



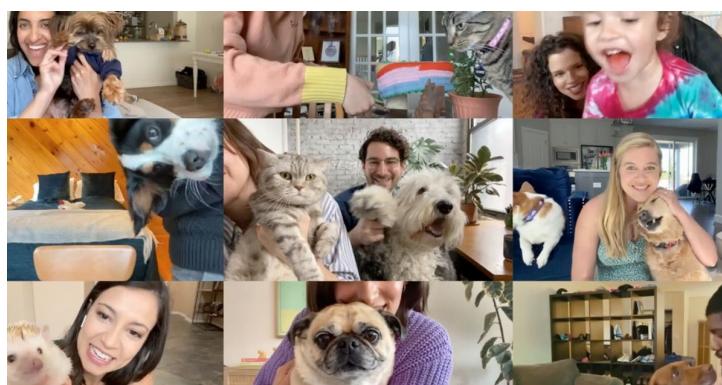
## Pets, Mental Health and COVID-19

As lockdowns commenced across the world pet shelters emptied as people rushed to acquire pets. There could be many reasons for this spike in pet ownership, companionship, boredom or perhaps taking a decision that has been put off in the past. Research conducted prior to the pandemic on the relationship between pets and mental health did not show consistent results.

### What we did

This study was a part of a larger survey based project which involved 9 surveys being completed by the same people between March 2020 and May 2022.

The data for the current survey was collected across 3 surveys between March and June 2020 and collected information from over 1,400 people.



### What we've found so far

Work done so far includes drawing together the results of the more than 20 articles published in the last 3 years on the relationship between pets and mental health. Both our data and the wider literature suggest that the effect of having a pet on mental health is complex and depends very much on the person's whole of life situation. Having a pet, particularly a pet that requires a comparatively large amount of care and attention such as a dog or a horse, may add to a person's psychological burden, or conversely may reduce anxiety and stress in the household if the pet is not perceived as an added burden.

Interestingly in both our and others' research the results collected through asking open ended text based questions showed more positive attitudes towards pet ownership than questions that required only a numeric response. This suggests that the surveys used so far may not be asking all the right questions.

#### Want to learn more?

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