



SHELTER
ANIMALS
COUNT



2024

MID-YEAR ANALYSIS

COMPARING JANUARY THROUGH JUNE TO PRIOR YEARS



Dear Animal Welfare Community.

As we pass the midpoint of 2024, I want to take a moment to share some important updates about the current state of animal shelters and rescues.

On the potentially hopeful side, we've seen a decrease in community intakes, with nearly 5% fewer dogs and cats entering shelters compared to the same period last year. This translates into roughly 155,000 fewer animals coming into shelters in the first half of 2024 compared to the first half of 2023. Both stray and owner surrender numbers have declined. What the data does not show is whether the intake reduction was due to a decrease in community need or in shelter availability.

Unfortunately, the decrease in intakes is matched by a reduction in community live outcomes. So far in 2024, 2.7 million cats and dogs have experienced a community live outcome, which is almost 5% fewer than last year. So while intakes have gone down, so have outcomes, keeping the overall outcome rate the same at 92% of all intakes. This means there has been little headway made towards reducing the number of animals waiting in shelters, which requires outcome rates to increase.

Another key trend is the increase in length of stay. Despite lower intake numbers, animals are staying longer in shelters, leading to an increase of 75,000 dogs and 247,000 cats in our care so far in 2024. Across the nation, we've heard from shelters who are struggling to maintain capacity for care, and the data in this report offers some clear insights as to why there are too many animals in the sheltering system.

What our data shows is that expediting outcomes and shortening length of stay are the most crucial and effective ways to solve the bottleneck of animals stuck in the shelter system. We've heard from many organizations that they're having to work harder for every outcome and that shelters that lack resources for effectively marketing pets are struggling to find enough outcomes to keep pace with intakes.

Thank you to all of the shelters who contribute data to make this report and all of our SAC reports possible. In this difficult time, we are incredibly grateful that you put your trust into us and we hope this report will help you better understand the challenges and opportunities within your own organization.

Stephan Lile
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY - JUNE 2024



TIP: Throughout this report we have included tips to help readers better understand the data and explore it from different perspectives, providing the additional insights needed for a more complete narrative.

1

5% FEWER COMMUNITY INTAKES

Community intakes are lower than this same time last year (Jan-Jun) by almost 5%, accounting for 155k fewer dogs and cats. Both dogs and cats are contributing to the decrease in intakes.

PAGE 5

3

8% AWAITING OUTCOME (GAP)

4% of dogs and 13% of cats that have entered organizations this year have not had an outcome. Combined, the gap is 8%, resulting in an increase of 75k dogs and 247k cats in population.

PAGE 16

2

LIVE OUTCOME RATE MAINTAINED

2.7 million cats and dogs had a community live outcome so far in 2024, which is almost 5% (130k) fewer than the same months of 2023. Live outcomes are decreasing at the same rate as intakes, maintaining 82% of all intakes being a live outcome.

PAGES 12 & 13

4

ADOPTION RATES SAME FOR DOGS, INCREASING FOR CATS

2k (almost 4%) fewer dogs and cats were adopted so far in 2024 compared to 2023. However, adoption rates for dogs are staying the same at 56% of total intakes, while cat adoption rates are increasing.

PAGE 12



While intakes are lower than last year, animals are experiencing longer stays and **populations are rising**.

So far this year, **322K MORE** pets have entered the system than left.

A smiling woman with short brown hair is holding a small, fluffy brown dog in a white mesh basket. The dog is looking directly at the camera with its mouth slightly open. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green foliage.

Intakes

SHELTER ANIMALS COUNT 2024 MID-YEAR REPORT

In the 1st half of 2024,

3,118,000

dogs and cats have entered shelters and rescues nationwide.

↓ **4.8%**

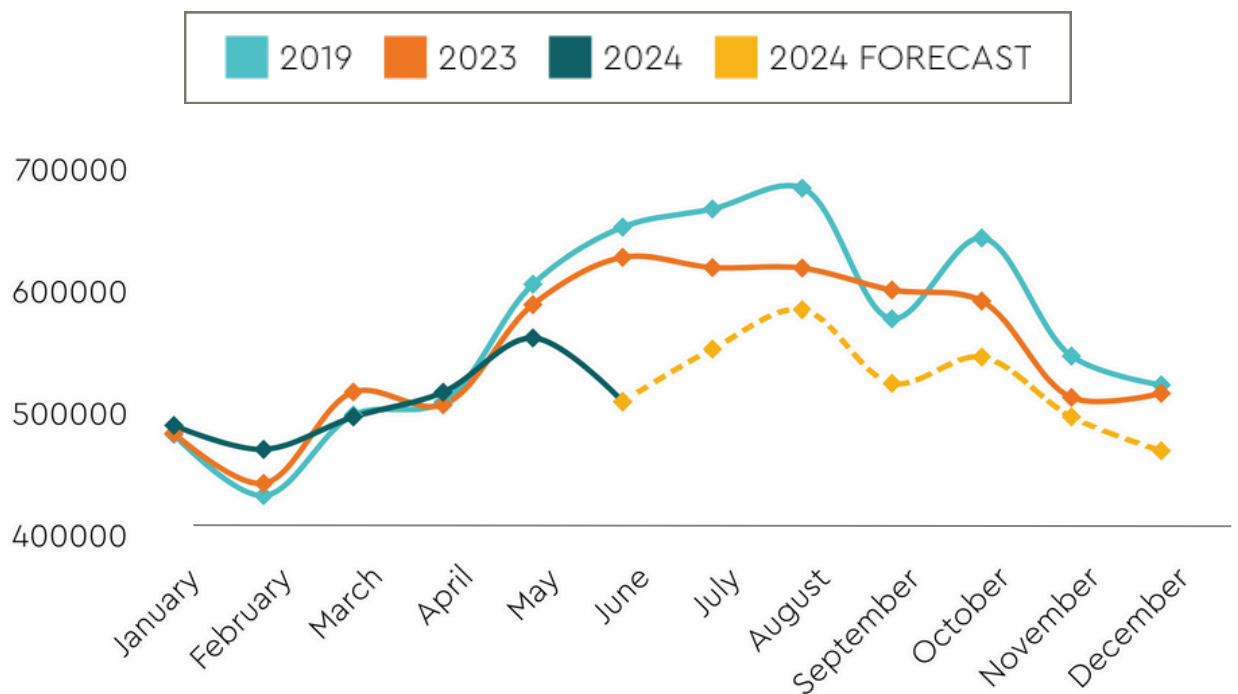
(155,000 fewer animals)
COMPARED TO 2023

↓ **5.6%**

(184,000 fewer animals)
COMPARED TO 2019

COMMUNITY INTAKES* YTD 2024

Community intakes are down by almost 5% compared to the same period last year, accounting for 155,000 fewer dogs and cats. Both dogs and cats contribute equally to this decrease, with intake numbers continuing to be lower than 2019 levels by 184,000 animals. Current forecasts indicate that intakes will remain lower than 2023 for the remainder of the year.



