How Canadians Feed, Shop, and Spend on Their Pets

June 2026

Make better decisions, faster, with access to rapid insights at every stage of the consumer journey.

CADDLE
Voice of the Consumer ™

in Collaboration with

petvalu

About This Study

Caddle surveyed Canadians from coast to coast to understand how pet owners feed, shop for, and spend on their dogs and cats. Incidence and market-landscape findings are based on a representative sample of approximately n=10,000 Canadian adults. The main study reflects n = 2,184 cat and dog owners who are responsible for pet purchasing, with Dog-owner (n = 1,417) and Cat-owner (n = 1,380) segments analyzed separately where noted. Surveys were conducted in May 2026 using Caddle's mobile platform and online panel. Data is weighted to be representative of the Canadian population.
All data presented is owned by Caddle.

Key Findings

01 Pets are family, and the spending proves it

87% of owners consider their pet a full family member. That bond makes spending resilient: when budgets tighten, owners cut dining out, clothing, and self-care long before the pet, and 80% expect to maintain or grow pet spending in the year ahead.

02 Price leads perception, but rarely drives brand changes

Price/value is the number one factor in choosing pet food (51%), though vet recommendations and functional benefits matter too. That said, price is rarely the driving force for why an owner may switch brands.

03 Specialty leads, but owners are omnichannel

Pet specialty stores are the most common main channel (39%), and a cluster of specialty banners (Pet Valu, Mondou, Global Pet Foods) leads the segment at 43%. Yet shoppers are highly omnichannel, with every channel over-indexing on secondary trips, and 1 in 3 tried a new channel this year.

04 Online is routine and auto-ship builds loyalty

More than 4 in 10 buy pet food online regularly and Auto-ship has reached 41% of owners.
45% would take their business elsewhere if their retailer dropped Auto-ship, making subscription a powerful retention lever.

05 The vet anchors trust; AI is the emerging assistant

The veterinarian remains the most trusted advisor by far (62%). AI is an early but rising habit: 1 in 3 owners have used it, mainly for diet and health questions. They treat it as a complement, not a replacement, with nearly 7 in 10 verifying its advice.

06 Owners invest in wellbeing, and the category renews itself

Owners invest well beyond the basics: spending on experiences is mainstream (71%) and most see pet insurance as worth the cost (58%). Commitment runs deep, 75% would welcome another pet after a loss, sustaining a self-renewing market.

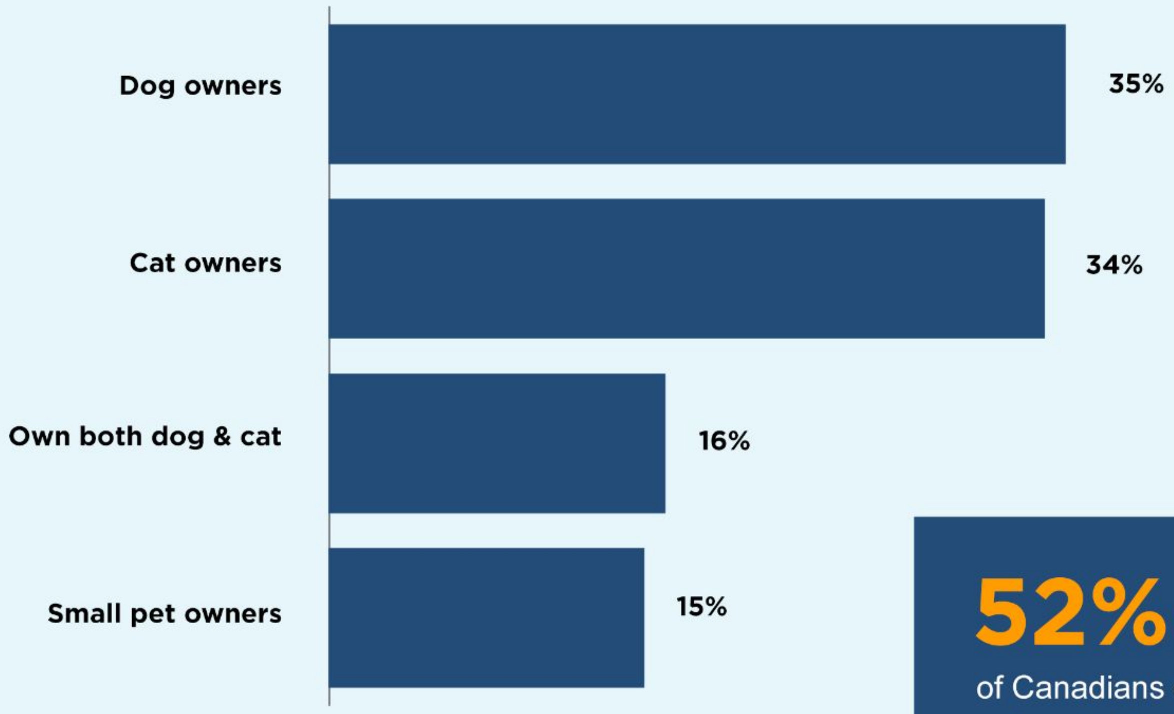
The Canadian Pet Landscape: Pet Ownership, Regionality, and Passion

Who owns pets, where they live, and how deeply they care

More than half of Canadian households own a dog or a cat, and for most of them, the pet is family. This section sizes the market and profiles the pet owner before we follow them through their shopping journey.

More than half of Canadian households own a dog or a cat

About 1 in 3 Canadians own a dog (35%) and a similar share own a cat (34%), with 16% owning both. Together, just over half of households have a cat or dog, a market consistent with national benchmarks.



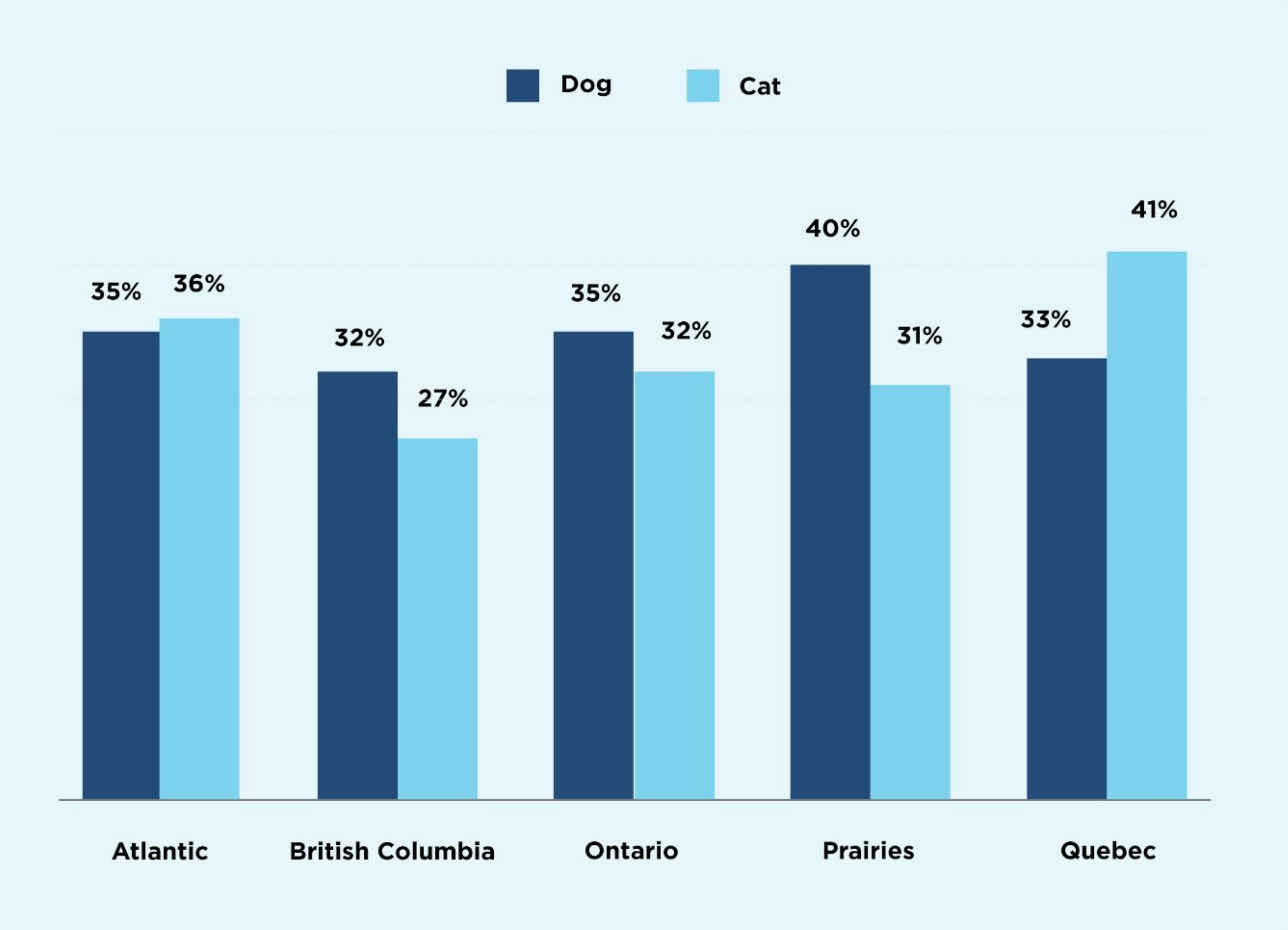
52%
of Canadians own a cat or dog*

*Combined dog-or-cat ownership; 52% of Canadians own a cat/dog and are the purchase decision-maker. Benchmark: Canadian Animal Health Institute reports ~41% of households own a dog and ~37% own a cat (2024).

Pet ownership incidence among Canadian adults
Base: Representative sample of Canadian adults, n ≈ 10,000

Where you live shapes what you own: Prairies skew dog, Quebec skews cat

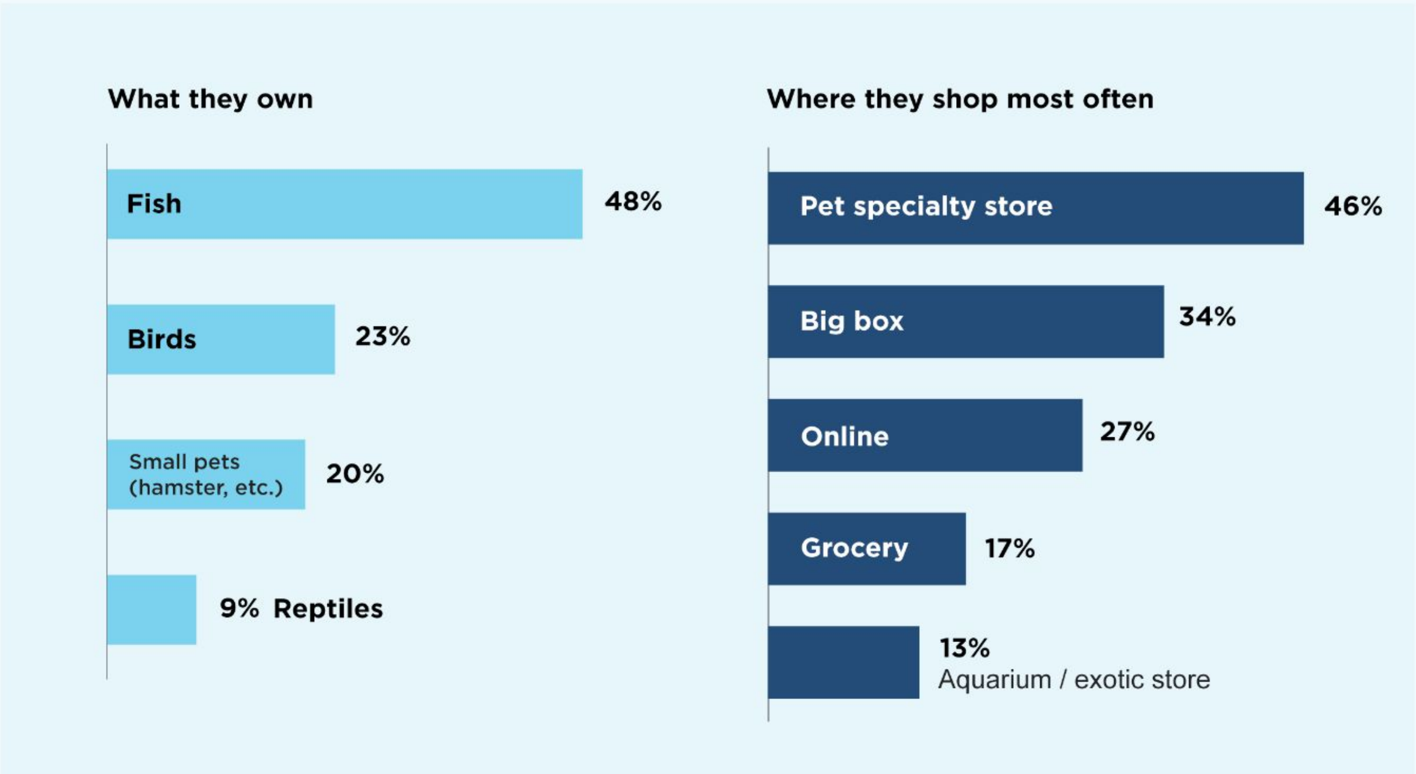
Dog ownership peaks in the Prairies at 40%, while Quebec is Canada's clear cat market at 41%. These regional patterns should steer assortment and local marketing.



