

RACIAL DISPARITIES IN ANIMAL WELFARE



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FOREWORD



Maddie's
Fund

#ThanksToMaddie



The animal welfare movement is not uniquely exempt from the racism and other systems of marginalization that permeates the past and present of the United States. Yet, there is a critical gap in the research literature on racial disparities in the animal welfare movement. Companions and Animals for Reform and Equity (CARE) contracted with University of Tennessee Program for Pet Health Equity (PPHE) team to conduct this research with generous funding support provided through grants from PetSmart Charities and Maddie's Fund.

CARE is a BIPOC-led nonprofit organization with the mission to prioritize and amplify Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) voices in human and animal well-being through research, narrative, and community-centered investments. CARE partners with community-based organizations, lived experience experts, and other research institutions to identify community-specific priorities and amplify community-led solutions. Our hope is that the research will generate the data and information needed for proximate leaders and BIPOC-led organizations to secure the funding needed for their impactful work.

There are several key findings in this report that can inform next steps towards advancing racial equity in animal welfare. And yet there is much more to be done to ensure that policy and practice solutions are robust, implemented consistently, and continuously refined. We hope this study inspires ongoing commitment and action towards racial equity in human and animal wellbeing.



BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE



Animal welfare and attitudes about pets have undergone tremendous changes in the United States since the formation of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) in 1866. Approval of the charter to form the ASPCA by the New York Legislature was a result of Henry Bergh's advocacy for the humane treatment of work animals. One of the earliest animal anti-cruelty acts in the United States was passed in New York in 1867 due to the efforts of Bergh. In 1894, ASPCA began operating the animal control service for New York City and retained that responsibility until 1995. Additional organizations formed across the country during this period to protect and advance the status of animals. The San Francisco ASPCA, formed in 1868, "described itself as a 'national leader in saving lives and raising the status of companion animals'" (Aronson, 2010, p.2).

Animal control programs are greatly influenced by animal welfare organizations. In 1970, the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA) formed to "encourage and promote a professional approach to management of animal care and control agencies" (Aronson, 2010, p. 3). The National Animal Control Association was created in 1978 to promote professionalization in animal control. However, animal control organizations, though often linked to and intertwined with animal welfare organizations, have a different mission and purpose. "Animal control is a governmental responsibility" (Aronson, 2010, p. 11). Its responsibility is to implement and enforce animal state and local laws that are written to protect public health and the safety of humans and animals.



This responsibility can be accomplished using a different focus or priority that is often dependent upon the social and political climate of the community. The different models for providing the service can be viewed as a law enforcement responsibility, a community service, a public health program, or as an animal welfare function. Regardless of how the services are offered, animal control is bound by ordinances and laws that govern the local

community. Laws may reflect current attitudes about the role of pet ownership or may have been initiated and approved to address a situation that was perceived to threaten public safety.



Attitudes about companion animals have undergone major shifts in the past fifty years. Cushing (2020) argues that dogs and cats have gone from the backyard to the bedroom. With this shift, the role of government and citizens has changed. A push to “legislate, educate, sterilize” was the focus of efforts in the 1970’s to reduce the number of stray animals and to raise awareness about opportunities to adopt pets from animal shelters – including municipal shelters. At that time, “legislation began to require the sterilization of adoptable animals in shelters” (Irvine, 2003, p. 554).

As attitudes about the role of companion animals have changed, laws and policies about companion animal ownership have also changed. With these changes, questions about pet ownership and what a “responsible” pet owner looks like began to emerge. As these questions were being answered, animal shelters began to assume the role of helping stray or relinquished animals by making them available to the public for adoption. Policies about who could and could not adopt a pet were established. With any policy that determines criteria for eligibility, a group or groups of people may be disproportionately impacted more than others. “New laws have emphasized a more humane approach to animal regulation, but at the same time, these laws have imposed more requirements on animal owners, holding them more accountable for their actions and those of their animals.” (Aronson, 2010, p. 247)

Animal shelters and animal welfare organizations have generally adopted one of two types of adoption policies – closed or open adoptions. Closed adoptions typically involve a lengthy questionnaire used to screen potential adopters. Open adoptions are more conversational and attempt to match the adopter with a pet that aligns with their lifestyle. At the core of how these approaches differ is the amount of trust placed on the adopters (Balcom and Arluke, 2001). Developing trust in short interactions is difficult and can be influenced by implicit bias.



Animal welfare is a microcosm of society at large. Policies and laws that govern who can have a companion animal and how the animal should be treated may be judgment laden and reflect biased attitudes about who is deserving of pet ownership. How policies and laws are written is dependent upon how the problem is defined. Policies about pet adoption are laden with the judgement about who is best equipped to responsibly care for a pet. The policies and regulations may be acting as systemic barriers for certain groups of people to be able to adopt a pet. “Systemic and structural racism are forms of racism that are pervasively and deeply embedded in and throughout systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, entrenched practices, and established beliefs and attitudes that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment of people of color.” (Braveman, et. al., 2022, p. 171)



There have been recent calls by animal welfare leaders and pet advocacy organizations to promote diversity in a very white industry. However, there has been limited research conducted to explore if and how adoption policies and the enforcement of animal welfare laws may be contributing to racial disparities. Historically, research on animal welfare has predominantly focused on the animals and not on animal welfare policies and their impacts on the community. The purpose of this exploratory pilot study was to investigate whether differences exist in how racial and ethnic groups within a community are impacted by policies and procedures of animal control agencies and animal welfare organizations. Moreover, it was to explore how pet adoption procedures and practices impact different racial and ethnic groups within a community. Additionally, because it is a pilot study, it was to develop best practices for how to expand the research into additional communities.

Research questions guiding this study were “How are pet adoptions procedures and practices impacting different racial and ethnic groups within a community?” and “What differences exist in how different racial and ethnic groups within a community are impacted by policies and procedures of animal control agencies and animal welfare organizations?”



METHODOLOGY



Four communities were chosen for this study – Charlotte, North Carolina; Dallas, Texas; Detroit, Michigan; and Los Angeles County, California. These communities vary in size, geographic location, racial and ethnic diversity, form of municipal government, relationship with the municipal shelter, and how animal welfare is codified and enforced.

This exploratory pilot study was conducted using a mixed methods approach that included:

- in-depth interviews with animal welfare professionals,
- survey of community members,
- individual and group interviews conducted with Black, Indigenous, People of Color, hereinafter referred to as BIPOC pet owners,
- population and census data,
- review of local animal welfare laws and policies,
- review of media coverage pertaining to companion animals,
- programmatic data from animal welfare agencies.



The protocol for conducting the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Tennessee. – UTK IRB-21-06501-XP.



In-depth interviews with animal welfare professionals were completed using Zoom technology or by telephone. All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. Interviews completed using Zoom technology were transcribed using the transcription feature provided by Zoom. Interviews completed by telephone were transcribed by the interviewer. Once the accuracy of the transcript was confirmed, the audio recording was destroyed. The purpose of the interviews was to collect information about current animal welfare policies and

procedures and how they have changed. Specifically, interview questions were designed to collect information about animal adoption policies and procedures, enforcement policies and procedures, perceptions about why animals were being relinquished or seized by animal control officers, and race relations in the community. The interview guide can be found in the [Appendix](#) to this report. A total of sixty-eight interviews were conducted. Those interviewed included directors, program managers, staff, and field officers. The first interview was conducted on October 4, 2021, and the last interview on October 13, 2023. Transcripts from the interviews were coded and analyzed using thematic qualitative analysis methodology.