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THE NATIONAL DATABASE

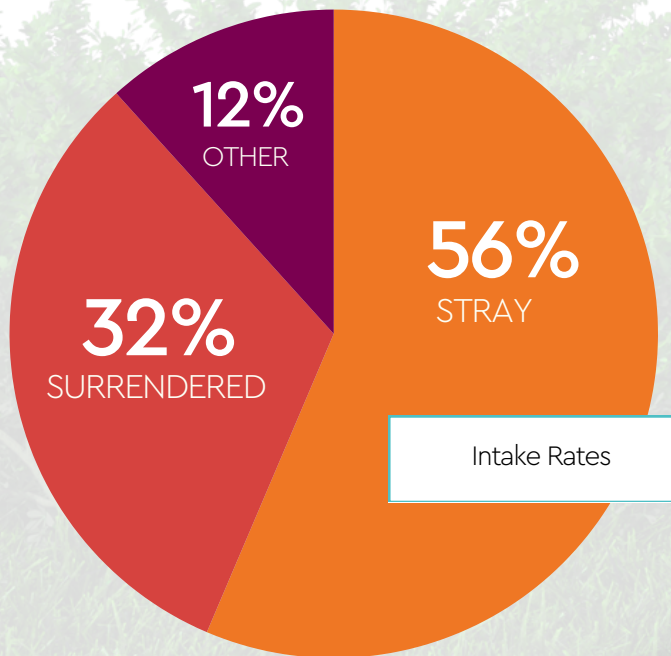
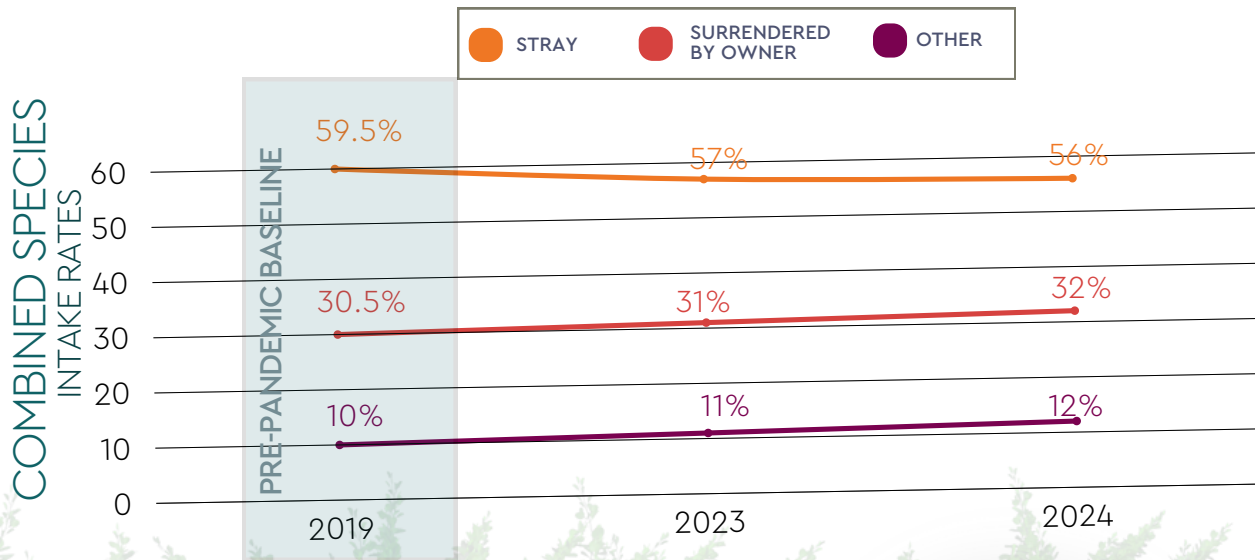
*Community intakes tally all intakes except transfers to ensure a clear count of animals received directly from the community, avoiding double counting during total intake calculations.

COMMUNITY INTAKES

THE NUMBER OF STRAY DOG AND CAT INTAKES decreased overall by 6% (121,000 dogs/cats) compared to 2023. In the first six months of 2024, strays make up 56% of all intakes coming from community sources - down from 57% in 2023 and 59.5% in 2019. Owner surrender rates overall have increased from 30.5% in 2019 to 32% in 2024. This increase is being driven by cats.



TIP: Throughout this report, we include both the change in the number of animals and what percentage increase/decrease that represents. We also include rates and rate changes, which allows us to see the change in occurrence, independent of the actual numbers. (For example: there has been a 5% decrease of community intakes, which equates to 155,000 fewer cats/dogs, while the intake rates on this page show the proportion of intake reasons, regardless of fluctuations in total intakes).