Pet ownership incidence by region
Base: Representative sample of Canadian adults, n ≈ 10,000

A 15% niche worth watching: small pet owners lean to specialty

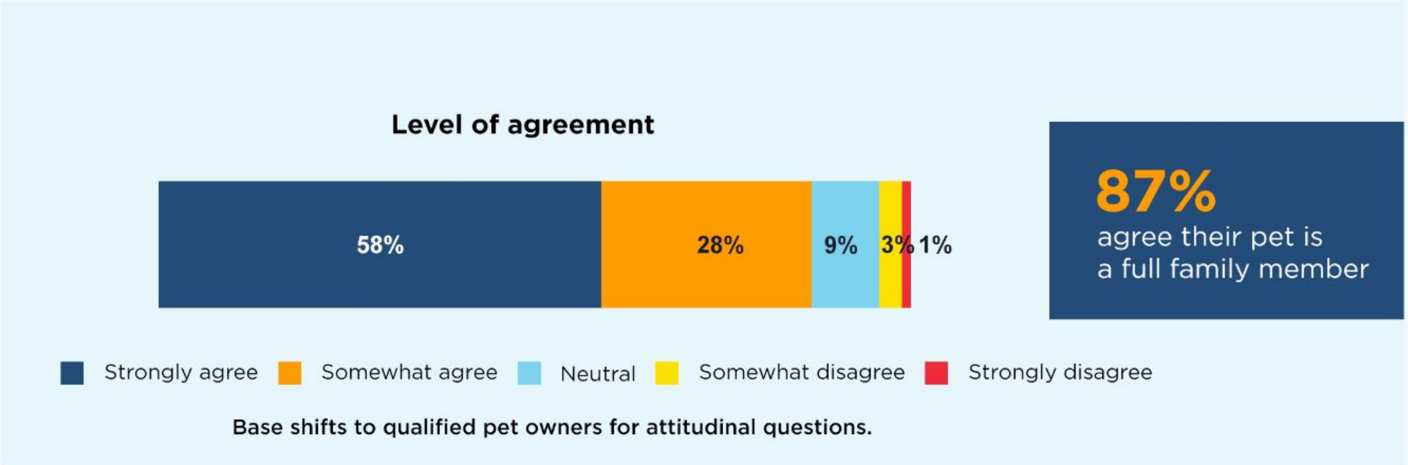
15% of Canadians own a small pet, most often fish (48%) or birds (23%). Nearly half buy their supplies at a pet specialty store, the channel's strongest ownership tilt.



Small pet ownership, types owned, and main purchasing channel (Q6 / Q7 / Q8)
Base: Small pet owners, among Canadian adults

For 9 in 10 owners, the pet is family

87% of owners agree their pet is a full family member, and 58% feel that strongly. This bond is what keeps pet spending resilient through the rest of this report.



Q35 – "My pet is a full family member, like a child" Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Spending & Economic Pressure: What Pet Parents Spend

What pet parents spend, and what they would sacrifice first

Pet spending is proving remarkably durable. Even under cost pressure, Canadians protect the pet budget and trim almost everything else first, and most expect to spend the same or more in the year ahead.

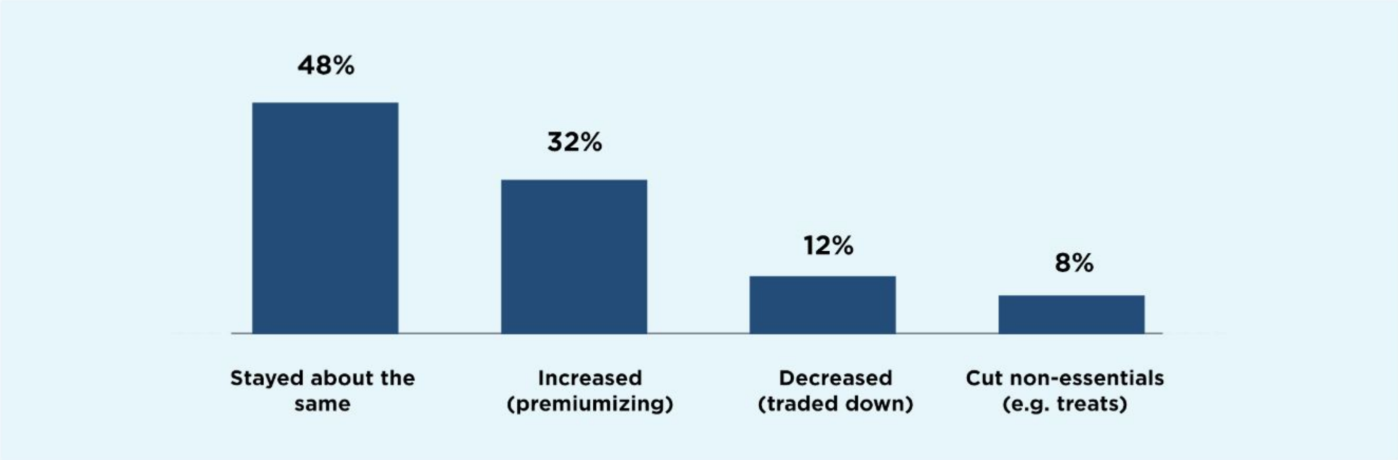
The typical household spends $50 - $99 a month on pet essentials

Monthly spend on food, treats, and litter centres on the $50 - $99 band (32%). More than a third of households spend $100 or more each month, pointing to a sizeable premium tier.

Q27 – Approximately how much do you spend monthly on pet food, treats, and litter?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Spending is holding firm, and 1 in 3 are trading up

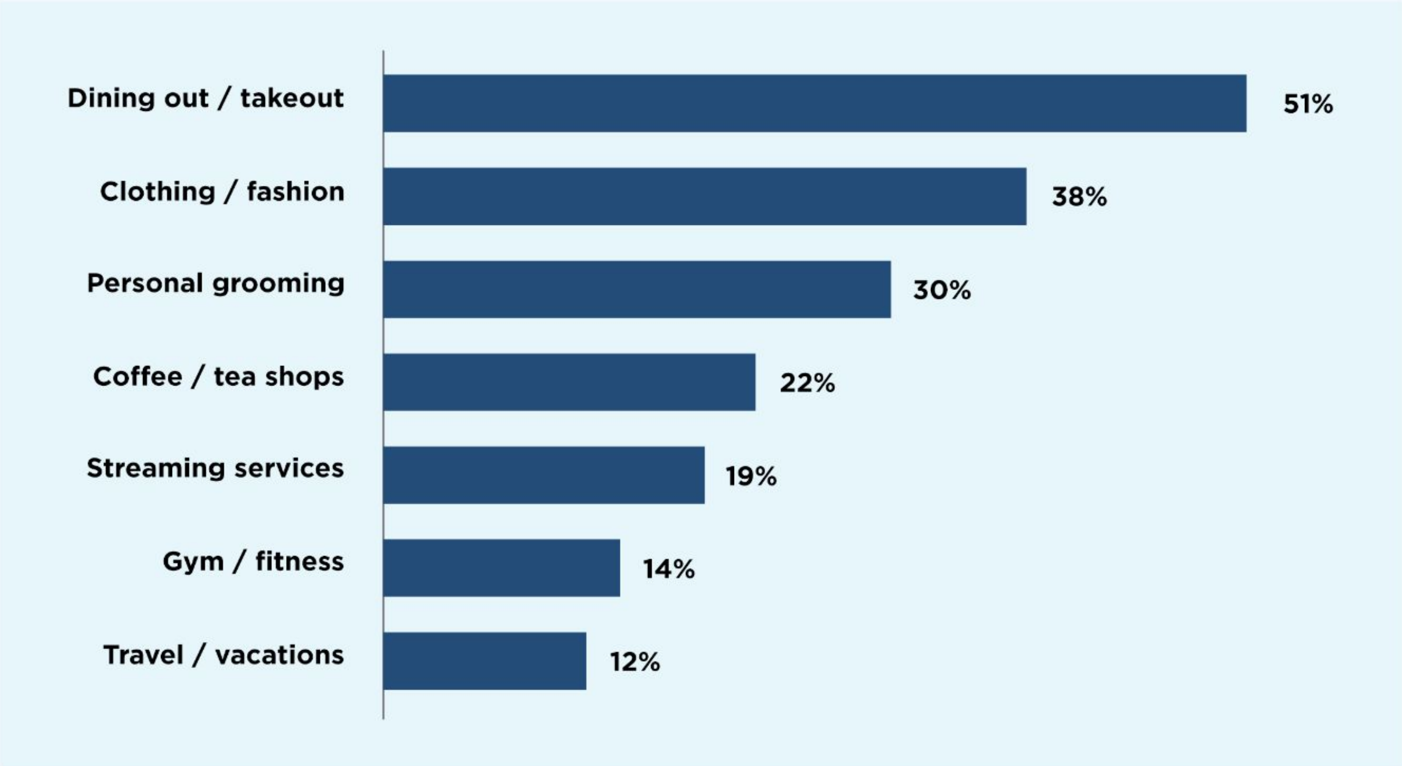
Nearly half of owners kept spending steady over the past year, and 32% increased it, often by premiumizing. Only about 1 in 5 traded down or cut non-essentials, a sign of a resilient category.



Q28 – In the past year, how has your pet spending changed?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

When budgets tighten, the pet is the last thing to go

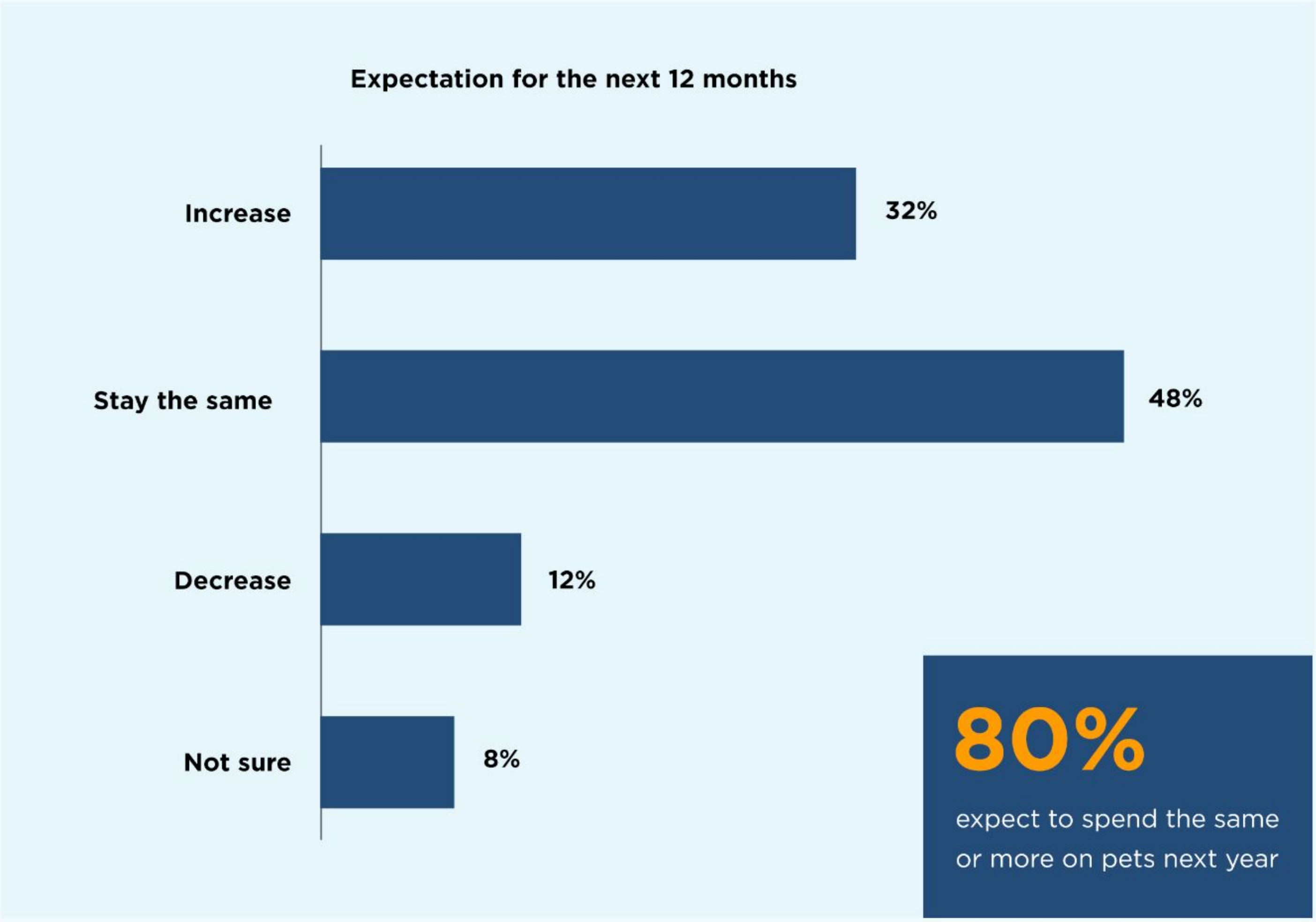
Asked what they would cut before the pet, owners point first to dining out (51%), clothing (38%), and self-care (30%). The pet budget is protected ahead of nearly every discretionary category.