A community survey of the four communities was conducted from June 20, 2023, through July 10, 2023. The survey was administered electronically using a web panel provided by Marketing Systems Group (MSG). MSG finds research participants from a diverse array of sources, many of which are double opt-in panels. Participants are invited to partake in research opportunities through emails, push notifications, or in-app pop-ups. Participants received an incentive to complete the survey in the form of cash, gift cards, or loyalty



reward points. The community survey was completed by 1,919 community members. The sample included both families with and without pets. Because BIPOC community members are often underrepresented in population research, quotas were set to ensure adequate representation of BIPOC respondents. For each community, quotas were implemented to include 200 BIPOC households with a pet, 100 BIPOC households without a pet, 100 White households with a pet, and 75 White households without a pet. The average time for survey completion was 12.7 minutes. The racial and ethnic characteristics of the survey respondents in each community are found in [Table 1](#).

Table 1: Race and Hispanic Origin of Survey Respondents

Race or Hispanic Origin*	Charlotte	Dallas	Detroit	Los Angeles
American Indian and Alaskan Native	3.1%	2.9%	2.7%	4.0%
Asian	3.4%	2.9%	2.1%	11.2%
Black	49.3%	34.8%	53.4%	16.2%
Hispanic or Latino	13.0%	26.7%	10.3%	38.3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.4%
White, not Hispanic or Latino	36.3%	36.3%	35.9%	36.2%
Other	2.5%	6.3%	1.2%	8.8%

**Total for each community exceeds 100% because respondents could choose more than one category.*



The survey was designed to learn the number and types of pets in the household, number of pets who are regularly fed if they don't live in the household, how the pets were acquired, and access to veterinary care. It was also intended to measure the level of knowledge about current pet laws, and attitudes about animal control agencies and local police. Univariate and bivariate analysis with appropriate statistical tests to determine statistically significant difference was conducted on the results of the survey. A copy of the survey instrument can also be found in the [Appendix](#) to this report.

Focus groups with BIPOC community members were planned for this project. The protocol to recruit candidates from each community included using a web survey administered by Marketing Systems Group. A short pre-screening survey was designed to ensure inclusion of households who currently have a pet or had one in the past five years, and households who had successfully or unsuccessfully adopted a pet from an animal welfare organization. The screening survey was completed by 305 individuals. Of these, 169 agreed to participate in a focus group and provided their contact information. The 169 - 39 BIPOC and 130 White – were contacted at least three times, either by



telephone or email, depending on the information they provided, to schedule a time to participate in a focus group or in-depth interview. Despite these efforts, only six individuals were included in the interview. Because efforts to recruit using this protocol were not successful, a flyer was designed for distribution in the community. The flyer included a QR code and web link to the screening survey. The flyer was provided to five people who agreed to share with members of their community. Two additional interviews were completed from this effort.

Data provided the U.S. Census Bureau and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were included in the study. Specifically, U.S. Census Bureau data was accessed to compile demographic information and household income for each community. The Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) provided by CDC was used to better understand the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic makeup of the four communities. The SVI assesses communities' overall vulnerability by grouping fifteen census-derived factors into four themes that summarize the extent to which the area is socially vulnerable to disaster. The factors include economic data as well as data regarding education, family characteristics, housing, language ability, ethnicity, and vehicle access. The four themes include socioeconomic status, household characteristics, racial and ethnic minority status, and housing type and transportation. The index compares all United States census tracts (geographic units approximating neighborhoods) to each other. Higher scores on the index indicate higher social vulnerability.¹



¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/ Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry/ Geospatial Research, Analysis, and Services Program. CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index 2020 Database US. https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/data_documentation_download.html. Accessed on August 8, 2023



Data provided by the National Equity Atlas was accessed to report trends in home ownership and access to a vehicle for the four communities ([National Equity Atlas](#)). The National Equity Atlas is a detailed report card of indicators to inform policy makers and to advance racial equity. The atlas was created and is maintained by researchers at PolicyLink and the Equity Research Institute at the University of Southern California (USC).

Programmatic data was provided by Los Angeles Animal Care and Control, Dallas Animal Services, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control, and Michigan Humane. Data analyzed for this report included 31,530 records of dog adoptions with intake and outcome zip codes. The records included dogs that had been surrendered by their owner, strays, and seizures by animal control and adopted by an individual. The number and dates of adoption records by each community included in the analysis are:



Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12,612• calendar year 2017 through 2021
Dallas Animal Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7,439• calendar year 2022
Los Angeles County Animal Care and Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4,220• calendar year 2021 through the end of 2022
Michigan Humane	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7,213• January 2017 to May 2022



A web search was completed to access media coverage about animal welfare in the four communities. The searches focused on changes in laws or policies that had been enacted in the past ten years and the rationale provided for the changes. Searches also included stories about animal welfare issues.

Finally, the legal team at Companion and Animals for Reform and Equity (CARE) reviewed local laws from the four communities to identify codes that might create barriers or ways that the BIPOC community might be negatively impacted.

LIMITATIONS

This study explored how animal welfare policies and practices impacted different groups in four communities. Pet adoption records for dogs were used to explore the movement of where dogs who were adopted came from and location of their adopted home. Adoption records made available for this study did not include address specific information but only included the intake and outcome zip codes. Furthermore, demographic information from the previous owner nor the adopter was available. Geographic factors including scale of aggregation can impact results, since aggregation of data to the census tract level may result in variation from aggregation of data at the zip code level. The socioeconomic and racial composition of the retrieval and adoption zip codes may not directly represent the socioeconomic and racial demographics of those areas, or of adopting households. Data from additional variables, such as adopter demographics and motivations, could provide further insights into the adoption process.

Secondary data sources were used to better understand characteristics of the communities.



Data sources do not use consistent terminology. For instance, the National Equity Institute uses the term “Latino” while the U.S. Census Bureau uses the term “Hispanic”. Terminology used by the source of the secondary data source is retained. Adjustments were not made to make the language consistent.



Community survey data collected using a web panel service was used for this study. All survey research includes non-response bias. Non-response bias is introduced into a study when 100% participation is not obtained because the opinions and experiences of those who do not participate may differ significantly from those who do participate. Using a web panel may also introduce additional bias because eligibility for participation is restricted to those who agree to be a member of the web panel. A reputable company was used for this research to minimize non-response bias.

In-depth interviews with animal welfare professionals were conducted to gain insights about how animal welfare policies and procedures were implemented. The list of potential participants was provided by upper management from the animal welfare agencies who agreed to participate in the study. Everyone identified was invited to participate. However, not all agreed to be interviewed. Those who chose not to participate may hold different opinions and have different experiences from those who did participate about how policies and procedures are implemented. Furthermore, professionals no longer working for the organization were not included. These factors may have limited the ability to obtain a comprehensive picture of animal welfare operations.



Additional input was sought from community members who currently have a pet or had one in the past five years, and households who had successfully or unsuccessfully adopted a pet from an animal welfare organization. A short pre-screening survey was designed to ensure inclusion of pet owners and those who had successfully or unsuccessfully adopted a pet from an animal welfare organization. Despite attempts described above to increase the number of community members included in the study, participation was minimal. This may limit a full understanding of how policies and procedures used by animal welfare agencies are impacting members of the BIPOC community.



To minimize the potential bias of this study, data from multiple sources were used to triangulate findings. Results of thematic analysis of interviews with animal welfare professionals were compared across communities. To be included in the discussion, a theme was corroborated by multiple sources. The theme had to be mentioned in more than one community or data that was collected had to corroborate or support the observation. Secondary data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were also used to support findings from surveys and interviews.