Intake Rates



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1,553,000 DOGS

ENTERED SHELTERS AND RESCUES IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2024

↓ **4.4%** COMPARED TO 2023

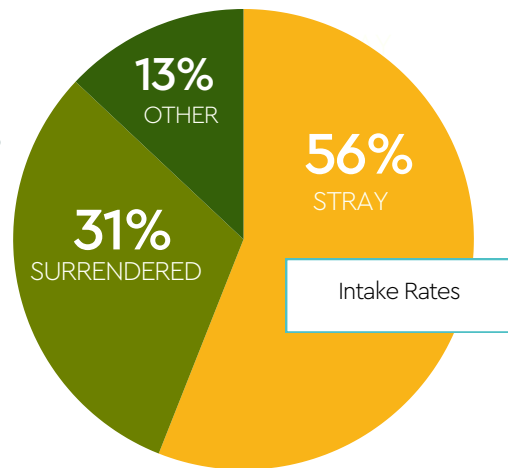
↓ **8.5%** COMPARED TO 2019

DOG INTAKES IN 2024:

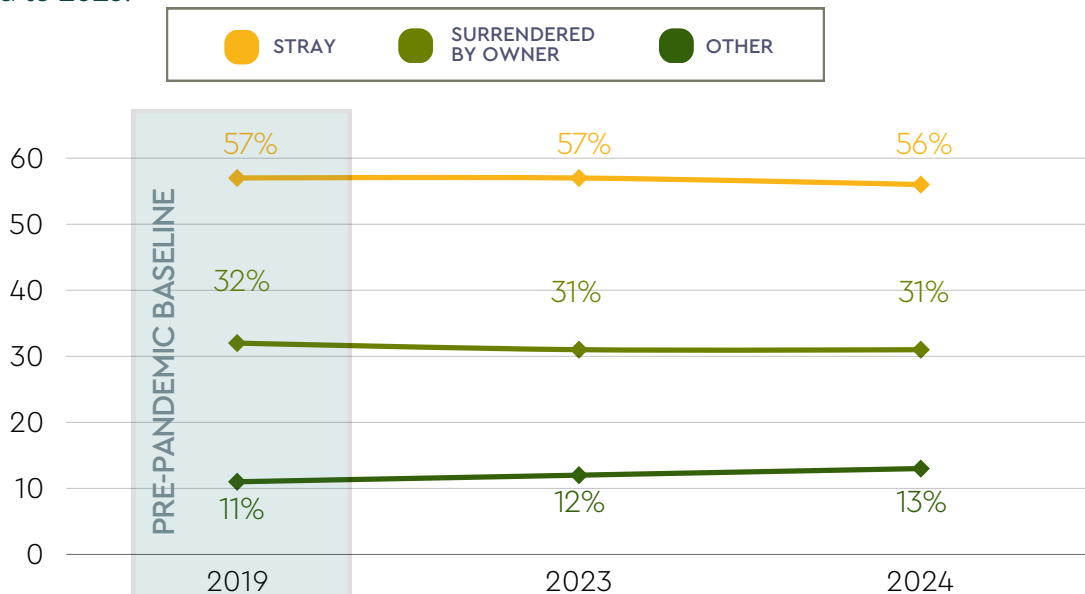
The number of dog intakes from community sources have decreased by 4% (71,000 dogs) compared to January-June 2023, and are nearly 9% lower than in 2019 (145,000 dogs). This decline is due to fewer strays and owner surrenders.

The number of stray intakes dropped by 6% (55,000 dogs), now making up 56% of community intakes. The number of owner surrenders decreased by 4% (22,000 dogs), but maintained a community intake rate of 31%.

Meanwhile, other intakes, such as dogs seized or born-in-care, have risen by 3%, adding 7,000 more dogs compared to 2023.



CANINE INTAKE TYPES INTAKE RATES





1,565,000 CATS

ENTERED SHELTERS AND RESCUES IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2024

↓ **5.2%** COMPARED TO 2023

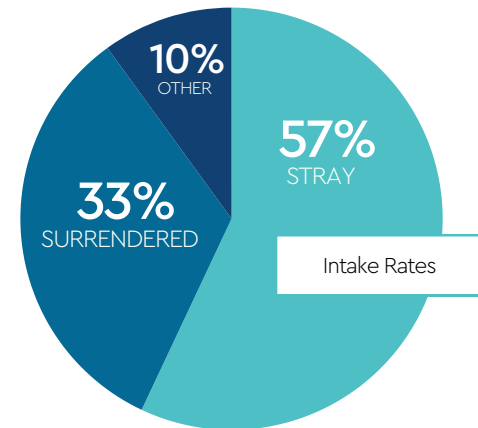
↓ **2.5%** COMPARED TO 2019

CAT INTAKES IN 2024:

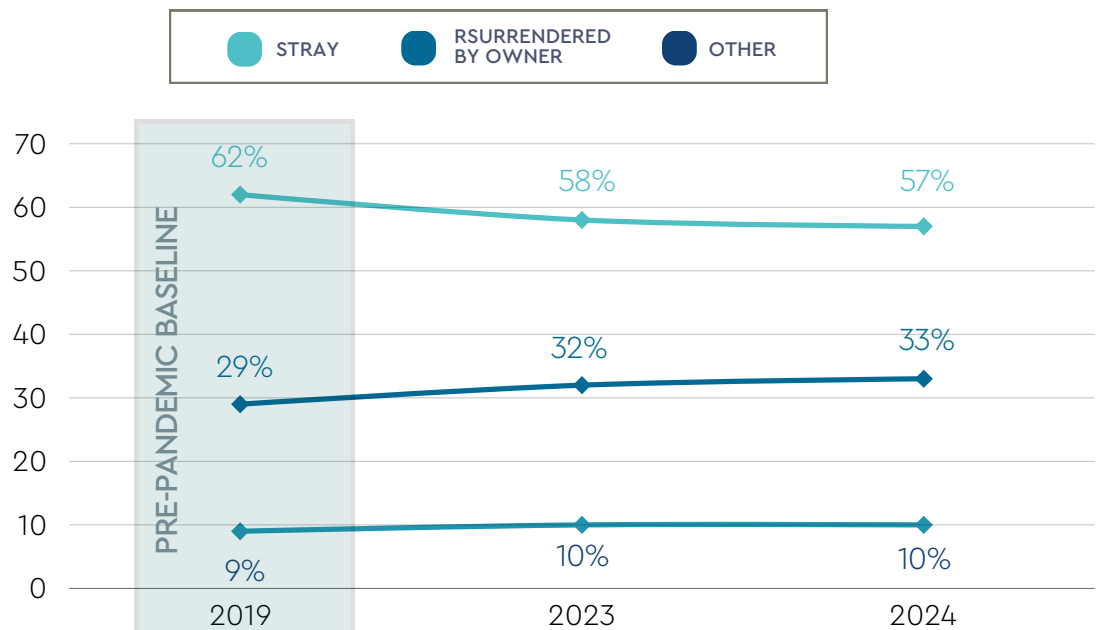
In the first half of 2024, the number of cat intakes from community sources decreased by 5% (85,000 fewer cats) compared to 2023 and 2.5% compared to 2019 levels (40,000 fewer cats).