Q29 – If you needed to cut back on spending, what would you reduce before cutting back on your pet? (select up to 3)
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

8 in 10 expect to maintain or grow pet spending next year

Looking ahead 12 months, 48% expect spending to stay the same and 32% expect it to rise, while only 12% anticipate cutting back. The category's outlook is stable to growing.



Q40 – Over the next 12 months, do you expect your pet spending to...?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Where & How They Shop: Channel Preferences & Why

The channels pet parents choose, and why

Specialty leads the main stop, but shoppers spread across

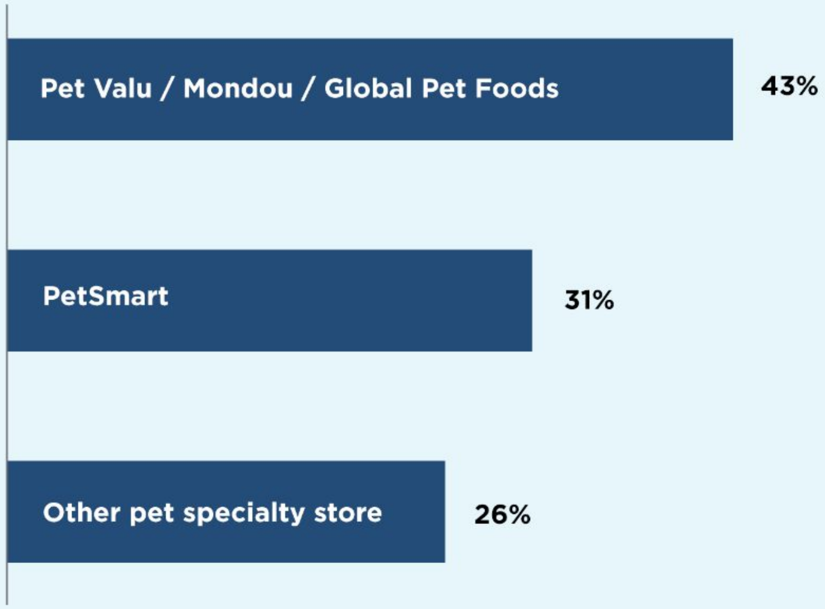
Pet specialty stores are the most common primary channel (39%), ahead of big box (29%). Yet most owners shop around: big box and online capture far larger shares as secondary channels.

Figures do not represent dollar share.

Q3 – Where do you MOST OFTEN buy pet food and treats? / Q5 – Which OTHER channels do you shop at least sometimes? (up to 3)
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Within specialty, Pet Valu and its peers lead the pack

Among owners whose main channel is a pet specialty store, 43% shop most often at Pet Valu, Mondou, or Global Pet Foods, ahead of PetSmart at 31%.



Figures do not represent dollar share.

43%
of specialty shoppers choose Pet Valu, Mondou, or Global Pet Foods first

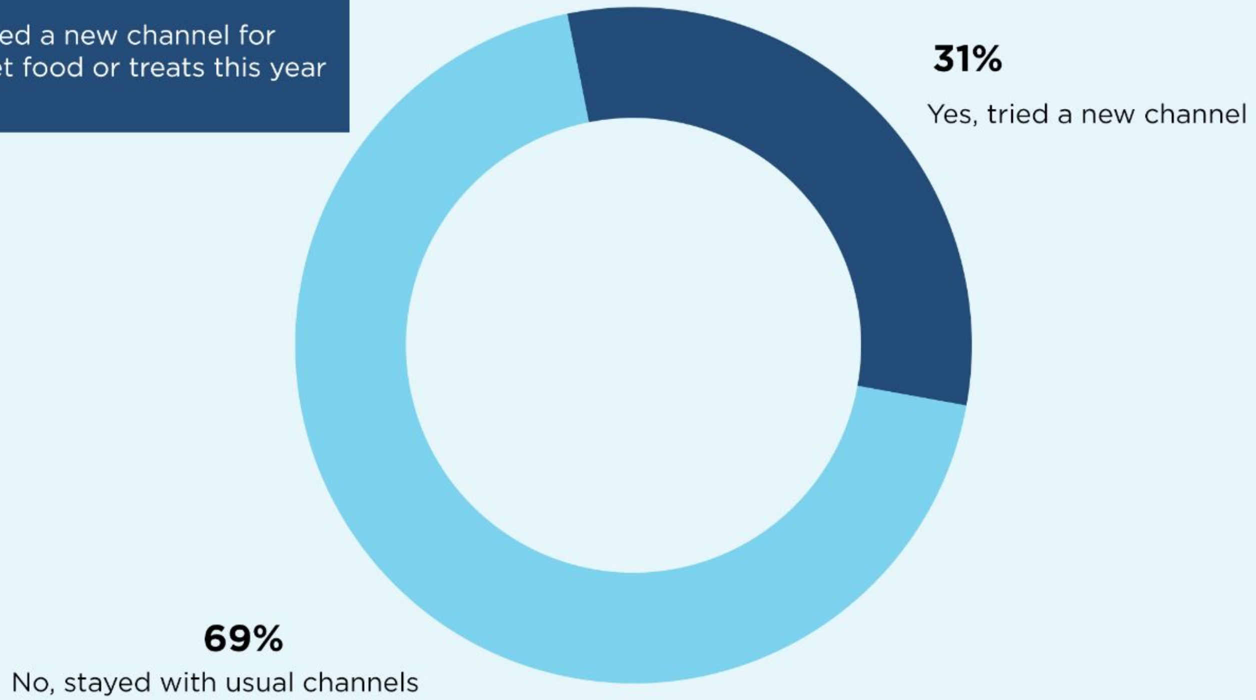
Q4 – Which pet specialty store do you shop at most often?
Base: Owners whose main channel is a pet specialty store (Q3), n = 845

1 in 3 pet parents tried a new channel this year

Channel habits are strong, but owners are willing to try new ways to buy pet food and treats.

31%

tried a new channel for pet food or treats this year



Q13 – In the past year, have you tried a new channel for pet food / treats (e.g. switched to online)?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

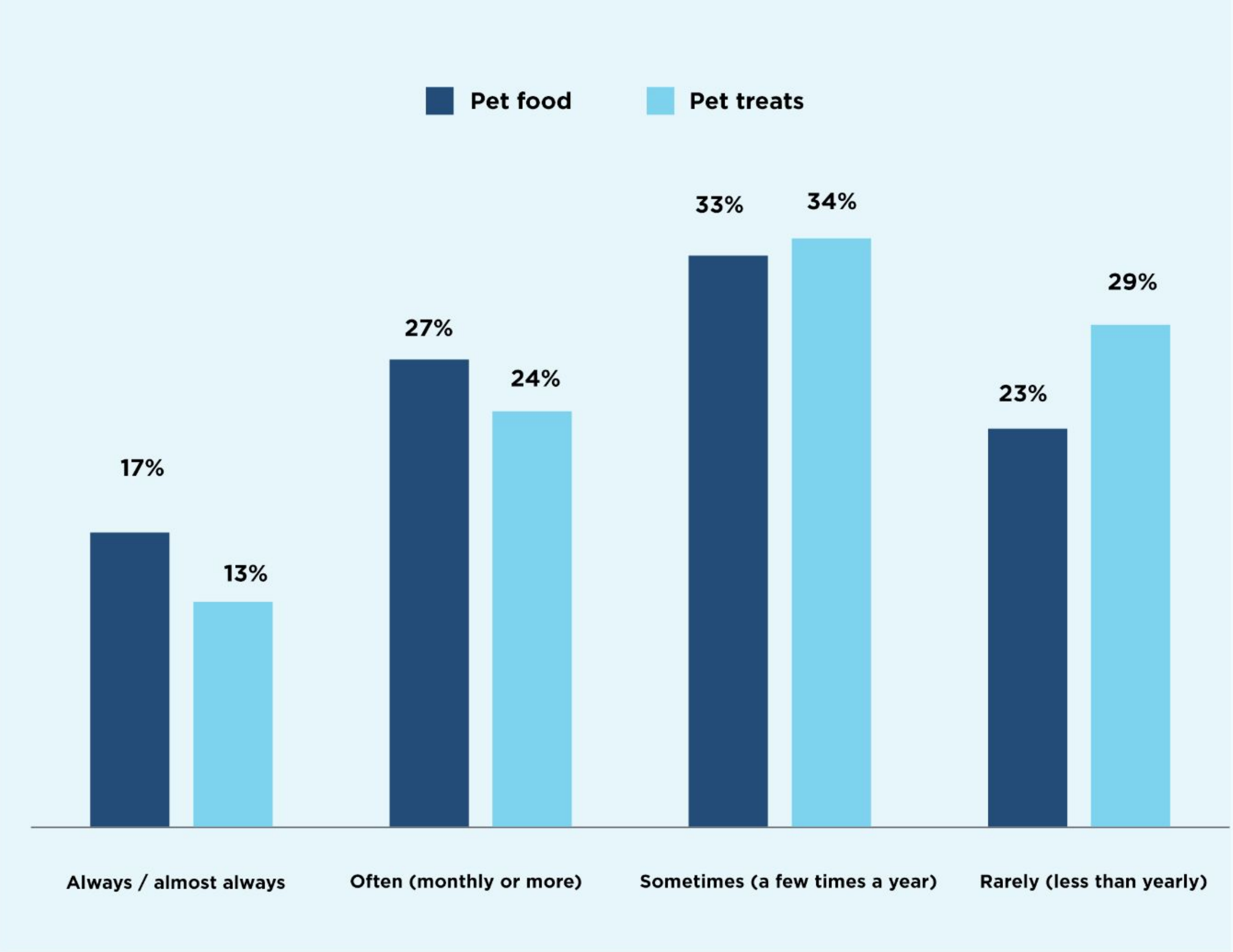
Online & Subscription: The Convenience & Retention Battleground

The convenience and retention battleground

Online buying is now routine. Auto-ship has reached 4 in 10 owners, and for a sizeable group it is the reason they stay with their retailer.

Buying Pet Food Online is now Routine for More than 4 in 10

44% buy pet food online always or often, and 37% do so for treats. Online has shifted from occasional to habitual, though a quarter still buy food online only rarely.