Findings from the study are provided in the remainder of this report. The first section provides demographic information and characteristics for each of the four communities, discusses how animal control functions in the community, local animal laws, and the current adoption process being implemented in the community. The second section discusses how adoption policies have impacted the communities. The third section examines how policies are being implemented and the need for increased awareness about local laws. Finally, the last section shares recommendations for future studies researching racial disparities in animal welfare.

STUDY COMMUNITIES

The four communities in the study represent communities in different regions of the United States. The degree of racial and socioeconomic diversity differs across the communities. They also represent variations in animal welfare laws and how these laws are administered.

Charlotte, North Carolina

Charlotte, North Carolina, the most populous city in North Carolina, is a metropolitan area within Mecklenburg County. The county covers 524 square miles and is home to 1,115,482 residents according to 2020 census figures. The population is diverse with more than half its population being defined as BIPOC largely comprised of Black or African Americans.



Table 2: Mecklenburg County, NC racial and ethnic makeup Source:
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts>

Race and Hispanic Origin	
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.9%
Asian	6.7%
Black or African American	33.2%
*Hispanic or Latino	14.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
White, not Hispanic or Latino	44.9%
Two or More Races	2.7%

* Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories

There are significant income disparities for residents in the community. Less than one out of four White households (22%) have an annual income below \$50,000 while almost half of Black households report the same level of income. ([Figure 1](#))

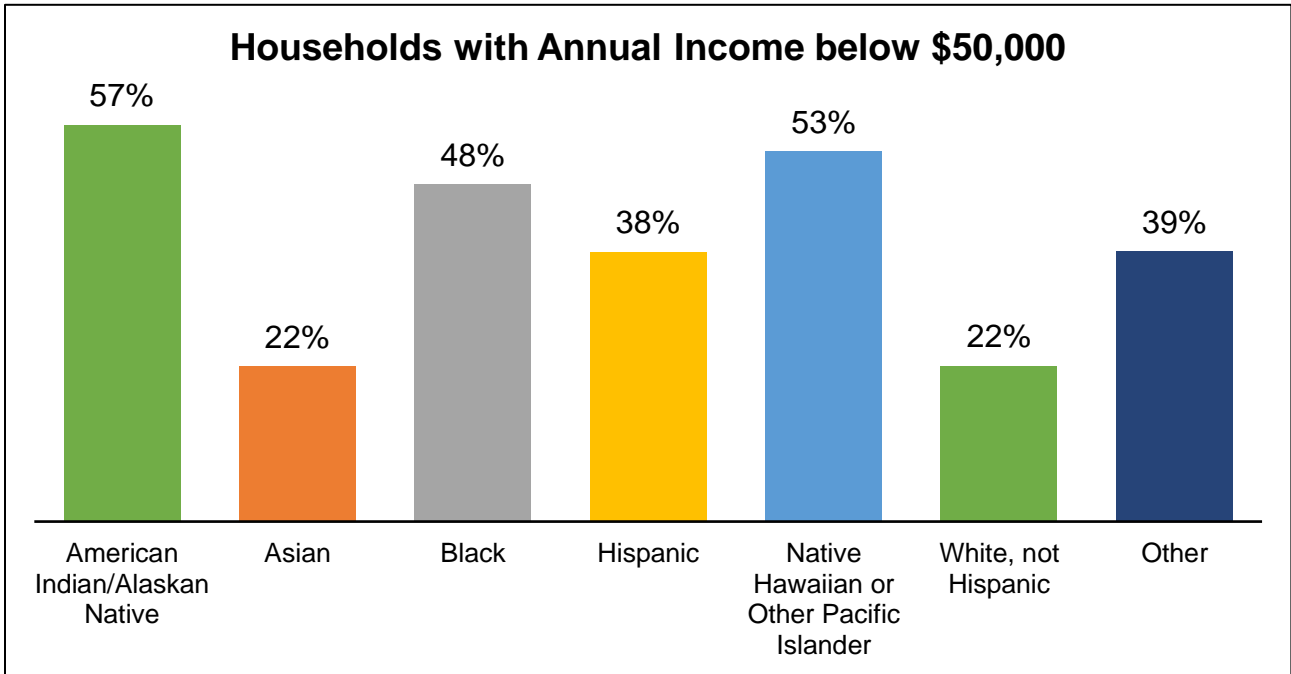


Figure 1: Mecklenburg County, NC; Source: U.S. Census Bureau Table B19001

There is also inequity in home ownership rates between racial and ethnic groups. In Mecklenburg County, White households are significantly more likely to own their homes than are people of color. Black and Latino households are least likely to own their homes.

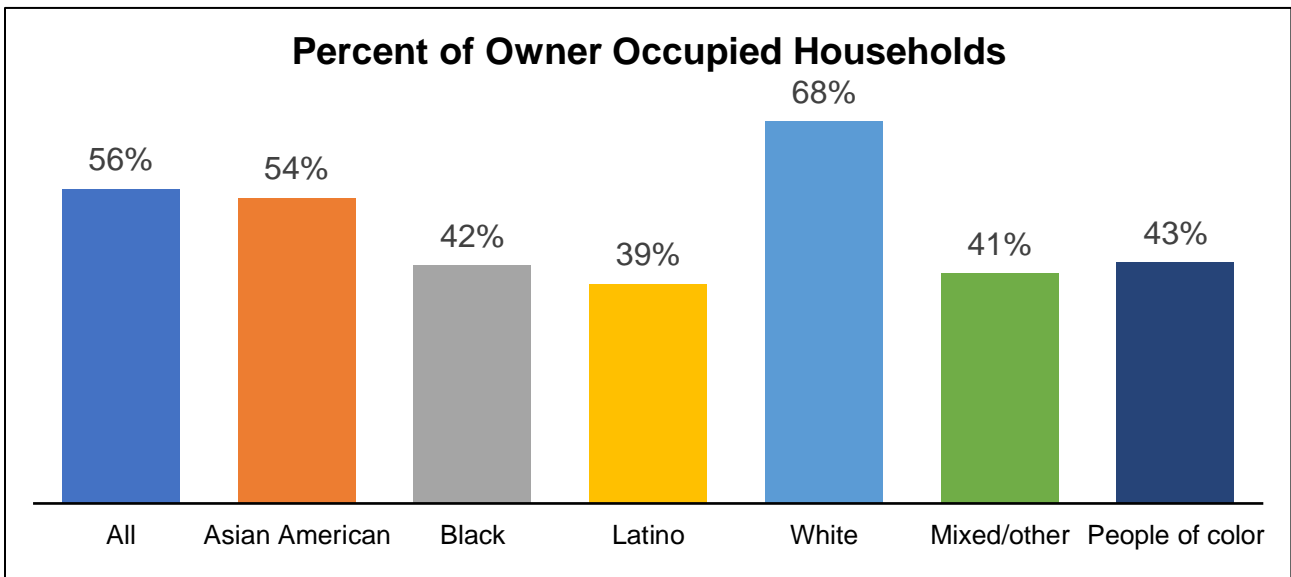


Figure 2: Mecklenburg County, NC Home Ownership; Source: www.nationalequityatlas.org

Consistent with lower household incomes and lower home ownership rates, members of the BIPOC community are also less likely than White households to have access to a vehicle. Only 3% of White households lack access to a vehicle while 9% of Black households do not have access to a vehicle.