This decline was primarily driven by a nearly 7% decrease in the number of stray intakes. The number of owner surrendered cats has also decreased by 2% from 2023.

When looking at all community intakes, the rate of owner surrendered cats has increased, comprising 33% of all community intakes in 2024 (compared to 29% in 2019).



FELINE INTAKE TYPES INTAKE RATES



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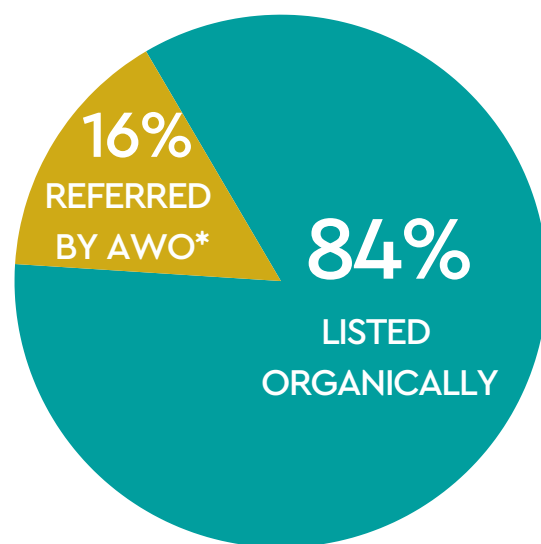
BONUS INSIGHTS:

via Rehome by

SUPPORTED Adopt a Pet SELF-REHOMING

Supported self-rehoming is a way for pet owners to directly find a new home for their pet, outside of the animal sheltering system. From January-June 2024, approximately 1 out of 5 of these would-be owner surrenders resulted in an adoption thus far and almost 10% of the original pet owners ended up choosing to keep their pets instead of rehoming through any channel.

86,000
profiles created
(JAN-JUN 2024)



*AWO = Animal Welfare Organization (shelter/rescue)

↓ 5%

(11,000 fewer animals)
COMPARED TO 2023

...of profiles with outcomes:



31%

OUTCOMES
RECORDED

(same in 2023)



61%

PETS
REHOMED

(51% in 2023)



1 in 4

KEPT BY
OWNER

(1 in 3 in 2023)



13%

SHELTER
INTAKE

(same in 2023)



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Outcomes

SHELTER ANIMALS COUNT 2024 MID-YEAR REPORT



In the 1st half of 2024, **3,068,000** dogs and cats had a COMMUNITY OUTCOME (excluding transfers)



This is a decrease of 148,000 outcomes from 2023 (71,000 fewer compared to 2019) driven by the decrease in overall outcomes for dogs.

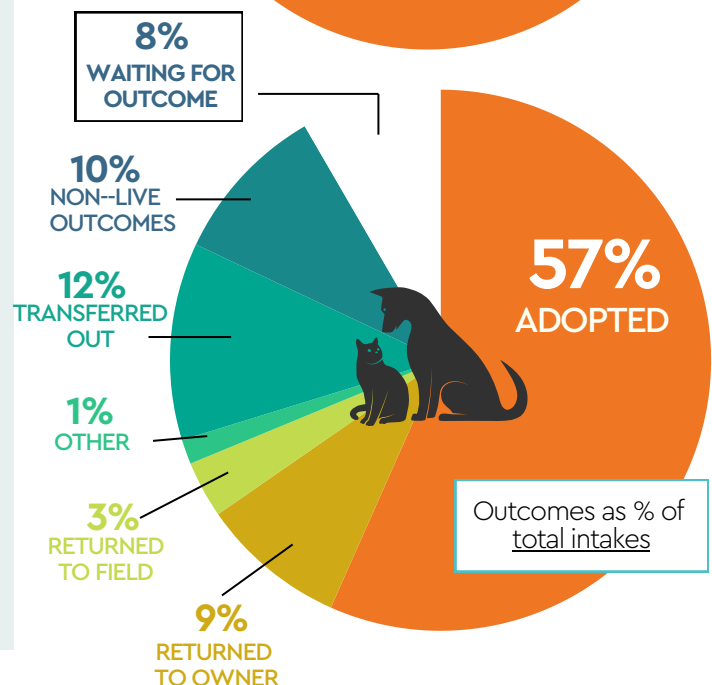
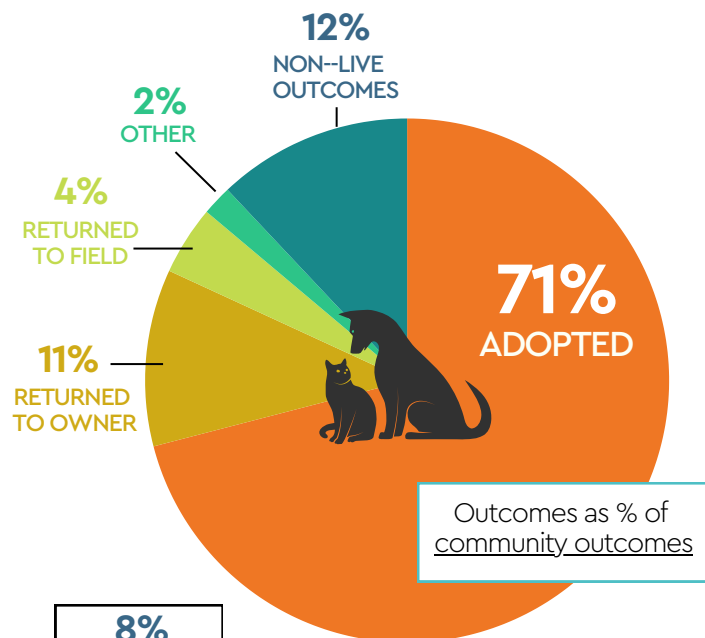


2 WAYS TO LOOK AT THE DATA

The top graph shows the outcome type rates based on all of the community outcomes that occurred. These percentages can be used to calculate how many animals were represented in each piece of the pie, out of all of the community outcomes that occurred (3.068M).

