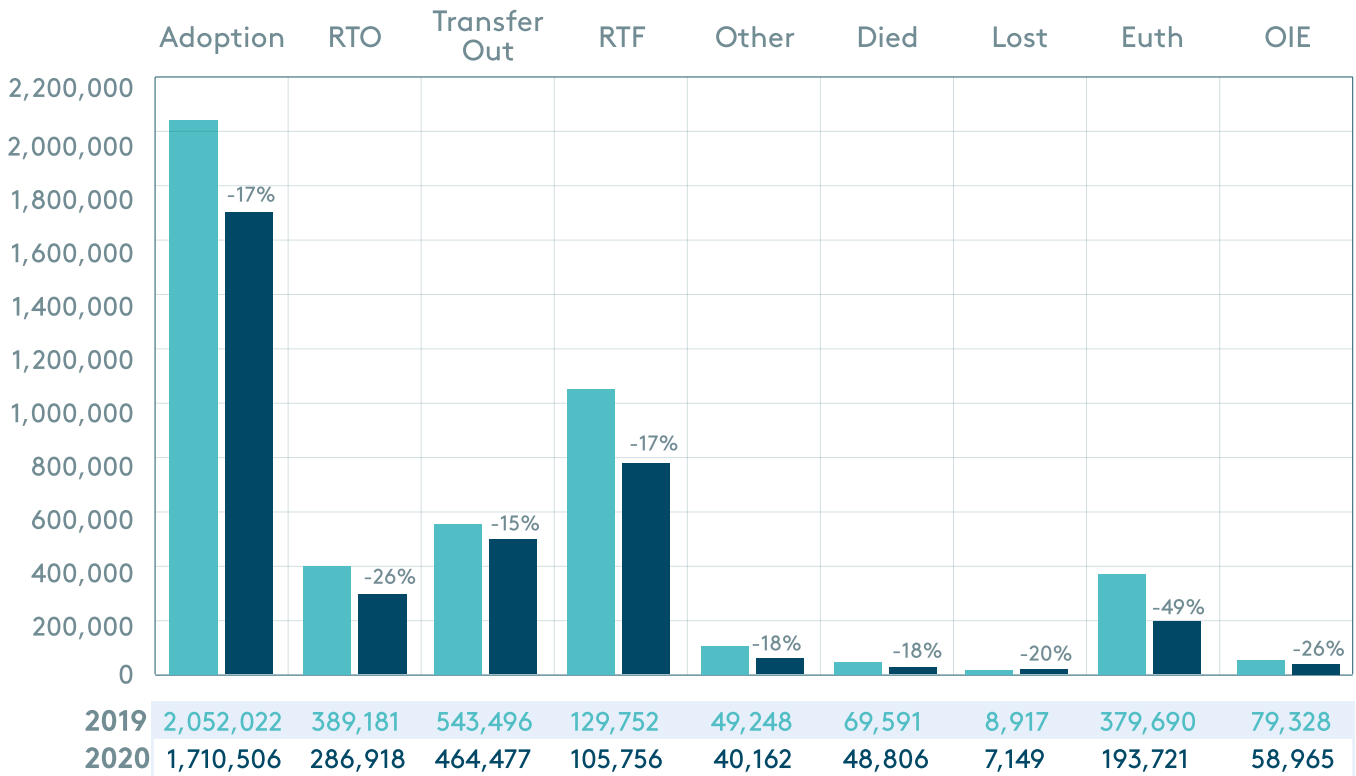
¹ Data for page 27 & 28, COVID-19 Impact reports, came from a subset of SAC data: all organizations with full year data for 2019 AND 2020. The rest of the report reflects all organizations that had full year data for 2020 only.

COVID-19 Impact – Outcomes Impact

- ▶ Adoptions experienced the largest absolute decline YOY in 2020 outcomes at (340,516) or (17%).
- ▶ Euthanasia saw the largest percentage decline at (49%).
- ▶ **Total Outcomes** declined by **21%** from **3.70M** in 2019 to **2.92M** in 2020.

FIGURE 21 COVID-19 Outcomes Impact

● 2019 ● 2020



Summary

The 2020 Shelter Animals Count dataset highlights the importance and significance of continuing to grow The National Database of animal sheltering statistics. 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 of key community trends across the country.

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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>

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**SHELTER
ANIMALS
COUNT**

THE NATIONAL DATABASE