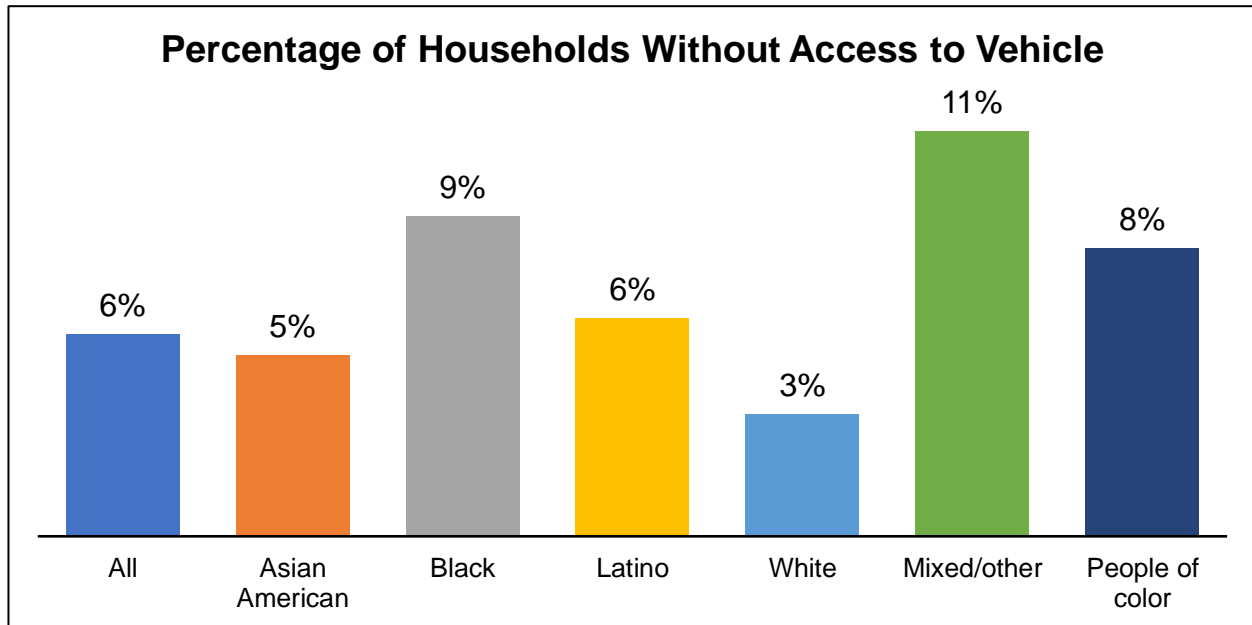


Figure 3: Mecklenburg, NC Lack of Access to Vehicle Source: www.nationalequityatlas.org



The Charlotte Mecklenburg County Animal Care and Control (CMCACC) is housed within the police department. The Director of CMCACC, who is responsible for the animal control officers and shelter operations, reports directly to the Chief of Police, but also responds to the City Manager and ultimately to the City Council. While CMCACC is part of the police department, the animal control officers are not police officers and are considered civilians.

The facility is located in the southwest section of the county near the Charlotte International Airport. While much of the surrounding area is defined as a high vulnerability area, it is a distance from other areas that are also defined as high vulnerability. The facility has extended operating hours and is open to the public seven days a week.

“We’re one of the few places that I know that’s open seven days a week, and we’re one of the only places I know that have extended hours on weekends and weekdays.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

However, the facility is not on a major bus line and transportation was identified as a barrier for accessing the facility and its services.

“We are not on public transit here much to my chagrin. By virtue of that, it would be very difficult for anyone who did not have their own vehicle to come out to our facility.” ~ Animal Welfare Professional

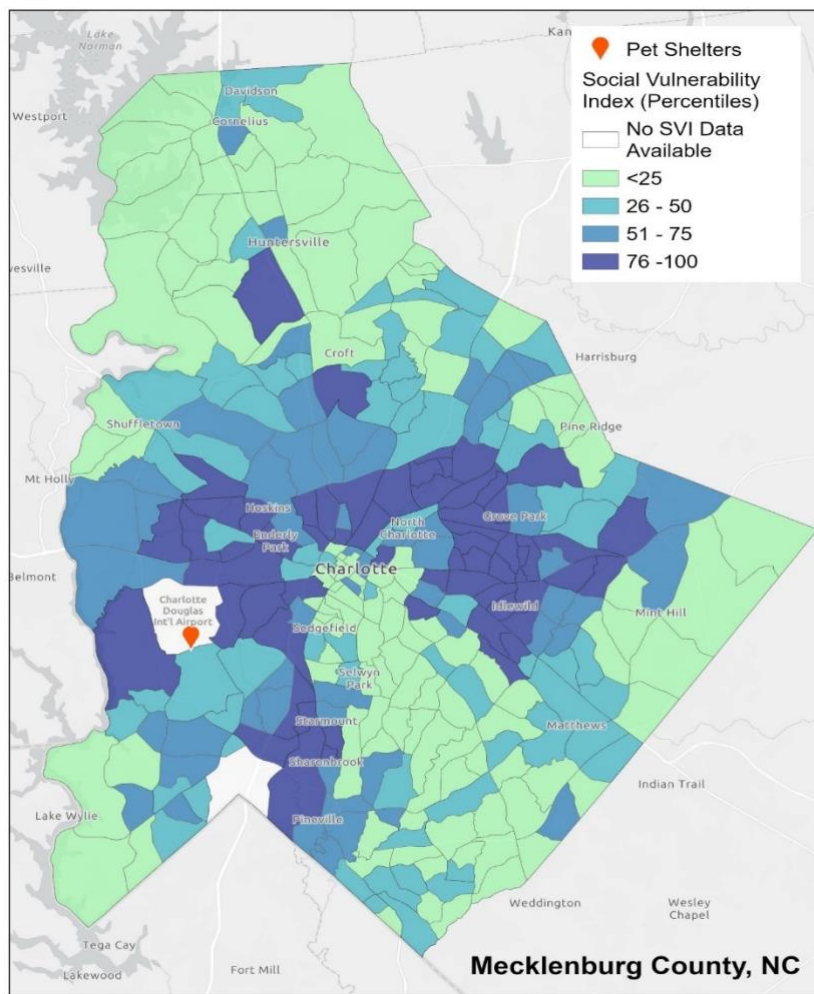
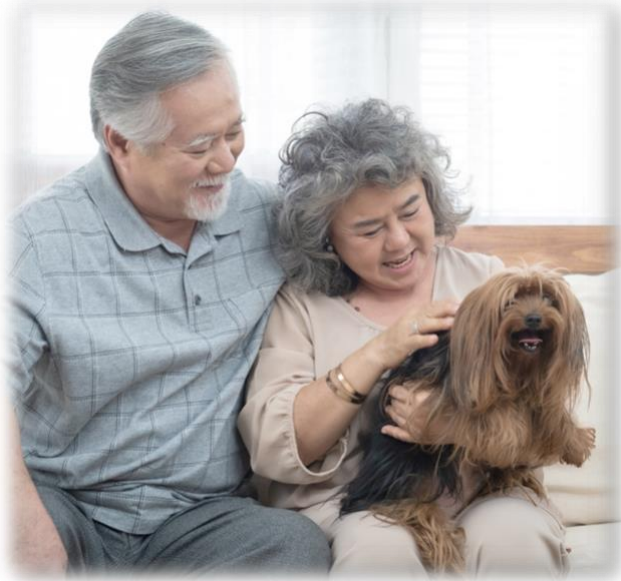


Figure 4: Mecklenburg County, NC SVI



Local ordinances in Mecklenburg County ([Charlotte Mecklenburg County Code of Ordinances](#))² require an annual license for all dogs and cats. The annual license has a 3-year option for sterile pets. The fee is \$10. Licenses are free for senior owners aged 62 and above, as well as for those with certain disabilities. Pet owners who live within the city limits of Charlotte are limited to three or more animals that are kept outside.