The bottom graph shows the status of all cat/dog intakes that occurred, the outcomes that have occurred, including transfers out, and also accounting for the percentage of animals that are still waiting for an outcome (this is the gap that is resulting in high shelter populations: 8% more animals have arrived than have left). These percentages can be used to calculate how many animals were represented in each piece of the pie, out of all of the total intakes that occurred (3.843M on pg. 17).

For example: Of the 3.068M animals who have been outcome'd, 71% were adopted (2,178,280 cats/dogs) and at the same time, of the 3,843,000 intakes (pg 17), 57% were adopted... and 8% are still waiting in the shelter.





In the 1st half of 2024,

2,699,000

DOGS & CATS

had a community LIVE outcome

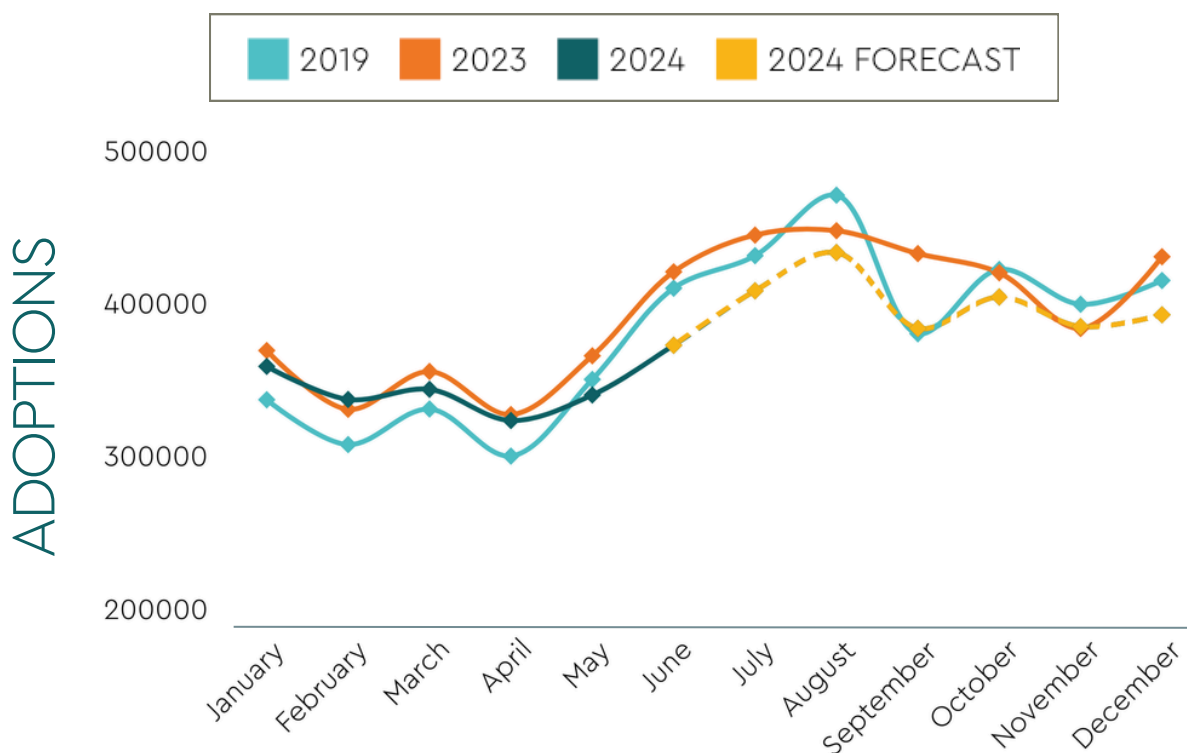
↓ **4.6%** COMPARED TO 2023

↑ **0.9%** COMPARED TO 2019

ADOPTIONS IN 2024 ARE ON THE DECLINE

In 2024, there were 82,000 fewer dog and cat adoptions compared to 2023, a drop of nearly 4% for the species combined.

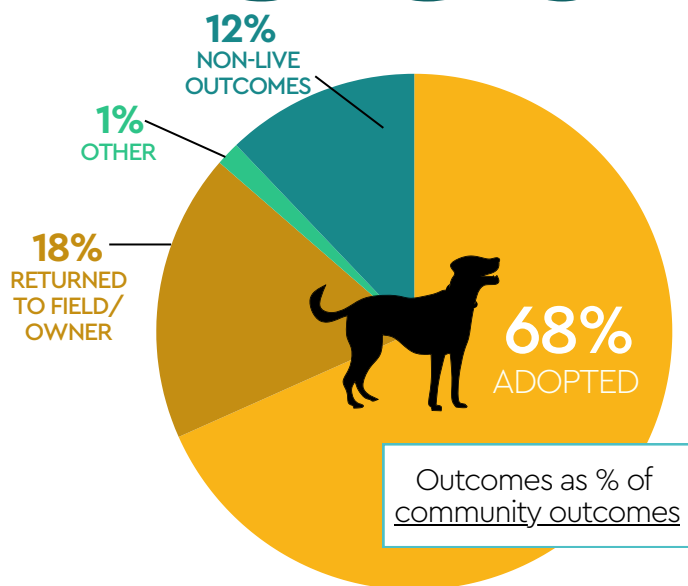
Dog adoptions decreased by 5% (59,000 fewer) compared to both 2023 and 2019. Cat adoptions have fallen by 2% (23,000 fewer) since 2023, but have increased by 17% (157,000 total) compared to 2019.