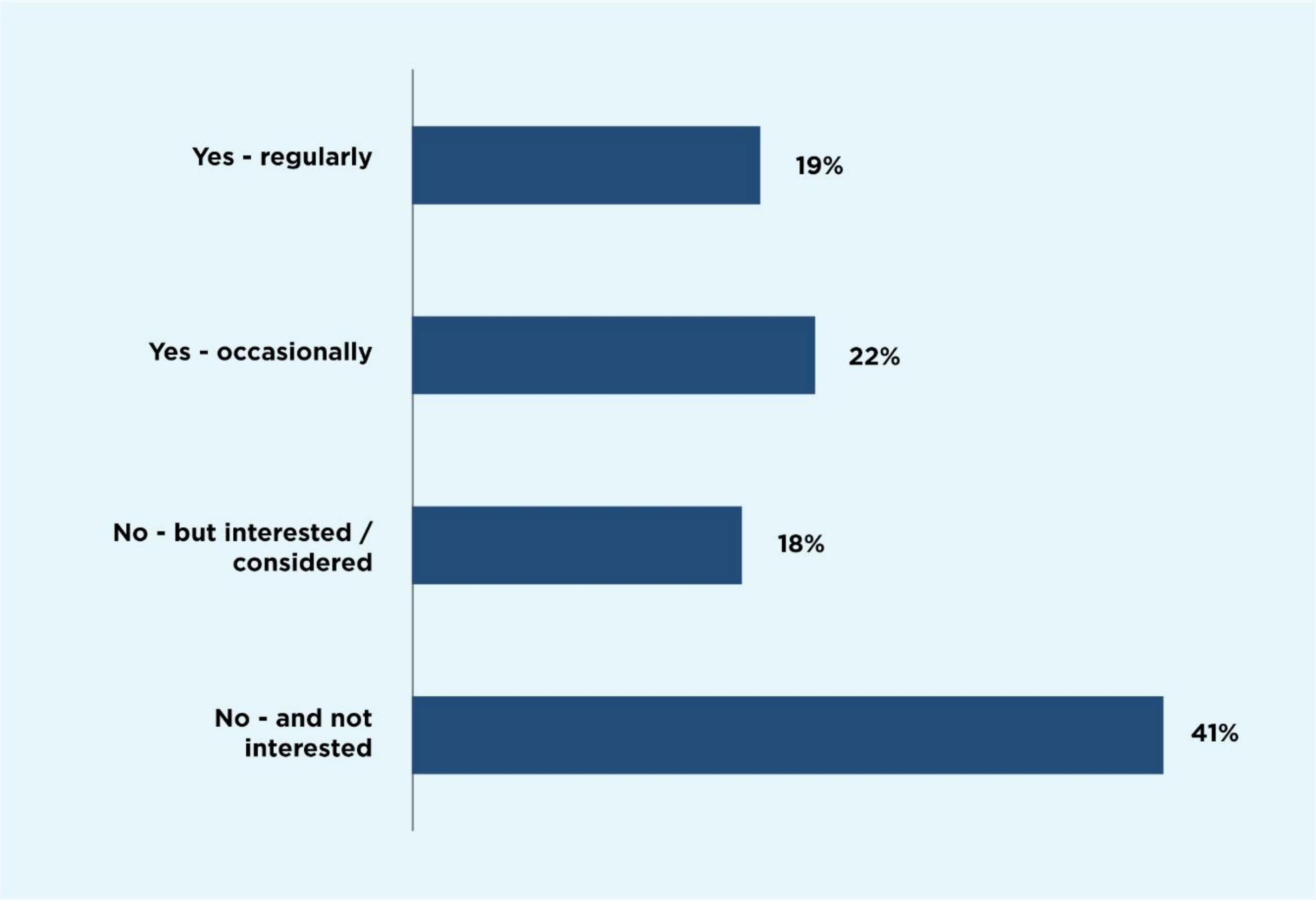


Q6 – How often do you buy pet food ONLINE? / Q7 – How often do you buy pet treats ONLINE?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Auto-ship has reached 4 in 10 owners, with room to grow

41% already use a subscription or auto-ship service, regularly or occasionally. Another 18% are interested but have not signed up, leaving a clear runway for conversion.

41% already use a subscription or auto-ship service for pet food or treats

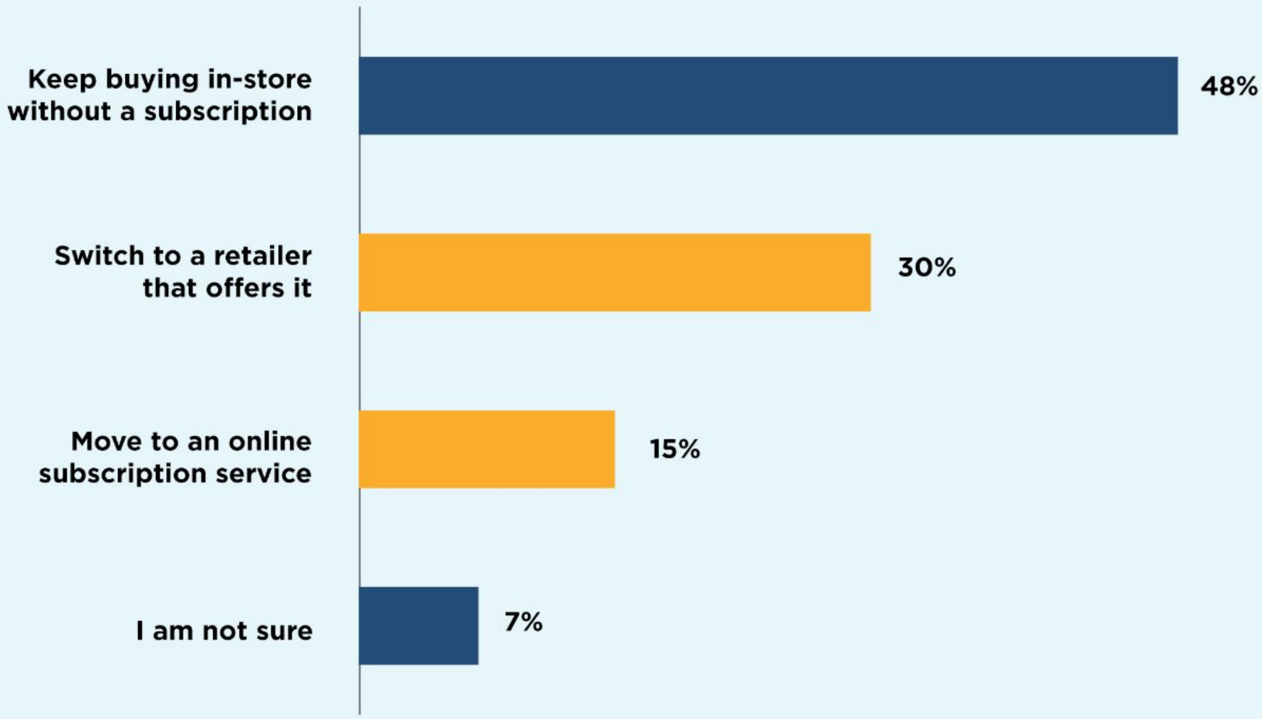


Q9 – Do you use a subscription / auto-ship service for any pet food / treats?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Subscription is a retention lever: Nearly 50% would shop elsewhere without it

If their retailer dropped subscriptions, 30% would switch retailers and another 15% would move to an online subscription, while 48% would simply keep buying in-store.

45% would take their business elsewhere if their retailer dropped auto-ship

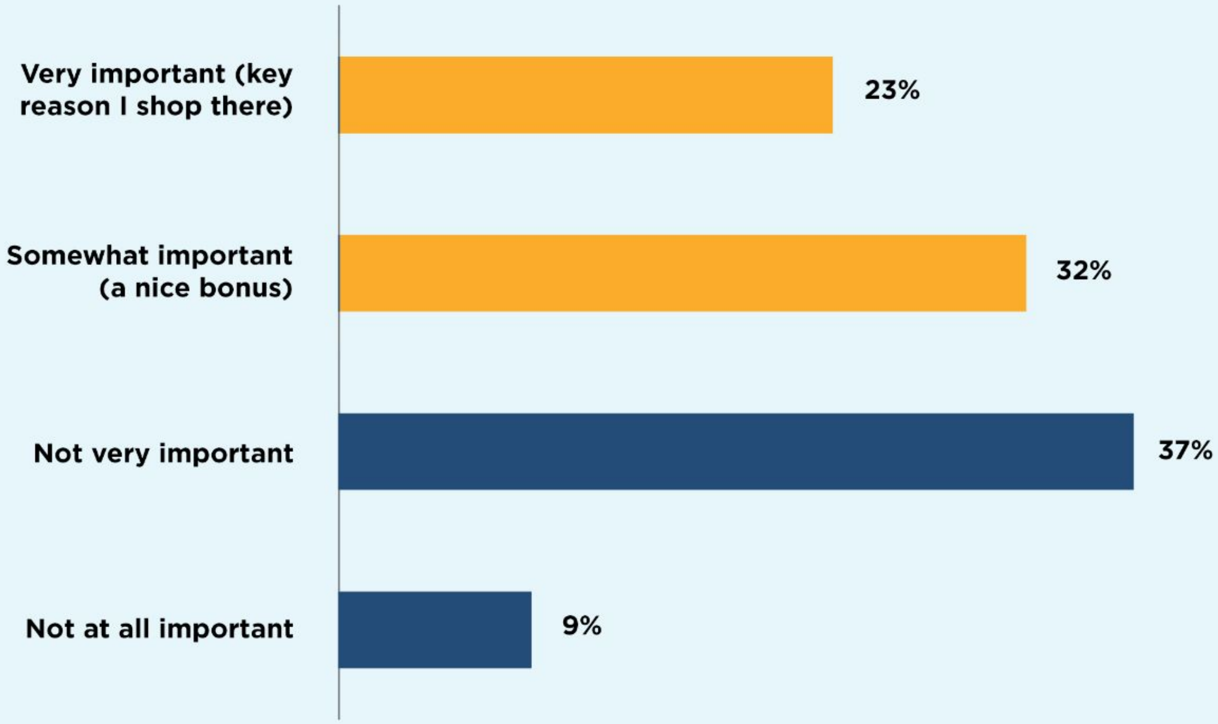


Q10 – If your preferred retailer did NOT offer a subscription/auto-ship, what would you do?
Q11 – How important is it that your retailer offers a subscription/auto-ship program?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Auto-ship matters to most, and is decisive for 1 in 4

55% say it is important that their retailer offers auto-ship, including 23% who call it a key reason they shop where they do. For that core group, the feature actively shapes their choice of retailer.

55% say it is important their retailer offers auto-ship



Q11 – How important is it that your preferred pet retailer offers a subscription / auto-ship program?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

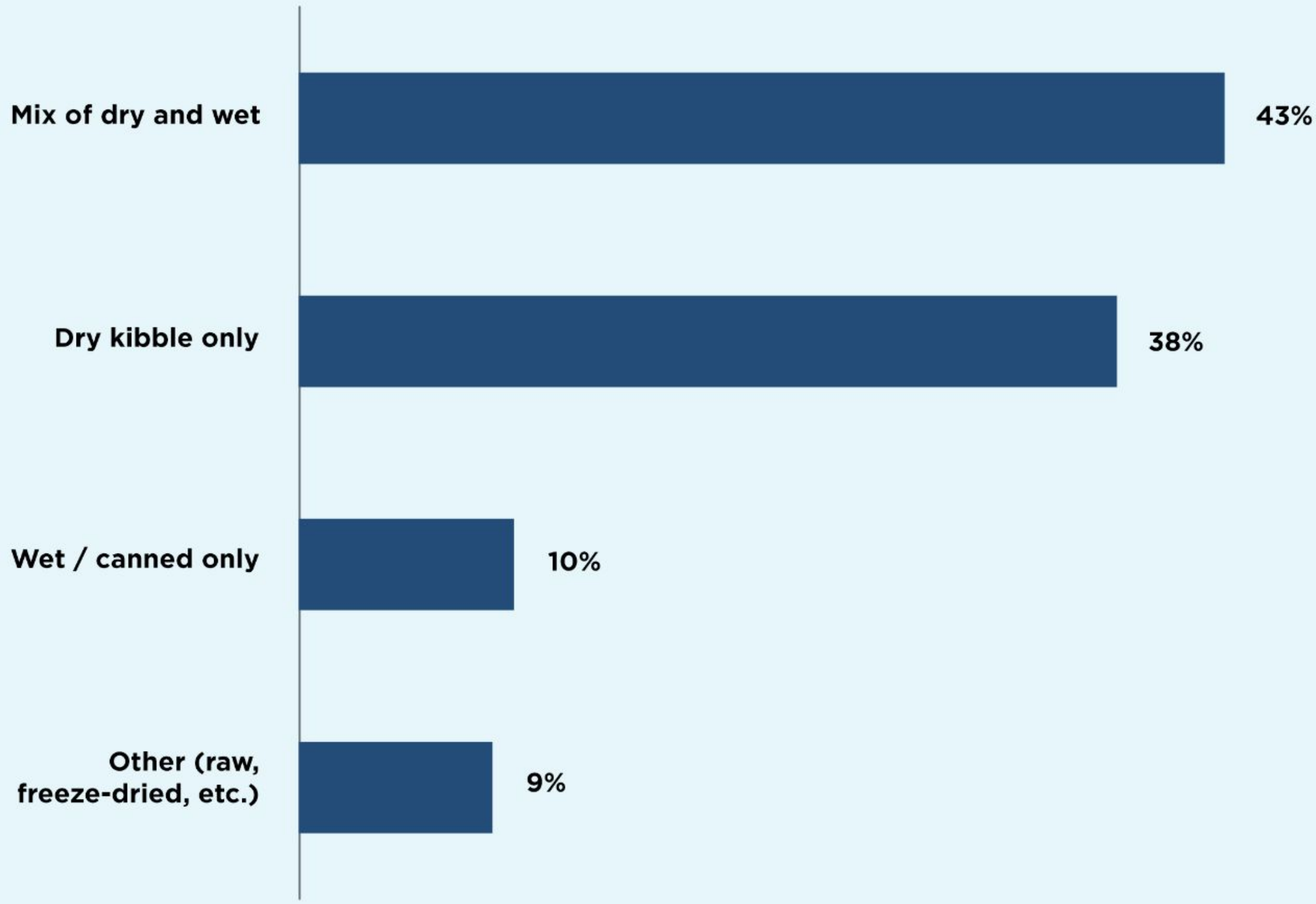
Food & Feeding Behavior: What's in the Bowl & Why

What is in the bowl, and why owners choose it

Feeding is rarely fixed. Most owners blend food types and brands, balancing their pet's needs against both cost and quality.