Recent changes to the laws reduced the number of days a pet owner could appeal a decision about termination of ownership from 30 days to 10 days. The impetus for this change was to reduce the animal's number of days in the shelter and to help address the problem of overcrowding in the shelter. Furthermore, only on rare occasion – once in the past eight years – has a decision been appealed to Superior Court.

“We reduced that - 30 days to 10 days - to fall more in line with the statutory requirements for Dangerous Dog appeals, as well as to reduce the amount of time that these animals are sitting in a shelter waiting for a date to pass.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional



CMACC offers free rabies vaccines once a month for pet owners. They also offer low cost spay/neuter services for the public as space allows.

² Local ordinances are subject to change.

CMACC Adoption Process

CMACC has an open adoption process. Pictures of all animals eligible for adoption – including those on stray hold - are posted on their website so that those who are interested in adopting a pet can see what pets are available. The facility is open from 11 am to 7 pm Monday through Friday and is also open during the weekend – 11am to 5 pm on Saturday and Sunday. The extended hours allow the public to have more access to the animals and to better accommodate work schedules for those who work outside of the home.

“We don't have any barriers to adoption. You don't have to own your own home and your pets at home don't have to be current on a rabies shot. When I first started here, you had to own your home or you had to bring in a lease showing that you're allowed to have a dog at that home. Your dogs at home had to be current on a rabies shot and have a license before you can adopt. We used to have all types of barriers, but those things have been dropped. The only thing that allows you not to really adopt here now is if you have animal cruelty charges pending against you.”

~ Animal Care Professional



“They [potential adopters] walk the facility. They can see all of the animals that are available for adoption that day as well as all of the animals that are still on their stray hold.... If they see an animal that is available for adoption, they take a picture of the kennel card and bring it up to our customer service team. Somebody [from the team] will go get the dog and will put them in an interaction room where they can interact If they decide they want to adopt, they fill out paperwork that day. It's very brief paperwork. Usually start to finish, once they say, 'Yes, I want to adopt this dog.' it usually takes less than 15 minutes.”

~ Animal Care Professional

Dallas, Texas

Dallas is the third most populous city in Texas. The city covers 340 square miles and is home to 1,299,544 residents according to 2020 census figures. The population is diverse with more than half its population defined as BIPOC. The BIPOC population is largely comprised of Hispanic or Latino residents.



Table 3: Dallas, TX Racial and ethnic makeup Source:
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts>

Race and Hispanic Origin	
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.6%
Asian	3.7%
Black or African American	23.6%
Hispanic or Latino*	42.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	28.3%
Two or More Races	13.1%

* Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.



There are significant income inequities between residents in the community. Less than one out of four White households have an annual income below \$50,000 while almost half of Black households report the same level of income. (Figure 5)

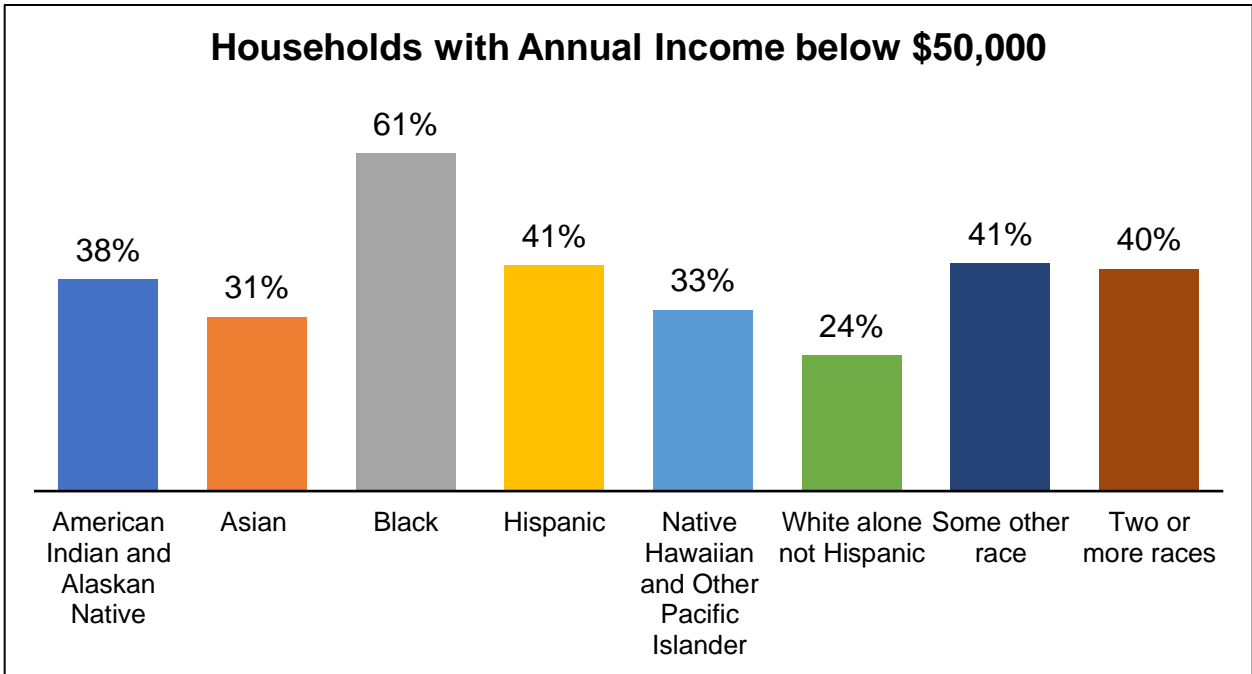


Figure 5: Dallas, TX Household income Source: U.S. Census Bureau Table B19001

Consistent with income inequities, BIPOC households are less likely to own the home where they are living. Black households have the lowest homeownership rate with less than one out of three (30%) households owning their residence.