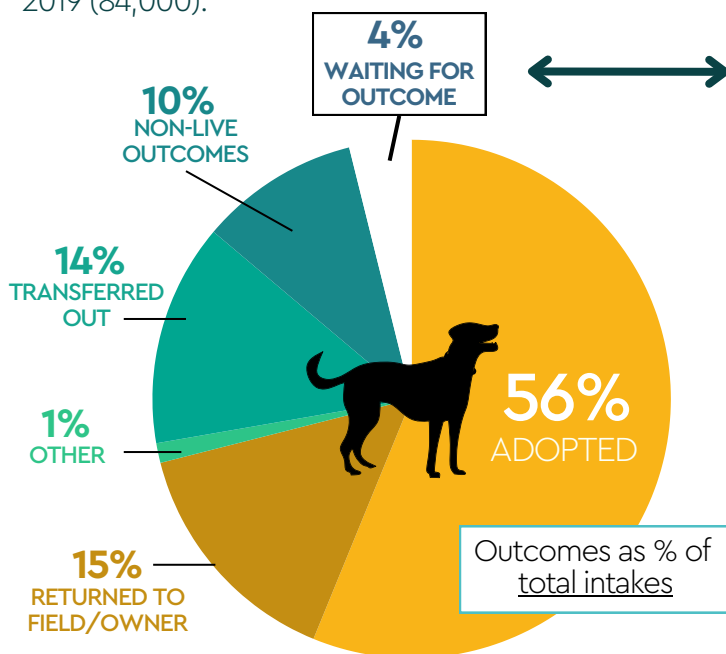
1,600,000

DOGS

have had a community outcome in 2024.*

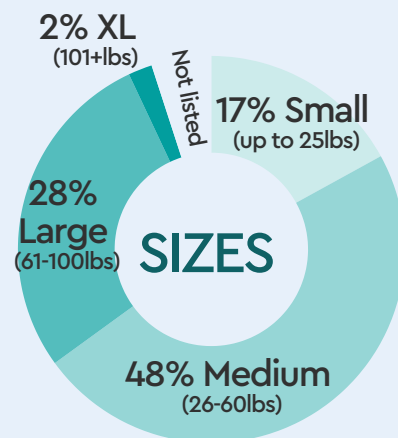
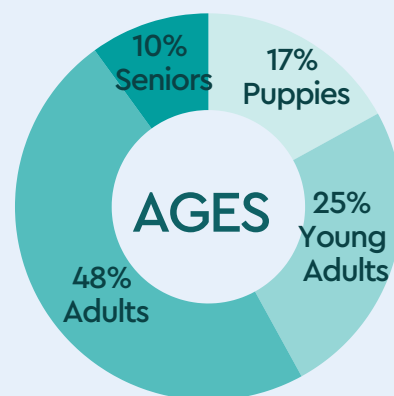


89,000 fewer dogs (-6%) had a community live outcome compared to the same time period of 2023, and 144,000 fewer than in 2019 (-9%). In 2019, dogs accounted for 58% of all community live outcomes and now they only account for 52%. Additionally, 8% fewer dogs were returned to owners in 2024 compared to 2023 (25,000), a 23% decrease from 2019 (84,000).



What kinds of dogs are in shelters?

from [Adopt a Pet](#)



150+

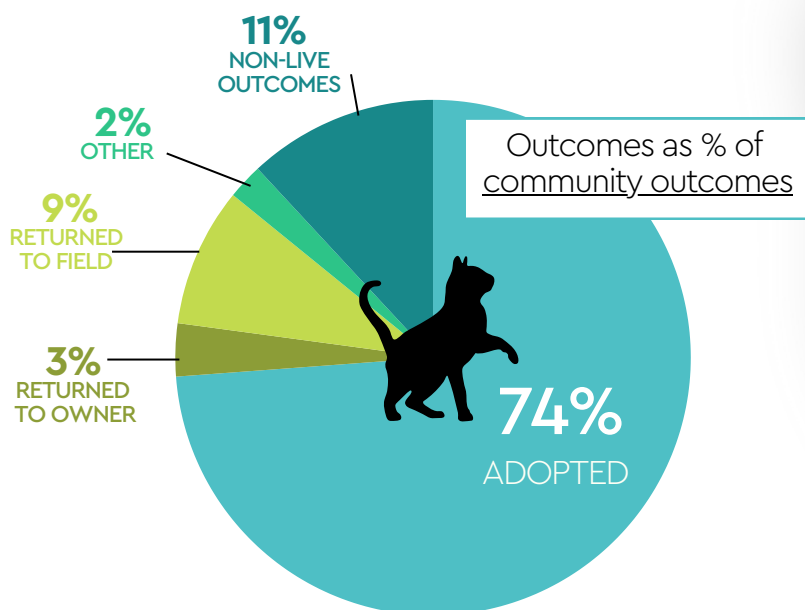
Purebreds & Hybrids

*Community outcome totals do not include transfers to ensure a clear count of animals receiving a final outcome in their community, avoiding double counting.

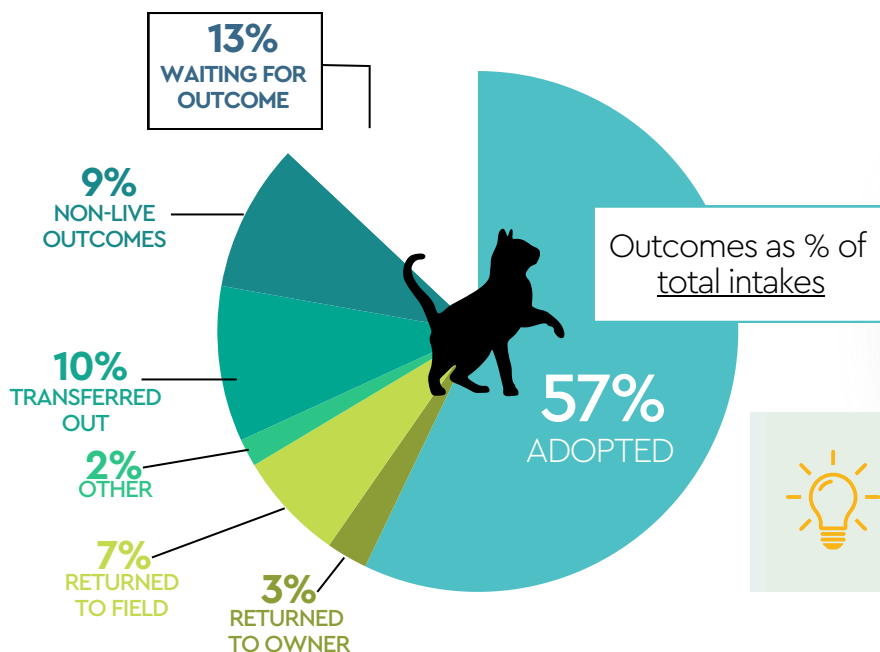
1,468,000

CATS

have had a community outcome* in 2024.