A mix of dry and wet is the most common way to feed

Combining dry and wet food is the leading approach (43%), just ahead of dry kibble alone (38%). Dry food features in roughly 8 in 10 households; raw and freeze-dried remain niche.

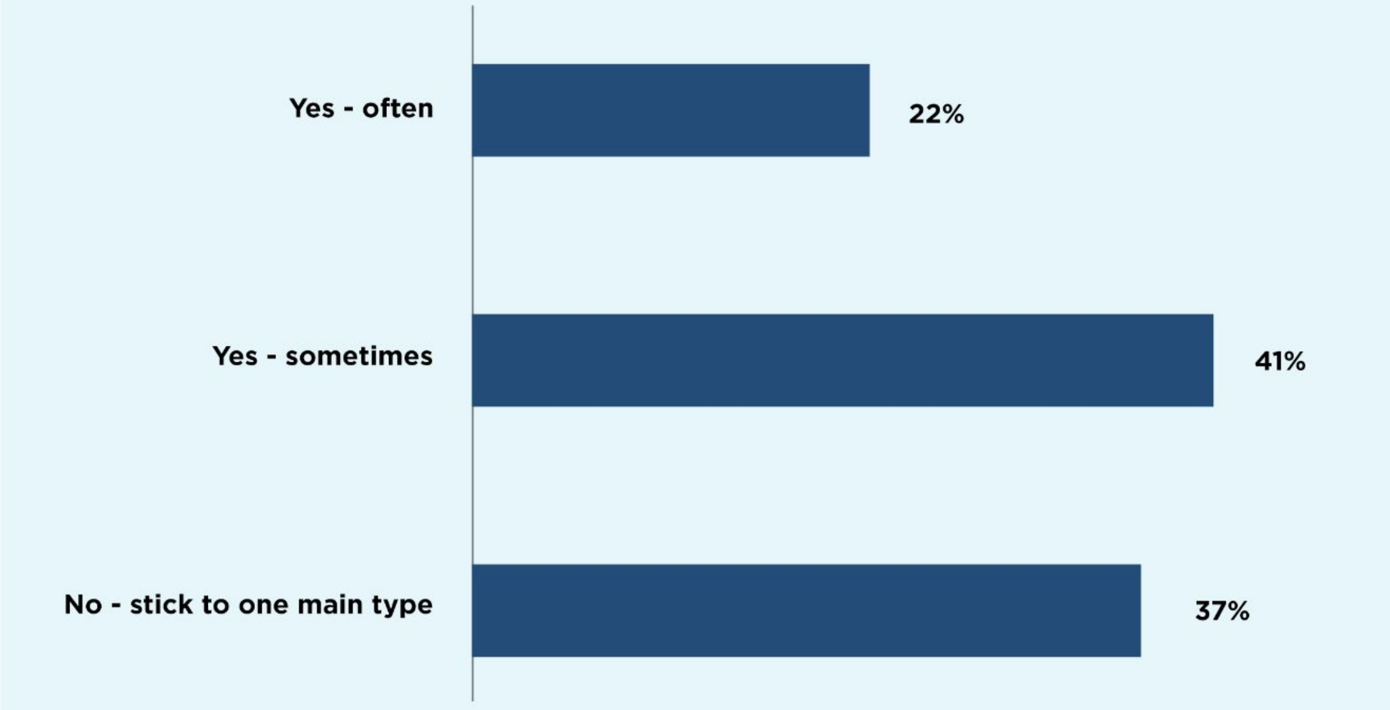


Q14 – What is the primary type of food you feed your dog(s) and / or cat(s)?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Most owners mix foods rather than stick to one

63% combine different food types or brands at least sometimes, and 22% do so often. Only about a third stay loyal to a single type, pointing to flexible, experiment-friendly feeding habits.

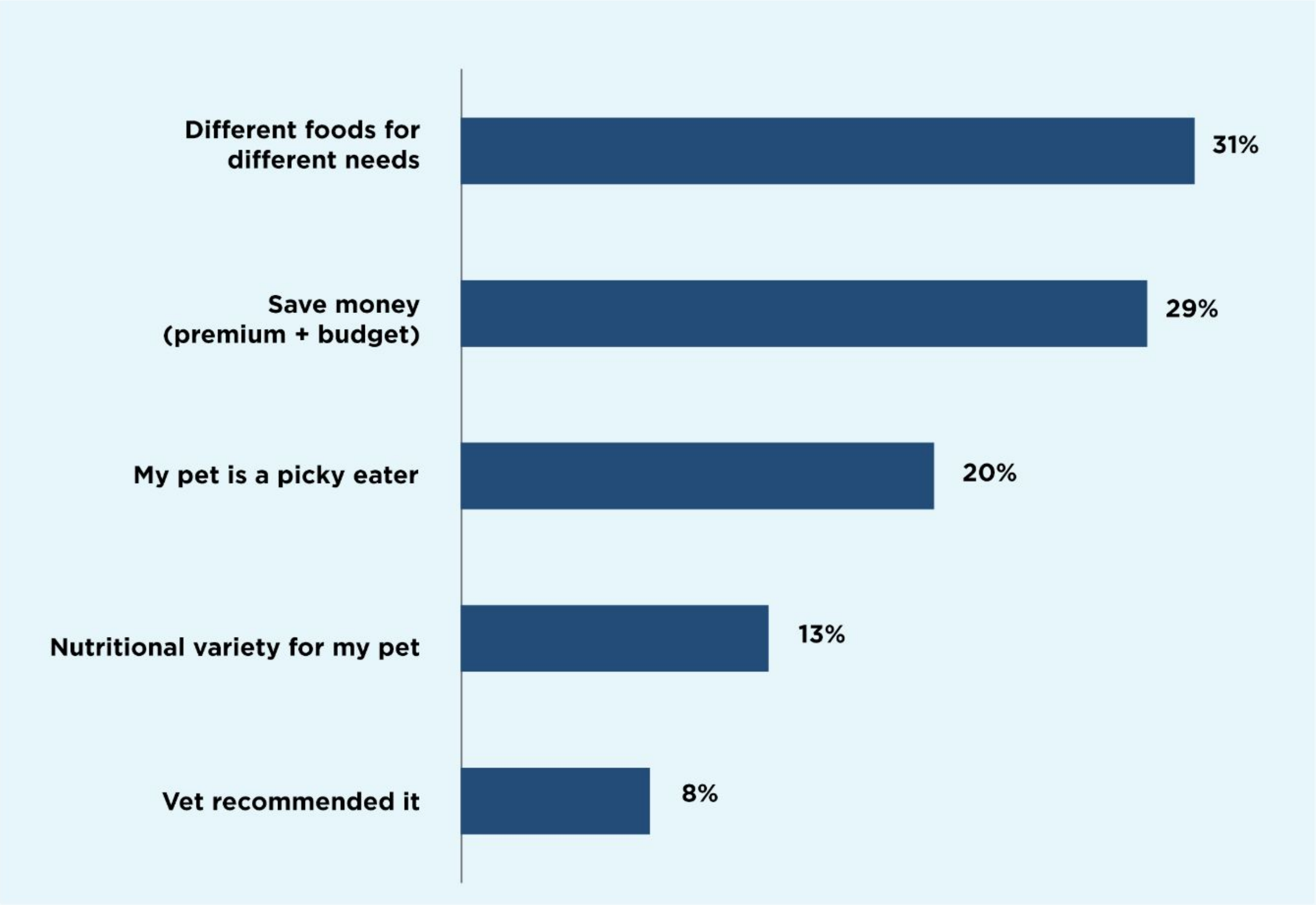
63% mix different food types or brands at least sometimes



Q15 – Do you mix different food types or brands regularly?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Owners mix for the right nutrition and to stretch the budget

Among those who mix, the top driver is matching food to their pet's needs (31%), closely followed by saving money by blending premium with budget options (29%). Picky eaters account for one in five.



Q16 – What is the main reason you mix different food types or brands? (among those who mix)
Base: Owners who mix food types or brands, n ≈ 1,385

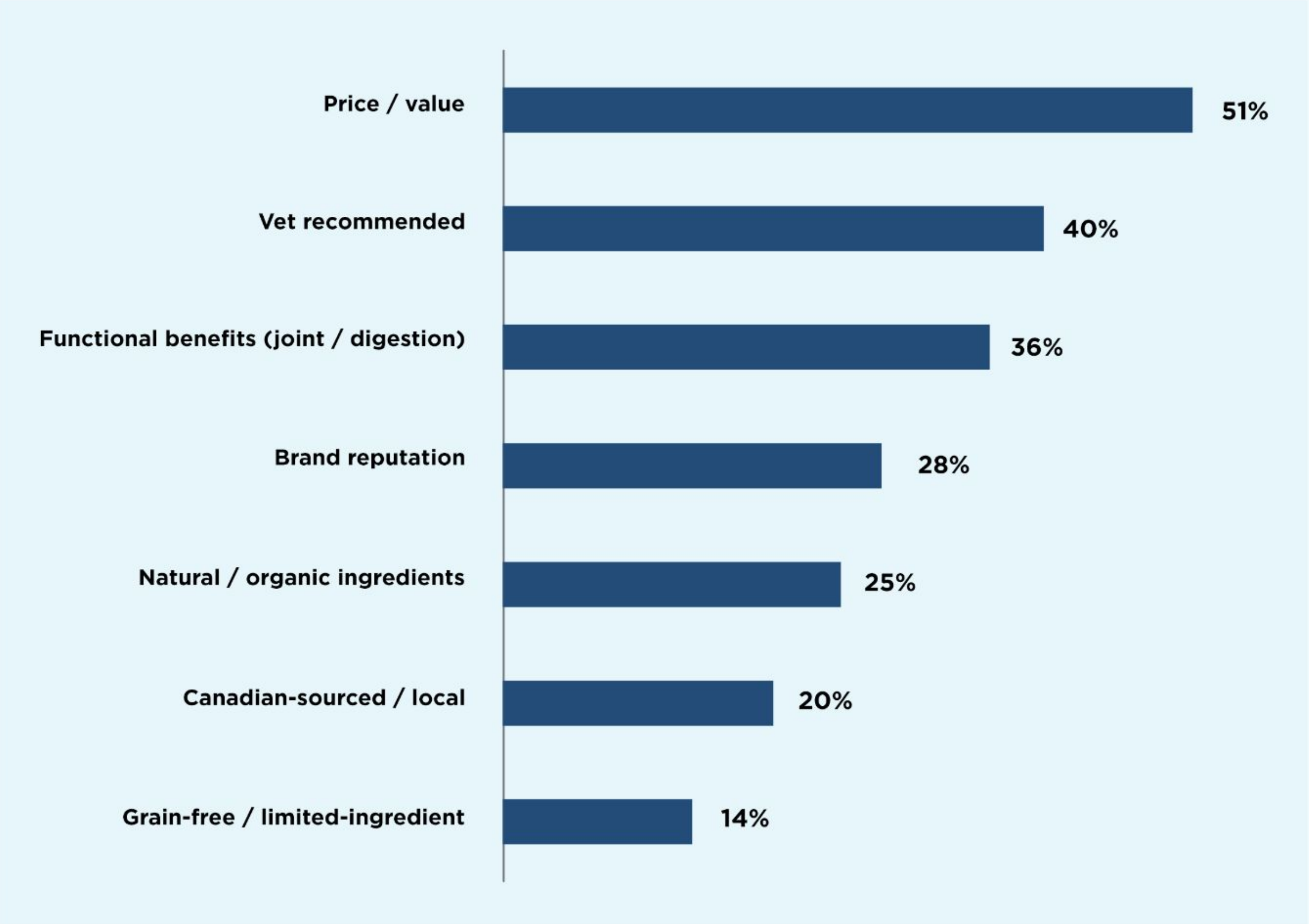
Brand Choice, Loyalty & Switching: How Loyal are Pet Parents?

How loyal pet parents really are.

Pet parents have clear brand habits but sensitive loyalty. Price leads the decision; most owners are open to switching when a better option appears.

Price leads food choice, but vets and function matter too

Price and value top the list of factors when choosing pet food (51%), followed by vet recommendations (40%) and functional benefits such as joint or digestion support (36%).