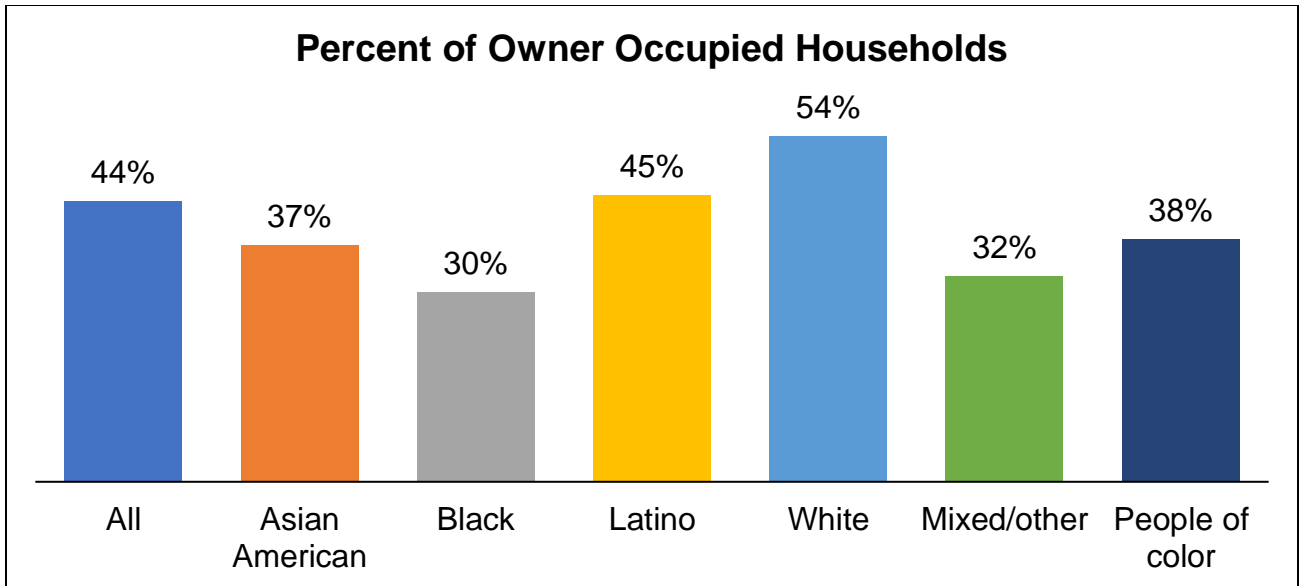


Figure 6: Dallas, TX Home ownership Source: www.nationalequityatlas.org

People of color are also more likely to live in a household that lacks access to a vehicle. People of color are twice as likely than White households to not have access to a vehicle – 12% compared to 6%.

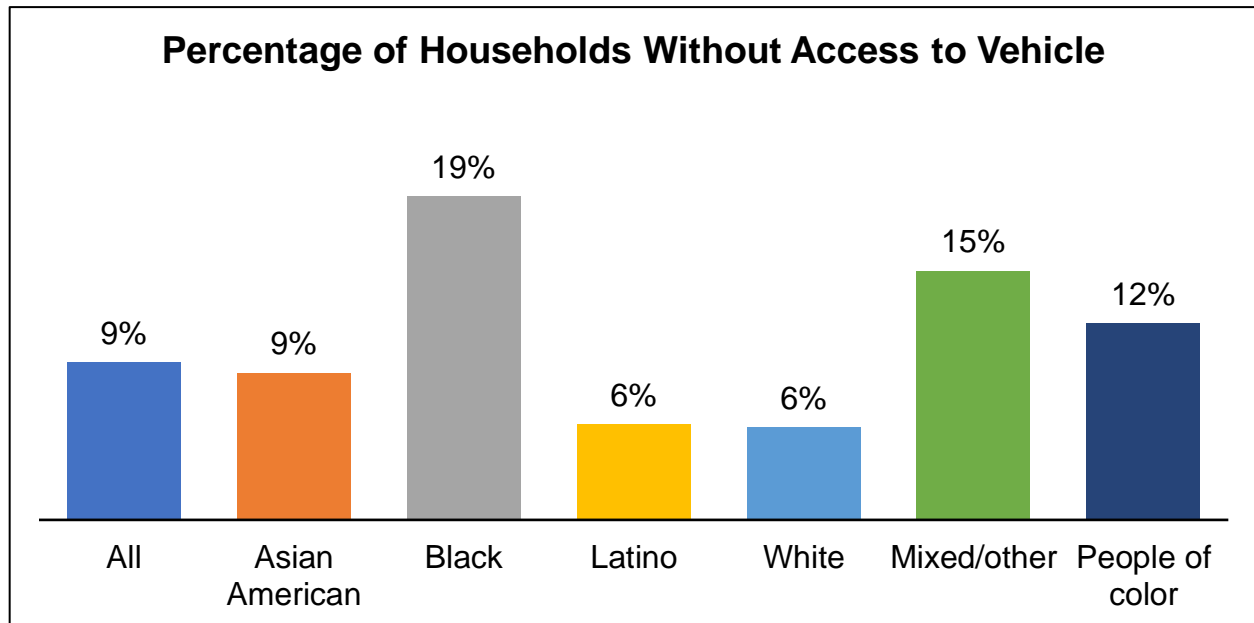


Figure 7: Dallas, TX Lack of access to vehicle Source: www.nationalequityatlas.org



Significant changes were made to Dallas Animal Services (DAS) in 2017 to address roaming dogs in Dallas following the death of Antoinette Brown. Ms. Brown, grandmother and U.S. Army veteran, was mauled by a pack of dogs in South Dallas in 2016. A study was ordered following the incident which found that more than 9,000 dogs were roaming in the south Dallas area (Mervosh, 2016).

These changes resulted in DAS being named a stand-alone department. The Director now reports to the City Manager, who is hired by the City Council. Other changes enacted in 2017 eliminated the requirement for the owners of dogs and cats to purchase a license. Instead, pet owners are now required to purchase a microchip for their dog or cat. All dogs and cats are now

required to be spayed or neutered by six months and additional restrictions were placed on breeders. Pet owners are now limited to four animals in their household. The changes also strengthened penalties for repeat offenders for non-compliance for proper restraint, rabies vaccination, microchip or spay/neuter requirements. ([Dallas Code of Ordinances](#)).

