

Felines or Canines: Which Do Christians Prefer?

A majority of Christians in the U.S. who own pets—75%—have dogs instead of cats, according to a survey released over the summer by the Pew Research Center.

The study, published in early July, revealed less than half of pet-owning believers in the U.S. (43%) have cats. Furthermore, 53% exclusively own dogs while only 21% solely possess cats. About 22% own both.

Overall, nearly two-thirds of Christians (62%) own at least one pet, which is the same percentage as the general American population. And just under half of pet-owning Christians in the U.S. (48%) said they believe they place the right degree of emphasis on the wellbeing of their pets.

Veterinarian Nancy Moore explained to Christianity Today that the disparity between cats and dogs in Christian households could be due to the fact many believers—especially those actively involved in their churches—don't have time to invest in animals, like cats, that are less adaptable to social interactions outside the home.

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The authors of the study, sociologists Samuel Perry and Ryan Burge, seemed to agree.

“On the one hand, certain personality types might simultaneously attract some Americans toward religious participation and away from pets, and cats in particular,” they said. “Alternatively, to the extent that pet ownership is a partial substitute for human bonding and interaction,

Americans more deeply embedded within a religious community may have less need (or time) for pets generally, and specifically more independent 'roommate pets,' like cats."

Regardless, the Pew Research Center study found that, of the Christians who own pets, many see their four-legged friends as part of the family.

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