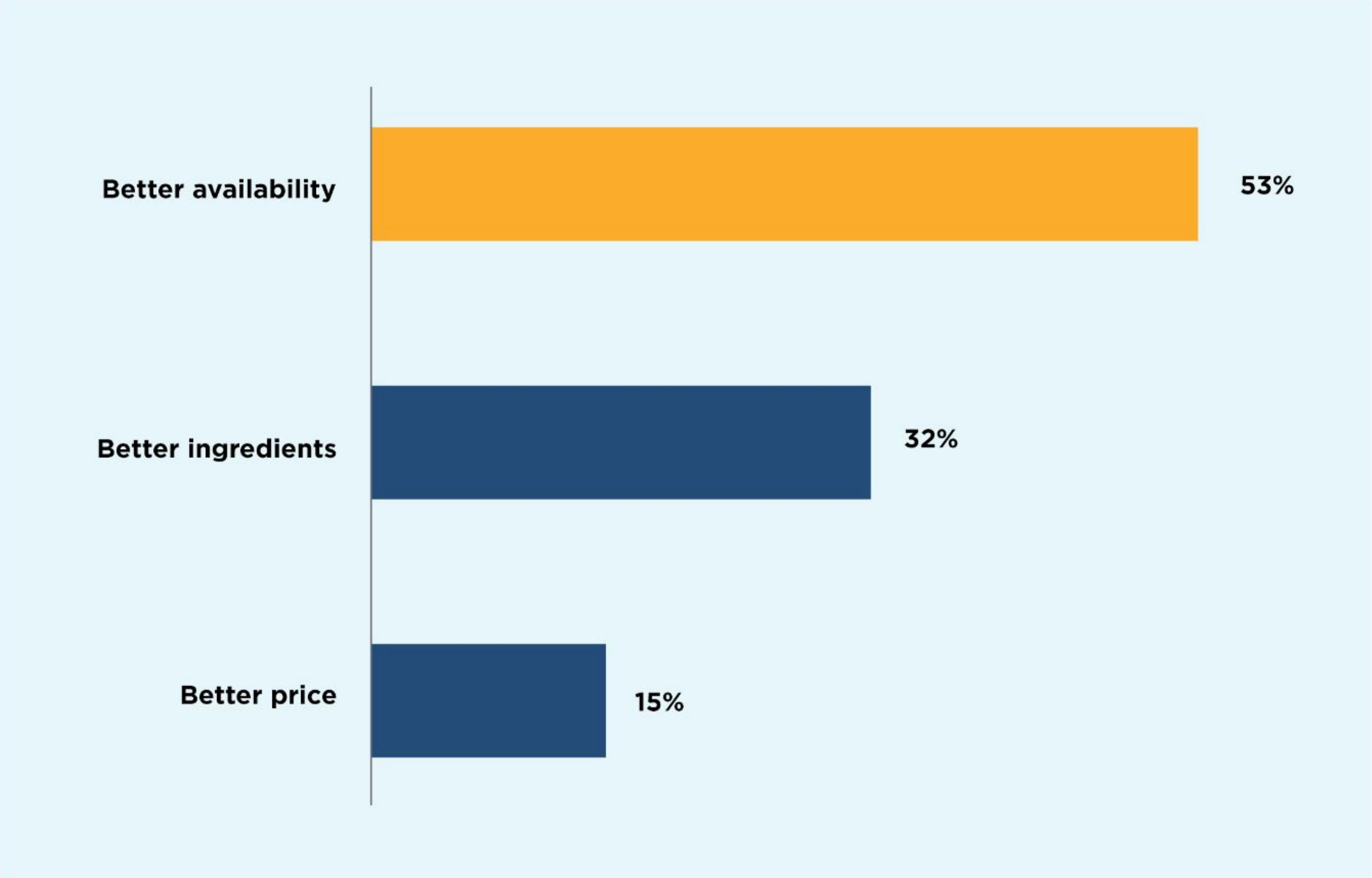
Q20 – Select your top 3 most important factors when choosing pet food. (select up to 3)
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Loyalty is conditional, but rarely about price

Almost 60% of owners either never/rarely switch brands, or only do so when required, driven by better availability (53%) and better ingredients (32%). Price is rarely the primary reason.

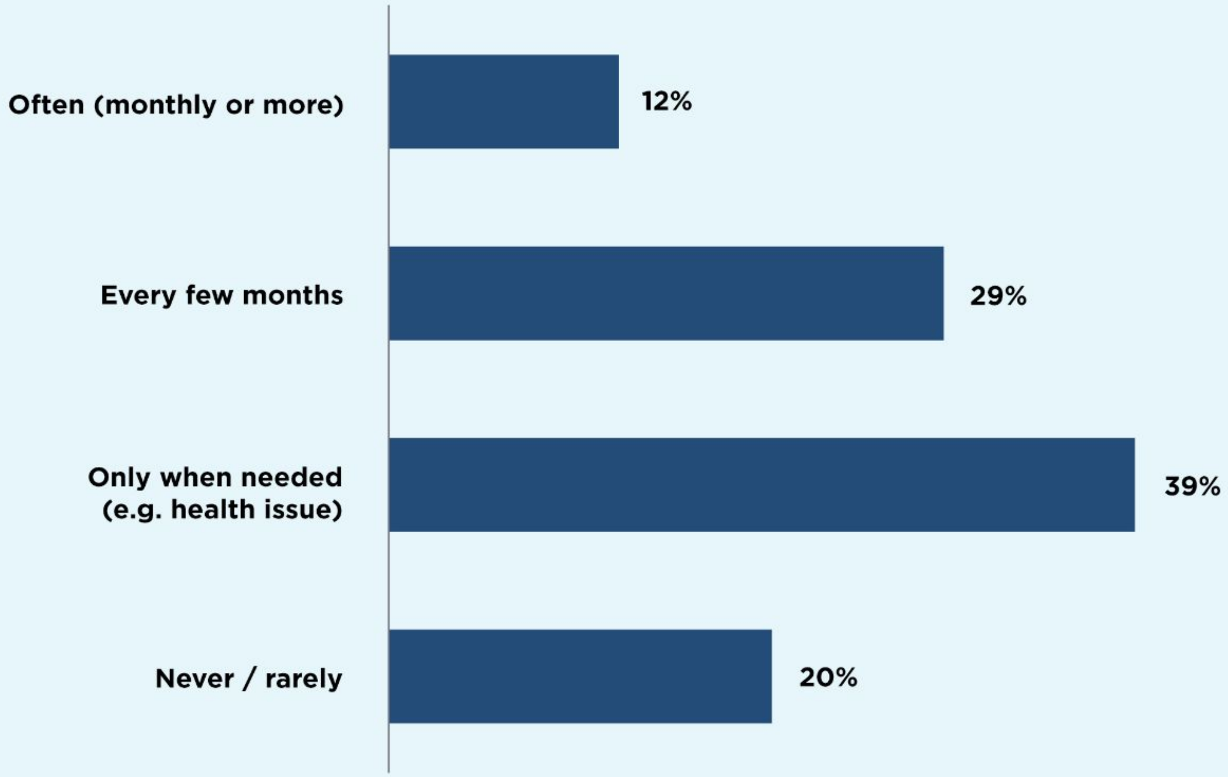
68% are likely to switch brands for better availability or ingredients, with price a smaller factor

Q32 – How likely are you to switch brands if a better option comes up?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184



Q33 – What is MOST LIKELY to persuade you to switch?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

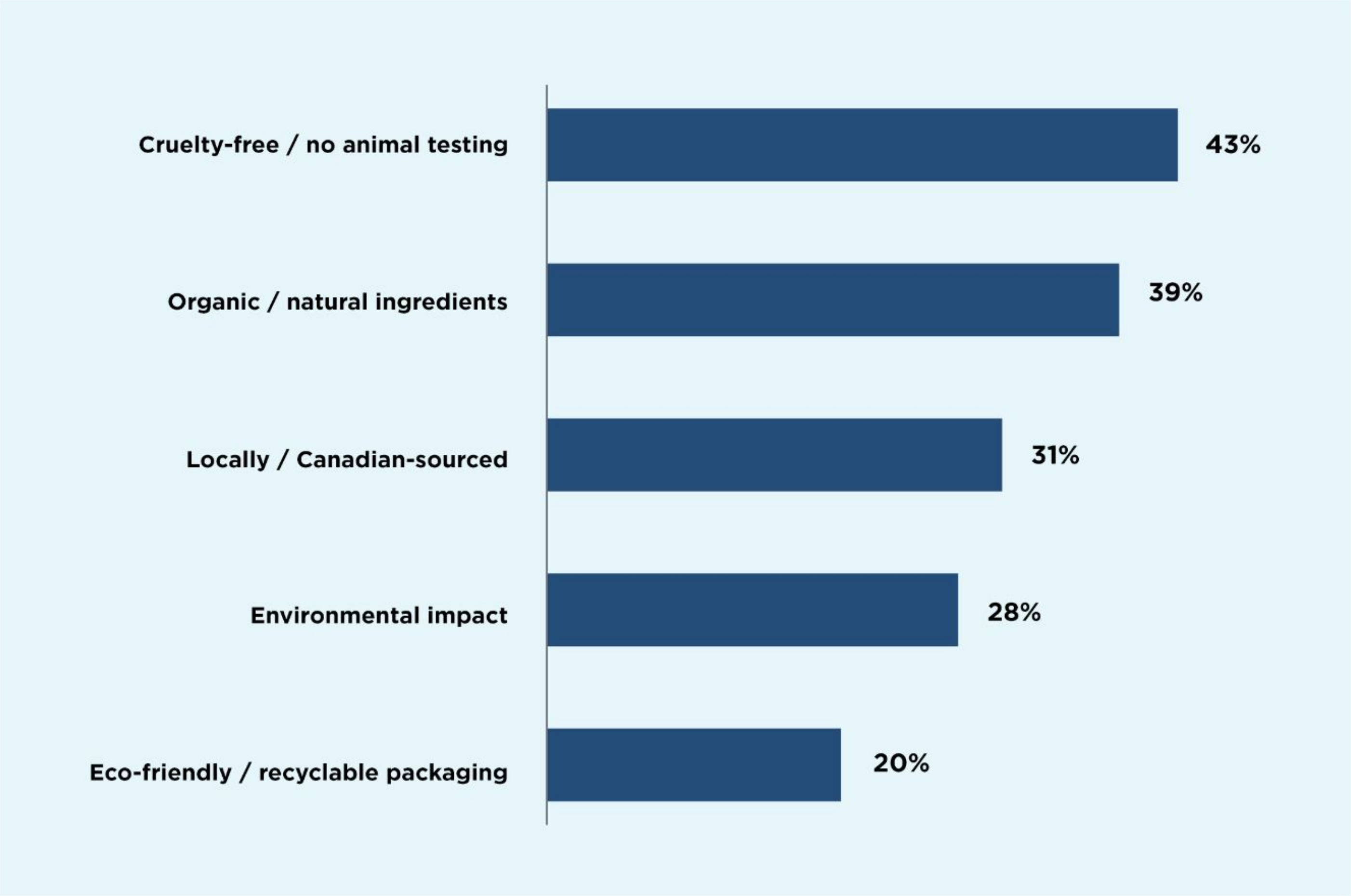
Almost 6 in 10 (59%) would never/rarely switch or would only switch when needed.



Q21 – How often do you switch pet food brands or types?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Cruelty-Free and Natural Lead Values-Based Choices

Beyond price and function, ethical and sustainability cues carry weight: 43% rate cruelty-free as important and 39% natural or organic ingredients. Canadian sourcing matters to roughly a third.