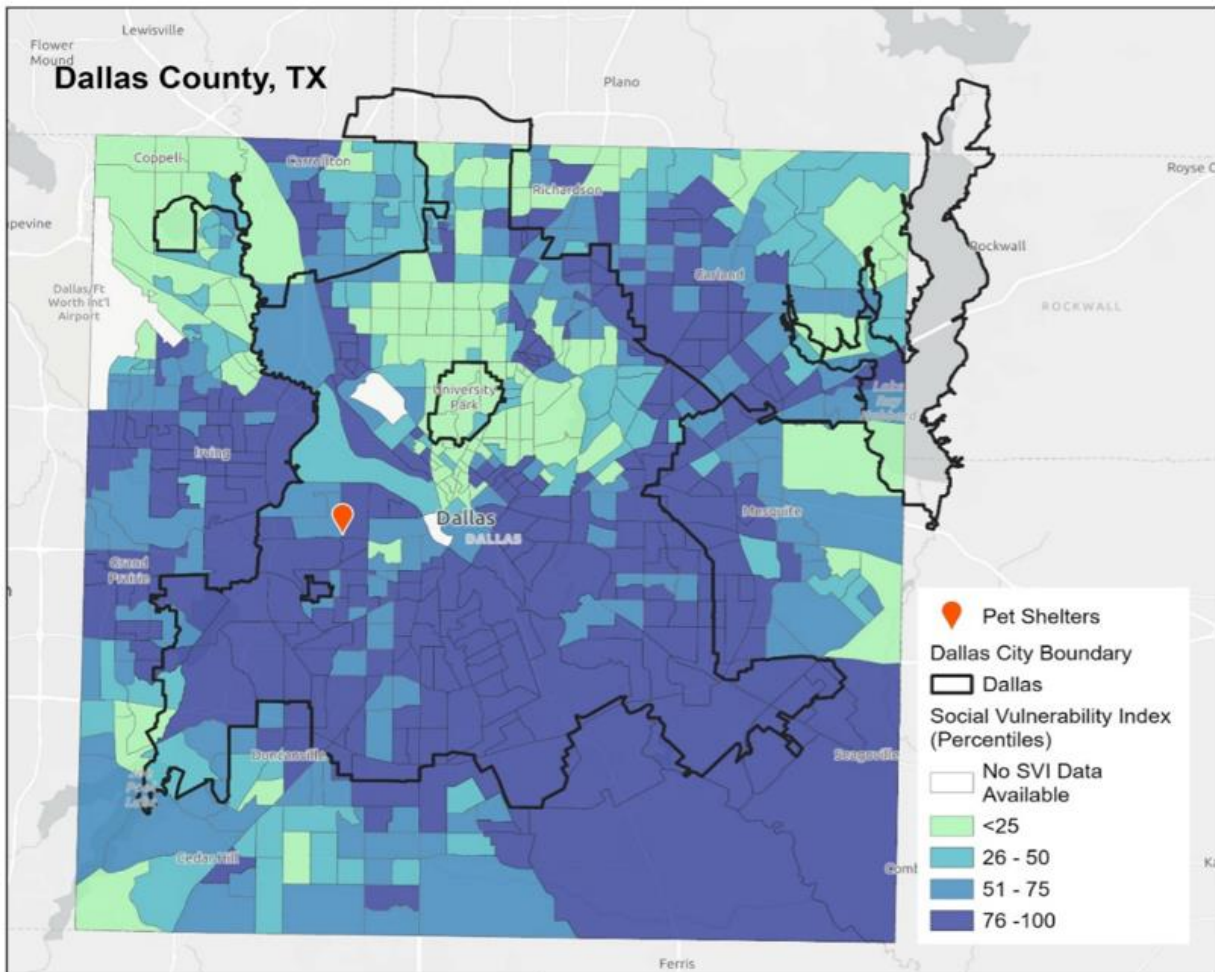


Figure 8. Dallas, TX

Dallas is often viewed as two regions – north and south divided by I-30. Residents in south Dallas are more likely to be BIPOC and in a lower socioeconomic category. Areas with the highest SVI categories are almost exclusively found in south Dallas. Dallas Animal Services and Adoption Center is located in the west central part of Dallas. The location can be problematic for those who do not have access to a vehicle and must rely on public transportation.



“There's not {sic} sidewalks right where we're at and it's kind of in an industrial area. It's not like a real densely populated area.There's a bus route, but it's up a ways from the shelter and depending on if you're able to take your pet on the bus with you [impacts ability to access the facility]. There's a train somewhere, but then you have to jump on a bus to be able to get from the train to us, and then we're west of the city. So it's a little bit like we're not in the best place [for people to access].”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

DAS provides free pet food for residents through its Pet Food Pantry Program. It also partners with the Spay Neuter Network to offer microchips at a discounted rate.

DAS Adoption policy



DAS also has an open adoption policy, and the public has been able to adopt without fees since 2020. The adoption policy has no restrictions that require a yard or a fenced yard. A person who is interested in adopting walks through the kennels and identifies a pet in which they are interested in adopting. The staff shares any information they have about the pet that is stored in Chameleon. However, the information is often limited. If the pet is off its stray hold, a “meet and greet” is arranged so the adopter can spend time with the animal. A person can “pre-adopt” if the pet is still under its stray hold, but they are not permitted to physically meet the animal until after the stray hold expires.

There is currently not an adoption application, but the person adopting does sign a contract so that contact information is part of the adoption record for microchip information. A government issued picture ID is required though it does not have to be issued in the

United States. Exceptions are sometimes made for people who do not have a government issued ID.

“We do make a few exceptions to the government issued ID requirement. So for example, there is a local nonprofit that provides services to unhoused individuals in Dallas, and they have their own form of ID for people who are struggling to get the government issued ID. It has a photo on it and it has the last four [numbers] of their social.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional



If the pet is not altered, the pet can either leave as a foster to adopt and the person adopting is required to bring the pet back for surgery to complete the adoption process. The person can also wait and take the animal home after the surgery is completed.

“If someone reaches out and says that they do not have the ability to come into the shelter, and ... they've seen the pet that they want online, we will counsel them over the phone, and then we can either arrange for someone to pick up the pet in their place and bring it to them, or I do have volunteers that can take a pet to somebody.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional



DAS also offers adoption support for people who have mobility issues or are not able to physically travel to the facility. The person’s information is taken over the phone and DAS delivers the animal to the person’s home.

Detroit, Michigan

Detroit is located in Wayne County and is the most populous city in Michigan. Detroit has 620,376 residents and Wayne County has an additional 1,136,667 residents.³ The racial composition of the two areas differs significantly. The city of Detroit has the highest percentage of Black or African American residents compared to the other three communities included in the study.



Race and Hispanic Origin	Detroit, MI	Wayne County MI
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.4%	0.5%
Asian	1.6%	3.7%
Black or African American	77.8%	38.3%
Hispanic or Latino	7.5%	6.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%
White, not Hispanic or Latino	10.1%	49.0%
Two or More Races	3.8%	2.9%

*Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.

Table 4: Detroit, MI racial and ethnic makeup Source:
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts>

³ Demographic information for the city of Detroit and Wayne County are included in this report due to the city’s relationship with Michigan Humane. Michigan Humane’s service area includes the city of Detroit and Wayne County.

All residents living in Detroit, regardless of race or ethnicity, have lower household incomes than their counterparts who live outside of the city. Except for Asian households, BIPOC households are more likely to have income below \$50,000 than White households. ([Figure 9](#))

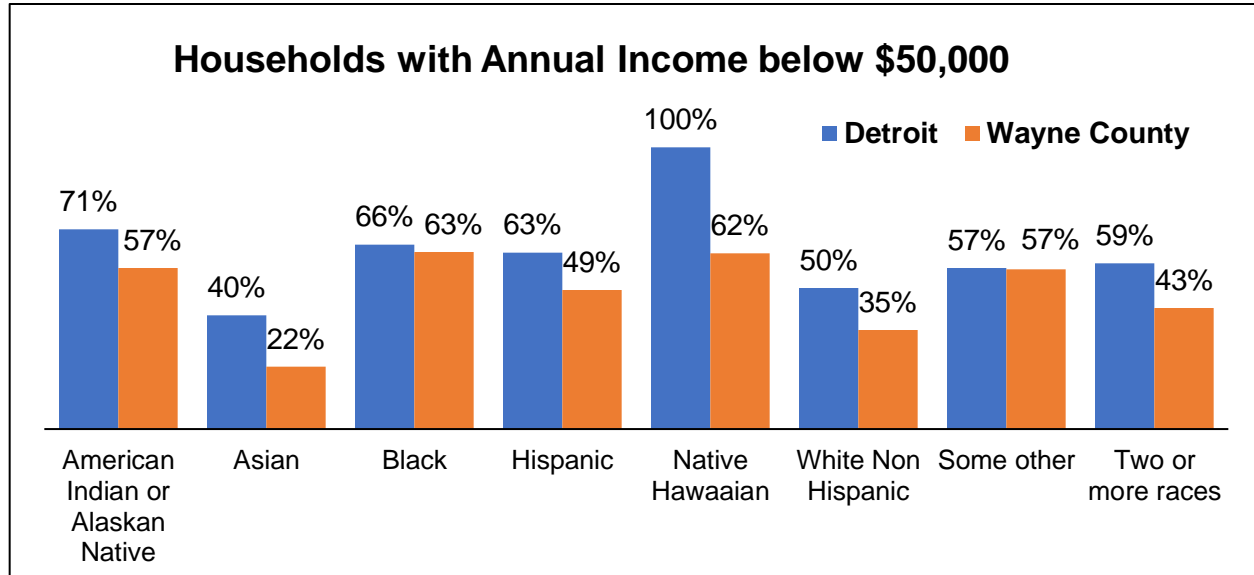


Figure 8: Detroit, MI Household income Source: U.S. Census Bureau Table B19001

There are inequities in home ownership rates between White households and BIPOC households in both Detroit and Wayne County. However, the differences are not as extreme in Detroit as they are in Wayne County. Asian Americans in Detroit have the lowest home ownership rate (36%).