41,000 fewer (3%) cats experienced a live outcome in the first half of 2024 compared to the same period in 2023. Compared to 2019, however, this reflects an increase of 168,000 live outcomes (+15%). Almost 11% fewer cats were returned to the field in 2024 compared to 2023 (15,000 fewer), though this is 9,000 more than in 2019.



13% of cats awaiting an outcome is consistent with seasonal trends.

*Community outcome totals do not include transfers to ensure a clear count of animals receiving a final outcome in their community, avoiding double counting.

TRANSFERS

In the 1st half of 2024,

726,000
DOGS & CATS

transferred **IN** to sheltering organizations

↓ **8.0%**
COMPARED
TO 2023

↓ **8.0%**
COMPARED
TO 2019

TRANSFERS STILL DECREASING

The animal transfer system has struggled to rebound since the pandemic and the number of animals being transferred among organizations continues to decrease in 2024.

IN: Compared to 2023, there were almost 8% fewer pets transferred into organizations (41,000 fewer dogs and 20,000 fewer cats). Transfers in can also occur from non-sheltering sources, so in some cases, transfers in are the primary intake type for a new animal entering the system.

OUT: Transfers out represent animals already in the sheltering system and therefore are the best indicator of animals moving within the system. Transfers out have decreased by 63,000 dogs and cats (12%) compared to 2023 and 33% (227,000) since 2019.



In the 1st half of 2024,

453,000
DOGS & CATS

transferred **OUT** of sheltering organizations

↓ **12.2%**
COMPARED
TO 2023

↓ **33.3%**
COMPARED
TO 2019



Understanding the data of animals moving within the transfer system is complicated. In many cases, we have excluded transfers throughout this report so we could analyze the intakes and outcomes that are occurring from the community and avoid double-counting.

In the 1st half of 2024,

369,000 DOGS & CATS had a NON-LIVE outcomes

↓ **5.0%**

(18,000 fewer animals)
COMPARED TO 2023

↓ **21%**

(95,000 fewer animals)
COMPARED TO 2019

DOG NON-LIVE OUTCOMES

- ↓ 2023: 1% (3,000) lower
- ↑ 2019: 8% (14,000) higher

CAT NON-LIVE OUTCOMES

- ↓ 2023: 8% down (16k)
- ↓ 2019: 38% down (109k)



Only 92% of cats and dogs that have entered shelters between Jan-Jun 2024 have had an outcome of any type, leaving an 8% gap.

10%
Non-Live

8%
Awaiting
Outcome

82%
LIVE
OUTCOMES

Outcomes as % of
total intakes



Looking at just the pets who had an outcome, 88% of those outcomes were live and 12% were non-live.

12%
Non-live

88%
LIVE
OUTCOMES

Outcomes as % of
community outcomes

Non-live outcomes species breakdown

So far this year, dogs have accounted for 53% of non-live outcomes, marking an increase from 51% in 2023 and 39% in 2019. This reflects a rise in dog-related non-live outcomes over the years.



61%

39%

2019

49%

51%

2023

47%

53%

2024



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THE NATIONAL DATABASE

STATS AT A GLANCE

JAN-JUN 2024

INTAKES

JAN-JUN 2024 TOTALS /
% CHANGE FROM 2023

 STRAY / LOST	 870K  6%	 889K  7%
 OWNER SURRENDER	 481K  4%	 513K  2%
 OTHER INTAKE (e.g. seized, born in care)	 202K  3%	 163K  4%
 TRANSFER IN	 393K  9%	 333K  6%
TOTAL INTAKES (includes transfers in)	 1.95M  5%	 1.9M  5%

OUTCOMES

JAN-JUN 2024 TOTALS /
% CHANGE FROM 2023

 ADOPTION	 1.09M  5%	 1.08M  2%
 RETURN TO OWNER / FIELD	 289K  8%	 177K  7%
 OTHER LIVE OUTCOME	 24K  18%	 33K  9%
 TRANSFER OUT	 270K  10%	 183K  15%
 EUTHANASIA	 172K  1%	 125K  10%
 DIED / LOST IN CARE	 22K  3%	 50K  5%
TOTAL OUTCOMES (includes transfers out)	 1.87M  6%	 1.65M  5%



GAP

 75K

 247K

So far this year, **322K MORE** pets have entered the system than left
















JAN-JUN 2024

STATS AT A GLANCE

OUTCOMES % COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

2024 VS. 2023



2024 VS. 2023

 ADOPTION	 68%	68%	 74%	73%
 RETURN TO OWNER / FIELD	 18%	18%	 12%	13%
 OTHER LIVE OUTCOME	 1%	2%	 2%	2%
 EUTHANASIA	 11%	10%	 8%	9%
 DIED / LOST IN CARE	 1%	1%	 3%	3%

COMMUNITY LIVE OUTCOMES

 88%	88%	 88%	88%
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NON-LIVE OUTCOMES



















 12%	12%	 12%	12%
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OUTCOMES % TOTAL INTAKES



May not equal 100% due to animals without outcomes

2024 VS. 2023



2024 VS. 2023

 ADOPTION	 56%	56%	 57%	55%
 RETURN TO OWNER / FIELD	 15%	15%	 9%	10%
 OTHER LIVE OUTCOME	 1%	1%	 2%	2%
 TRANSFER OUT	 14%	15%	 10%	11%
 EUTHANASIA	 9%	8%	 7%	7%
 DIED / LOST IN CARE	 1%	1%	 3%	3%