Q34 – Which of the following are important when considering which pet product to buy? (select up to 3)
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Trust, Advice & the Rise of AI: Who Pet Parents Listen To & AI Use

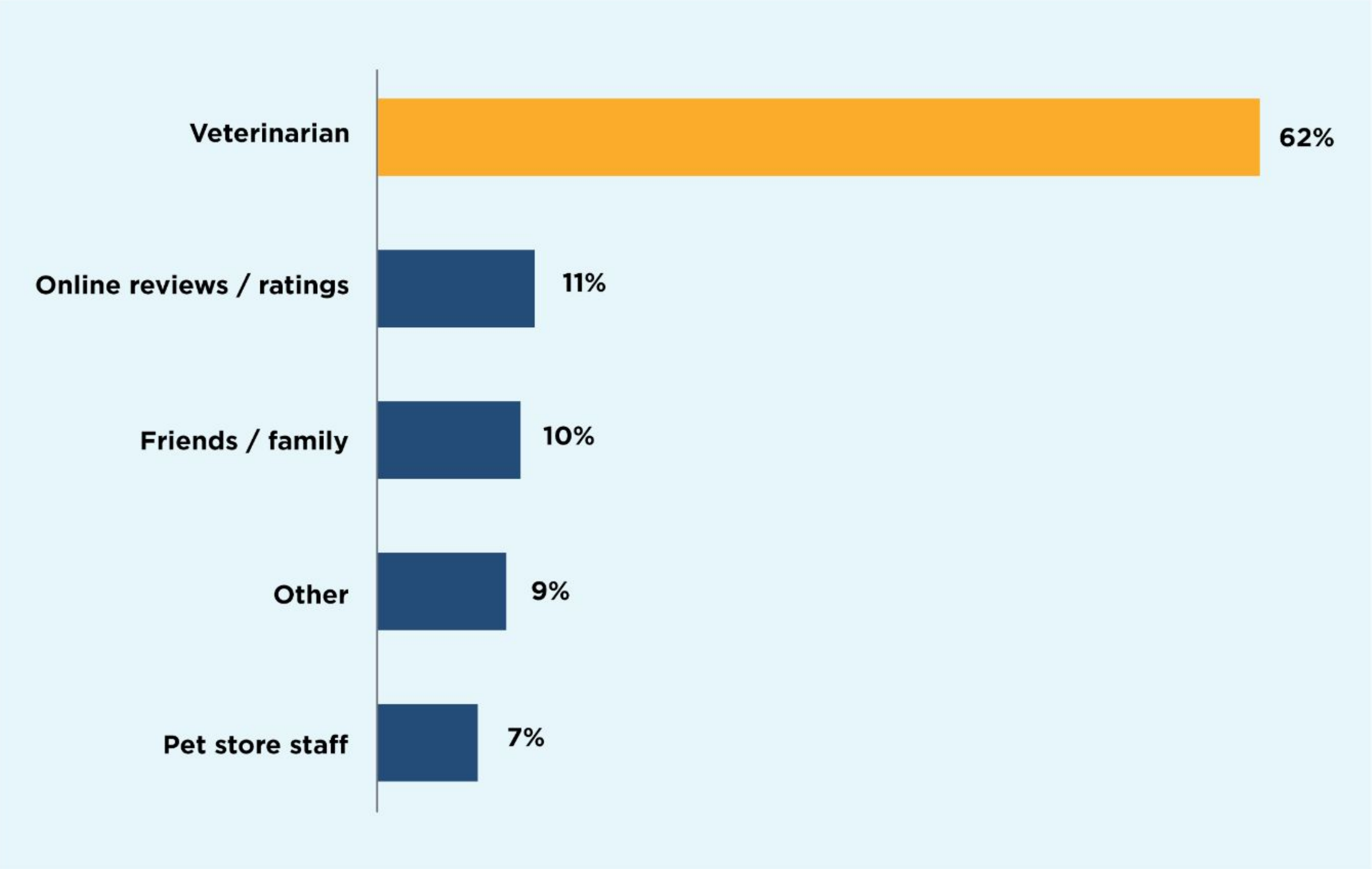
Who pet parents listen to, and how AI is entering the picture

The veterinarian remains the trusted authority on pet care, but AI is gaining an early foothold. 1 in 3 owners have tried it, mostly for diet and health questions, and they treat it as a cautious complement rather than a replacement.

The Veterinarian Remains the Most Trusted Voice

When it comes to pet feeding, health, and products, 62% of owners trust their veterinarian most, far ahead of online reviews (11%) or friends and family (10%). Professional authority still anchors decisions.

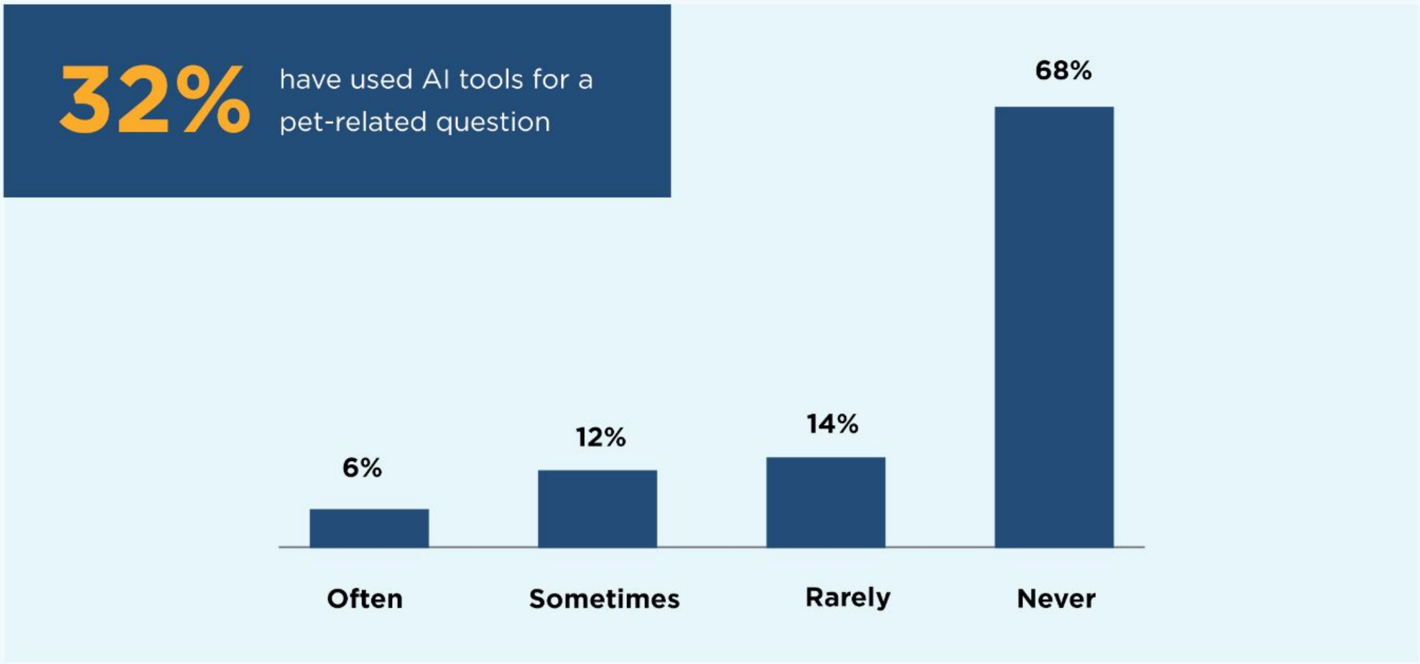
62% trust their veterinarian most for pet advice



Q22 – Who do you trust MOST for advice on pet feeding, health, or products?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

1 in 3 have tried AI for pet questions, but most have not

AI is an early-stage habit: 32% have used tools like ChatGPT or Google AI for pet questions, though only 18% do so at least sometimes. The remaining 68% have never tried it, leaving wide room to grow.



Q23 – How often do you use AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Google AI) for pet-related questions?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

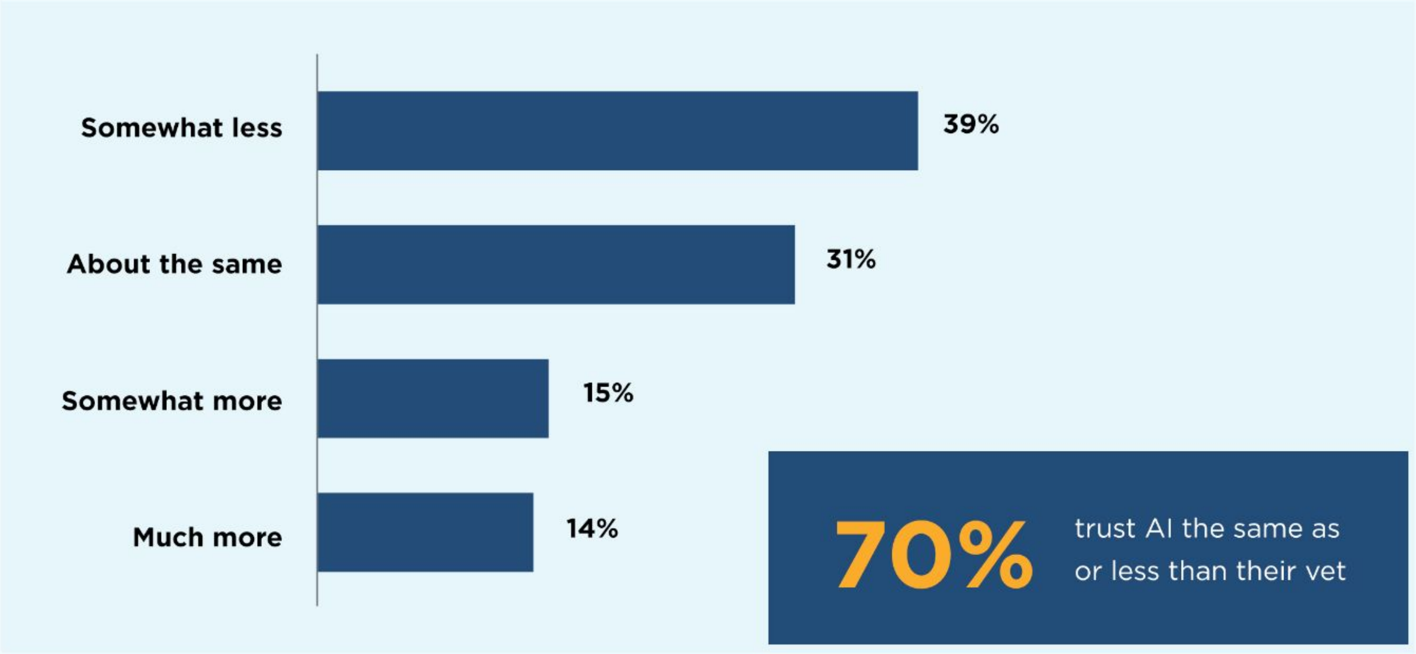
When they use AI, it is mostly about diet and health

Among owners who use AI, diet and nutrition is the most common topic (48%), followed by health symptoms and advice (42%) and product suggestions (36%). These overlap directly with what drives purchases.

Q24 – If you use AI for pet-related questions, what types of questions do you ask? (select up to 3)
Base: Owners who use AI for pet questions, n ≈ 690 (directional)

AI complements the vet; it does not replace it

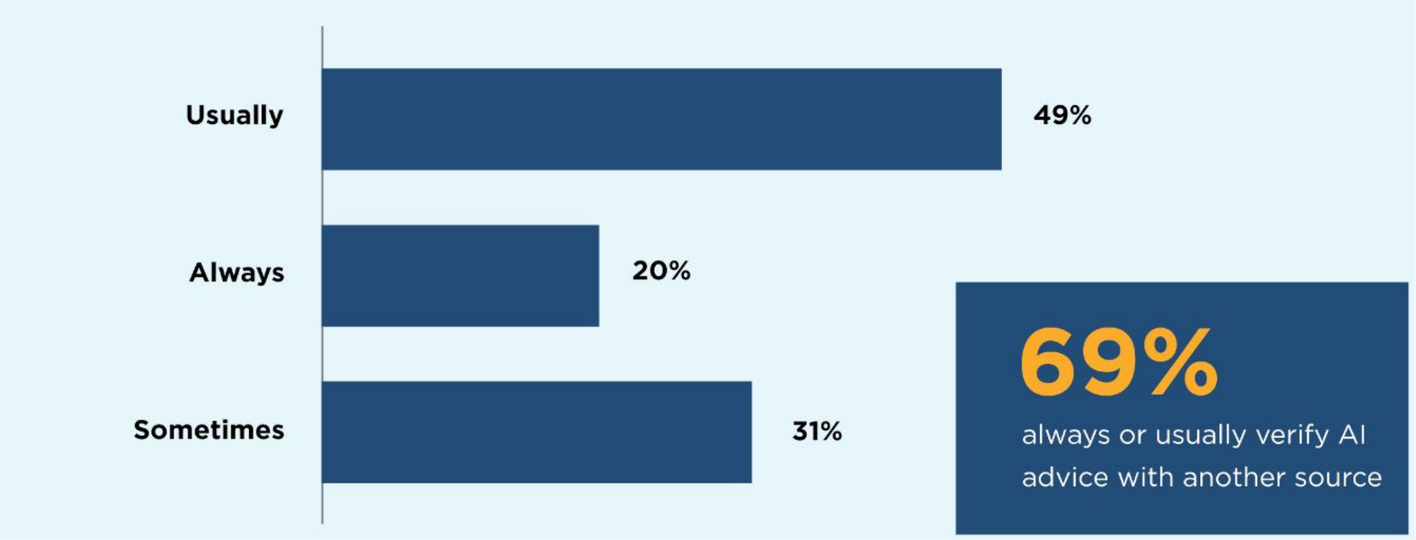
Among AI users, 39% trust AI less than their veterinarian and 31% trust it about the same. Fewer than 3 in 10 trust AI more, suggesting AI sits alongside professional advice rather than displacing it.



Q25 – How much do you trust advice from AI compared to a veterinarian?
Base: AI users, n ≈ 398 (directional)

Nearly 7 in 10 AI users check the advice with another source

AI users approach it with caution: 20% always verify AI advice with a vet or other source and 49% usually do. None say they never check, a healthy signal of informed, careful use.



Q26 – When using AI for pet advice, do you verify it with a vet or other source?
Base: AI users, n ≈ 398 (directional)

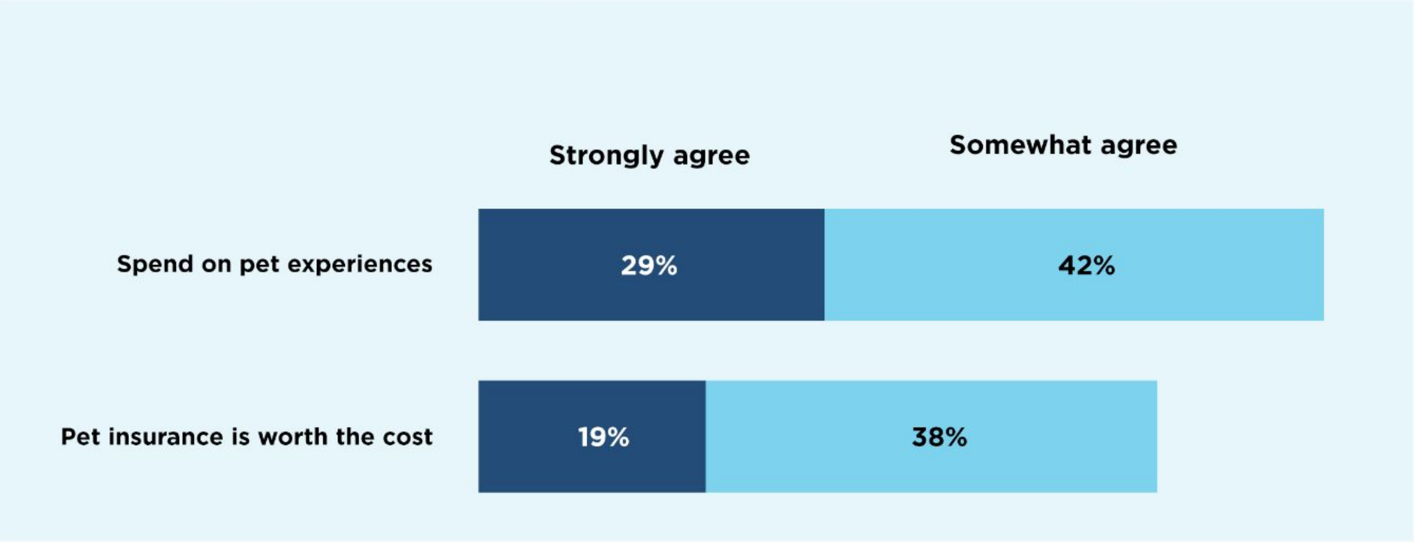
The Premium Pet Parent & Future Outlook: Attitudes Shaping the Market

The attitudes shaping where the market is heading

The bond translates into willingness to invest in experiences, insurance, and the broader wellbeing of the pet. That same commitment keeps owners loyal to the category for the long term.

Owners spend beyond the basics on their pets

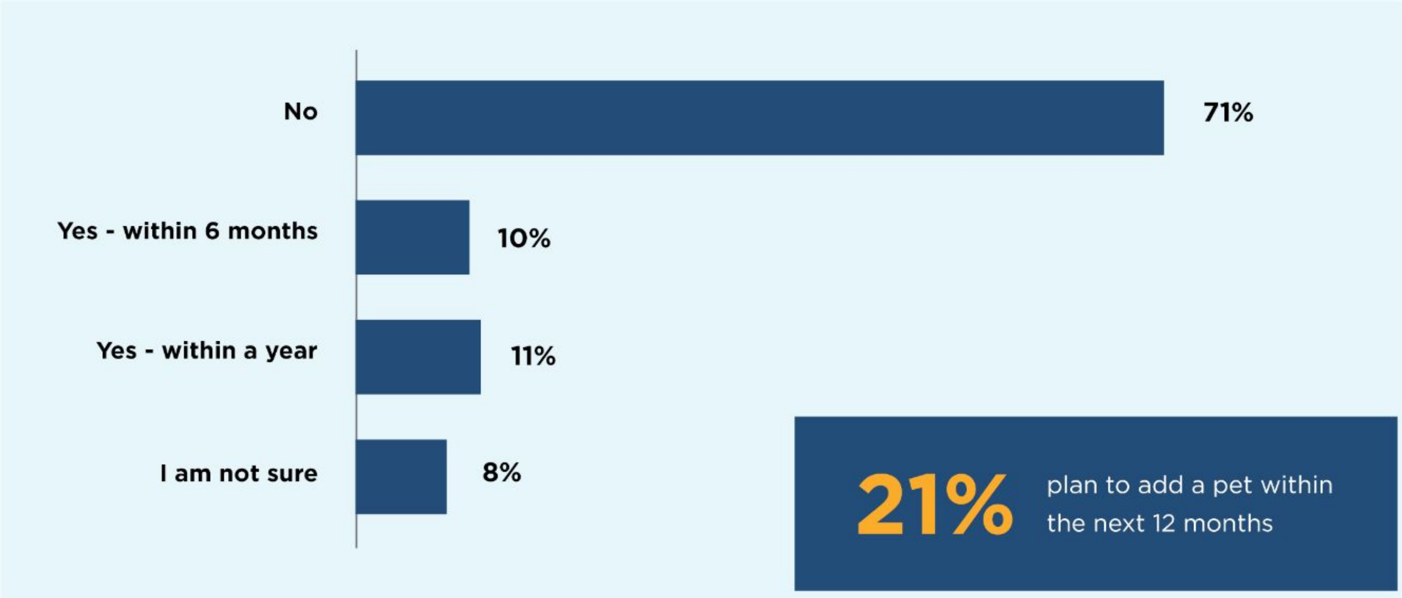
Pet spending increasingly extends past food and supplies. Spending on experiences is mainstream (71% agree), and a majority see pet insurance as worth the cost (58%), with clear room to grow.



Q36 / Q37 – Agreement with statements about pet experiences and pet insurance (% who agree)
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

1 in 5 plan to add a pet in the year ahead

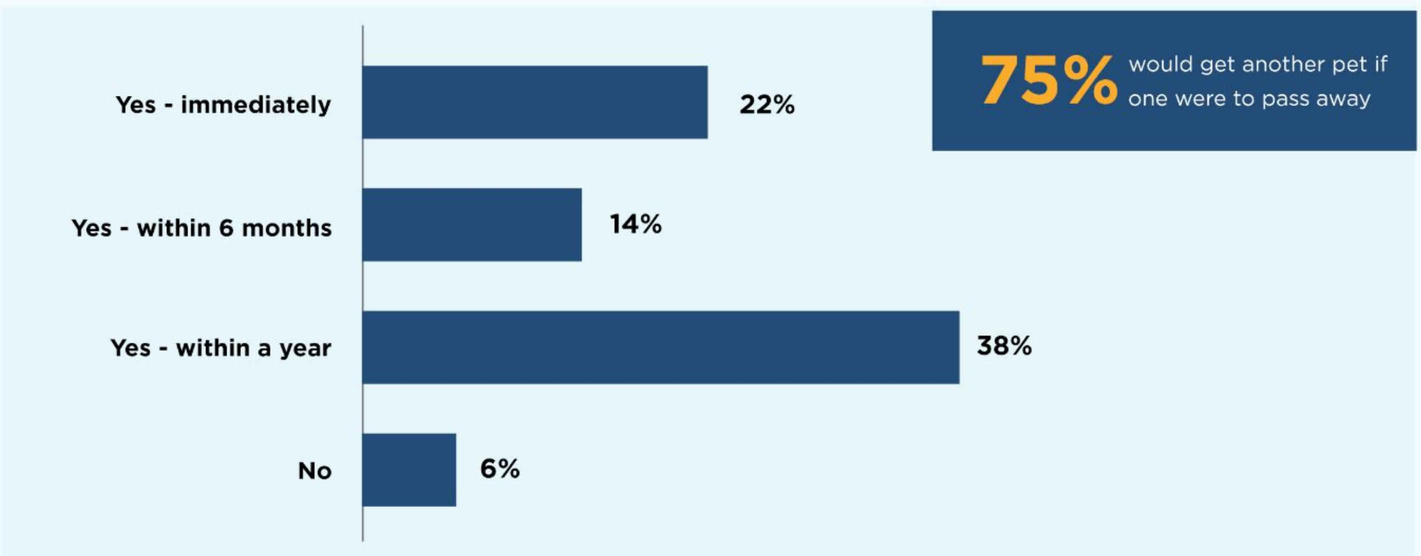
A steady stream of new demand is on the horizon: 21% plan to add a pet within the next 12 months, including 10% within six months. The majority are settled with their current household.



Q41 – Are you planning to add a new pet to your household in the next 12 months?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

Deep commitment: 3 in 4 would welcome another pet after a loss

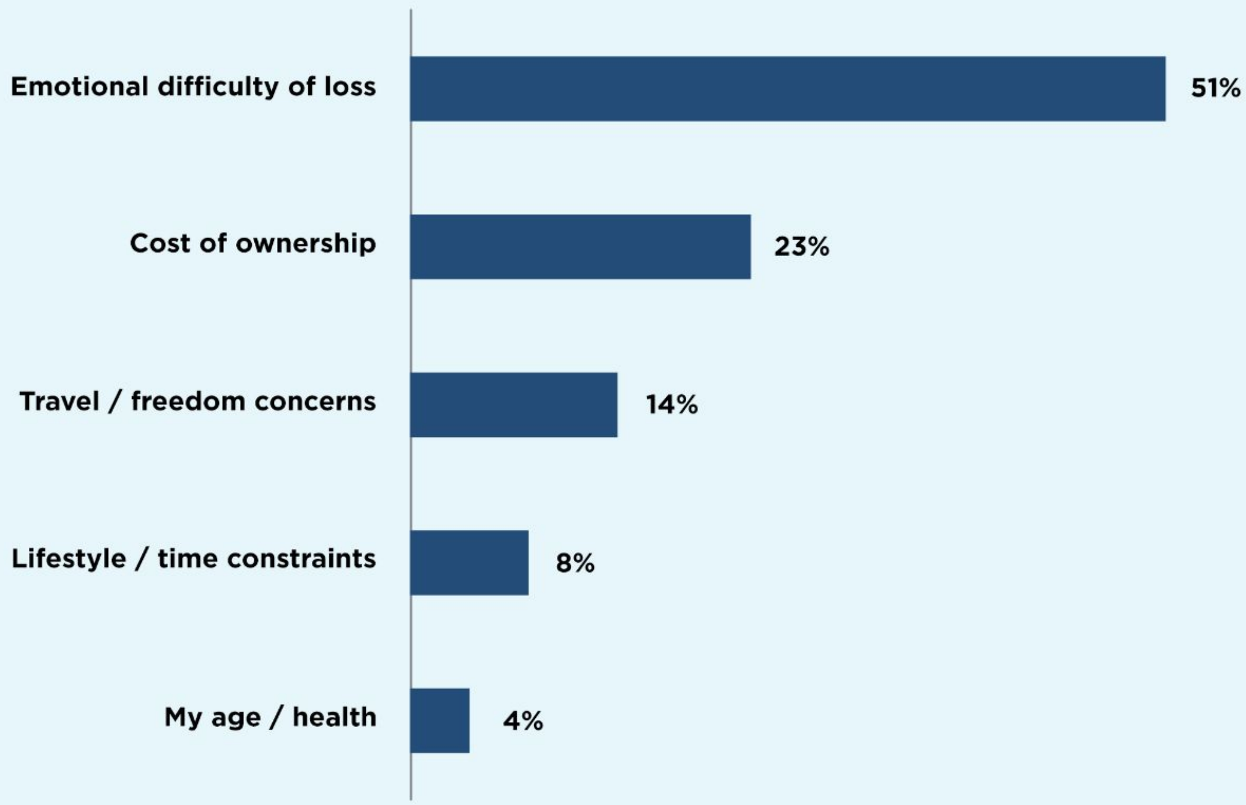
Attachment to pet ownership runs deep. 75% would get another pet if one passed away, with 22% saying immediately. Only 6% would not, underscoring a durable, self-renewing customer base.



Q42 – If a pet in your family were to pass away, would you get another pet?
Base: Cat and dog owners responsible for purchasing, n = 2,184

When owners hesitate, the reason is the heart, not the wallet

Among the few who would not replace a pet or are unsure, the leading reason is the emotional difficulty of loss (51%), well ahead of cost of ownership (23%). Hesitation is rarely about affordability.



Q43 – What would be the main reason for NOT getting another pet? (among those who said No or are unsure)
Base: Owners who would not replace or are unsure, n ≈ 762 (directional)

Conclusions

The Canadian pet market in 2026 is large, resilient, and emotionally driven. With more than half of households owning a dog or cat, and 9 in 10 treating their pet as family, spending holds firm even under cost pressure, and owners protect the pet budget ahead of nearly every discretionary category.
For retailers, the path to winning runs through value, convenience, and trust. Price opens the door, but auto-ship, a credible digital presence, and emerging AI tools are what build loyalty in a market where shoppers move easily between channels and brands. Those who pair sharp value with genuine care for the pet's wellbeing, the way owners themselves do, will earn a durable place in a category that renews itself with every generation of pet.

CADDLE
Voice of the Consumer ™

Get in Touch

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