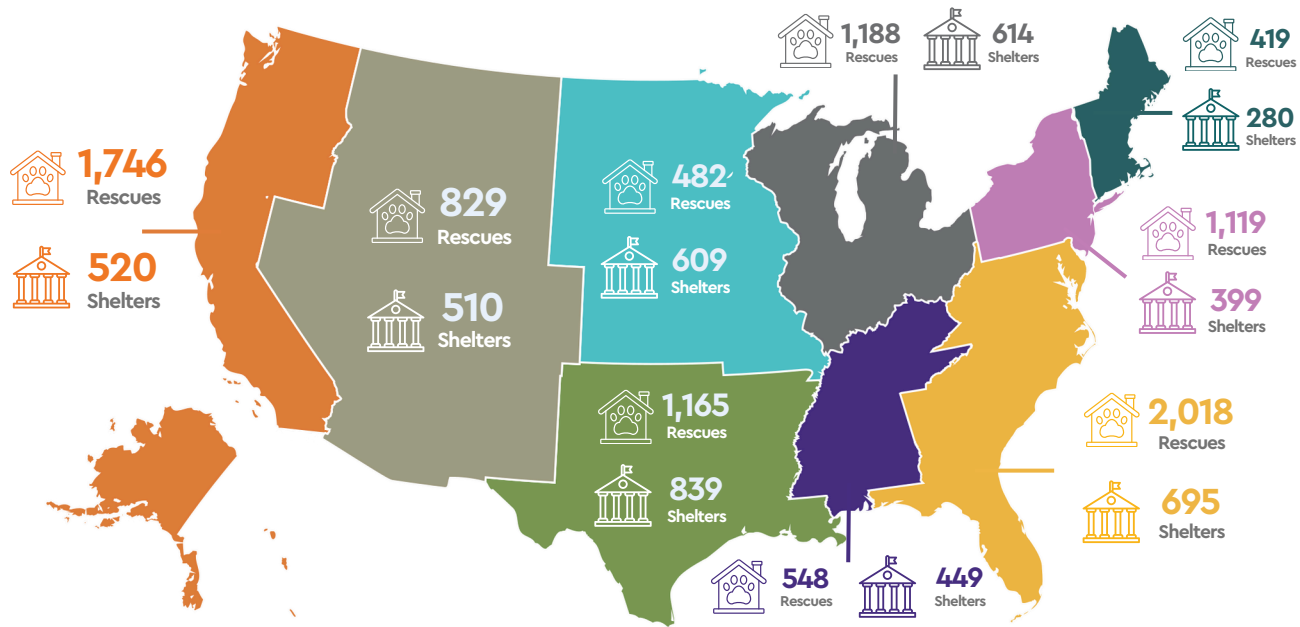
TOTAL LIVE OUTCOMES

 86%	87%	 78%	77%
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NON-LIVE OUTCOMES

 10%	9%	 9%	10%
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There are
14,429
 animal sheltering organizations
 operating in the U.S. in 2024.

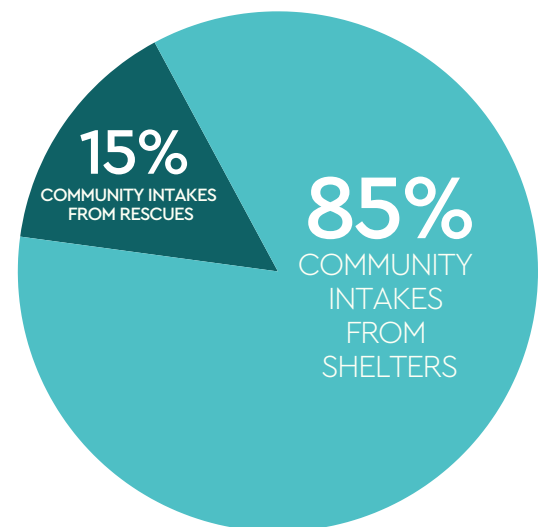


4,915 shelters

9,514 rescues

The majority (85%) of community intakes occur in shelters, with 15% coming from rescues.

Shelters are brick-and-mortar organizations, whereas rescues tend to be foster-based organizations.





About Shelter Animals Count

Shelter Animals Count is a neutral, independent non-profit organization entrusted with analyzing and sharing animal sheltering data to provide crucial information and insights to improve the lives of pets and the people who love them. Each month, 200+ data points are collected on all organization types and all species, for both sheltering and community services organizations in all 50 U.S. states, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Canada.

Definitions

Community Intakes

Total intakes excluding transfers in to show actual community activity, and avoid double counting intakes when aggregating. Includes strays, owner surrenders, and other intakes (e.g. seizures, born in care)

Community Live Outcomes

Total live outcomes excluding transfers out.

Community Outcomes

Total outcomes (live and non-live) excluding transfers out.

Intake Rate

The percentage of community intakes that are a certain intake type.

Non-live Outcomes

Died in care (neonatal loss, illness, etc.), lost in care, and shelter euthanasia.

Outcome Rate of Total Intakes

The percentage of total intakes that resulted in a certain outcome type. Transfers out are included as an outcome and Transfers in are included as an intake in this calculation

Outcome Rate

The percentage of community outcomes that were a certain outcome type.

Population Change (aka Awaiting Outcome or Gap)

$(\text{Community Intakes} + \text{Transfers in}) - (\text{Community Live Outcomes} + \text{Transfers out} + \text{Non-live outcomes})$ = the number of animals that have entered and not had an outcome. In the specified time period, this is the number that the population in care has increased (positive number) or decreased (negative number).

Total Intakes

All intakes including strays, owner surrenders, other intakes (e.g. seizures, born in care, and transfers in)

Total Live Outcomes

Adoption, return to owner (RTO), return to field, transfer, and other live outcomes.

Total Outcomes

Includes all outcomes including adoptions, return to owner/field, other live outcomes, transfers out, shelter euthanasia, died in care/lost in care

Shelter Animals Count's Estimation Model

Data estimation models are a common tool used by organizations in all business sectors and are a best practice for population/census-type data. Using intake and outcome data from over 6,000 organizations nationwide, SAC developed a peer-reviewed estimation model that includes representative data from all animal sheltering organization types and sizes in all U.S. states and territories. Data was analyzed separately to account for organizational differences, and then combined for the national numbers shared in this report. For more information, visit <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/2024-mid-year-report>.

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