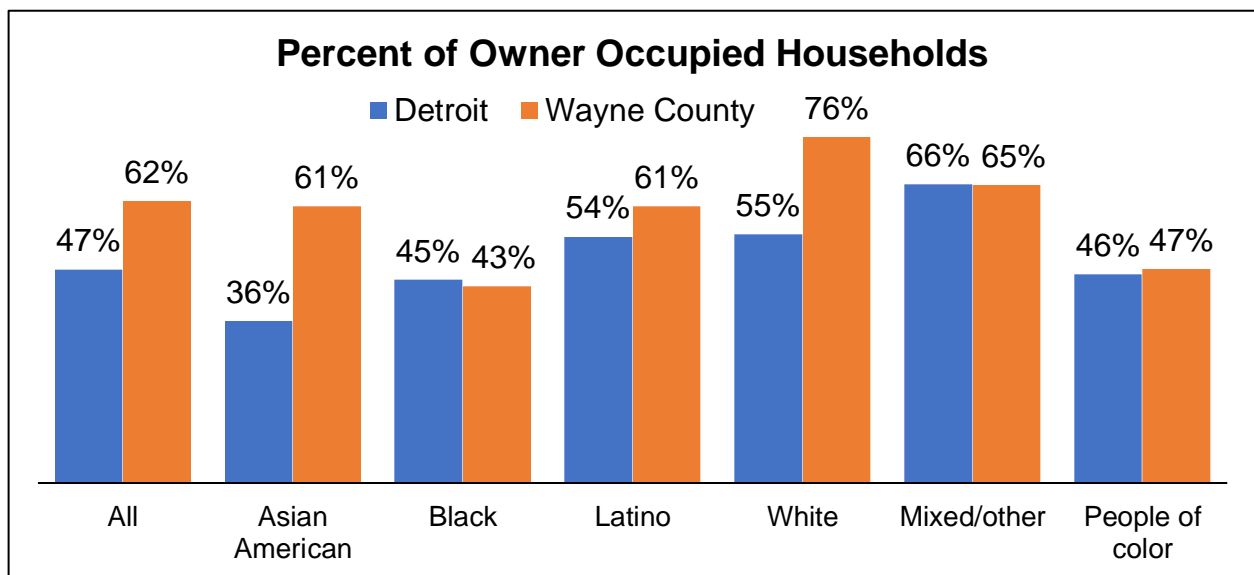


Figure 9: Detroit, MI Home ownership rate Source: www.nationalequityatlas.org



Lack of transportation is a significant barrier in Detroit. The percentage of households without access to a vehicle is higher than other communities included in the study. Households from racial and ethnic minority groups disproportionately lack access to a vehicle – 24% of BIPOC households compared to 15% of White households.

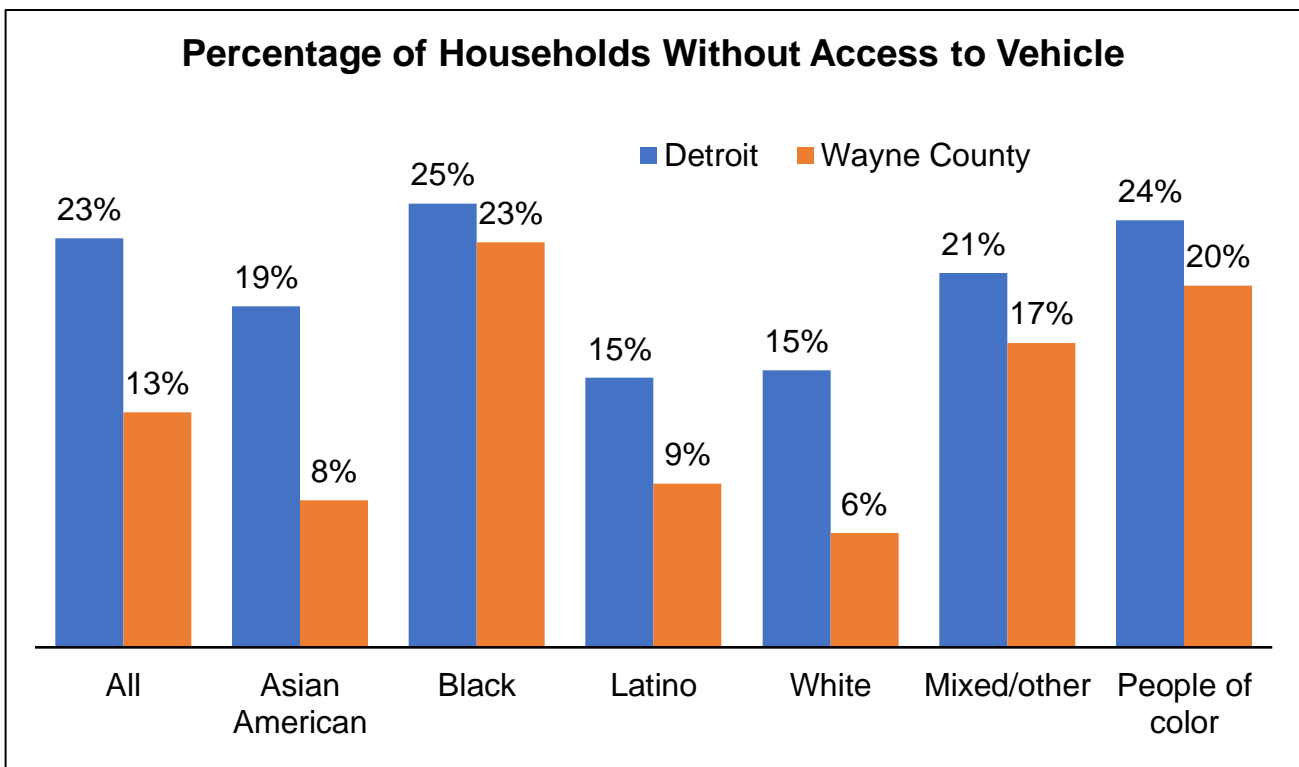


Figure 10: Detroit, MI Lack of access to vehicle Source: www.nationalequityatlas.org



[Detroit Animal Care and Control](#) (DACC) is currently housed in the City of Detroit's General Services department. However, it has been within the Department of Public Safety in the past. [Michigan Humane](#), a non-profit animal welfare organization that focuses on being a human centered animal welfare organization. It partners with DACC to provide support for emergency animal cruelty and rescue cases. The partnership with DACC is codified in Detroit's local ordinances where it states that if ordered, an owner must complete the "Animal Awareness Program" offered by Michigan Humane Society or by the Detroit Animal Care and Control Division ([Detroit Code of Ordinances](#)). Michigan Humane also provides contract animal services for other municipalities in Wayne County.



Recent changes in Detroit's ordinances were driven by children being mauled to death by dogs. The city ordinances were amended in 2017 after Xavier Strickland died from being mauled by a dog to include "This ordinance shall be known as the "Xavier Strickland Memorial Animal Control Ordinance" to honor the life and memory of Xavier Strickland, who was fatally injured by dangerous dogs, and to demonstrate the commitment by the City of Detroit that the circumstances, which led to Xavier Strickland's tragic death, are addressed for the safety and peace of mind of People of the City of Detroit." The new rules restricted tethering of dogs outdoors to three hours and required that dogs be provided with food and water.

In 2020, Detroit city ordinances were amended to restrict the number of dog licenses to two per residence. The latest change, informally known as Emma's Clause, was adopted after a 3-year-old girl was mauled to death by three pit bulls. The new ordinance also provides multiple designations for nuisance animals, potentially dangerous, dangerous and vicious dogs.



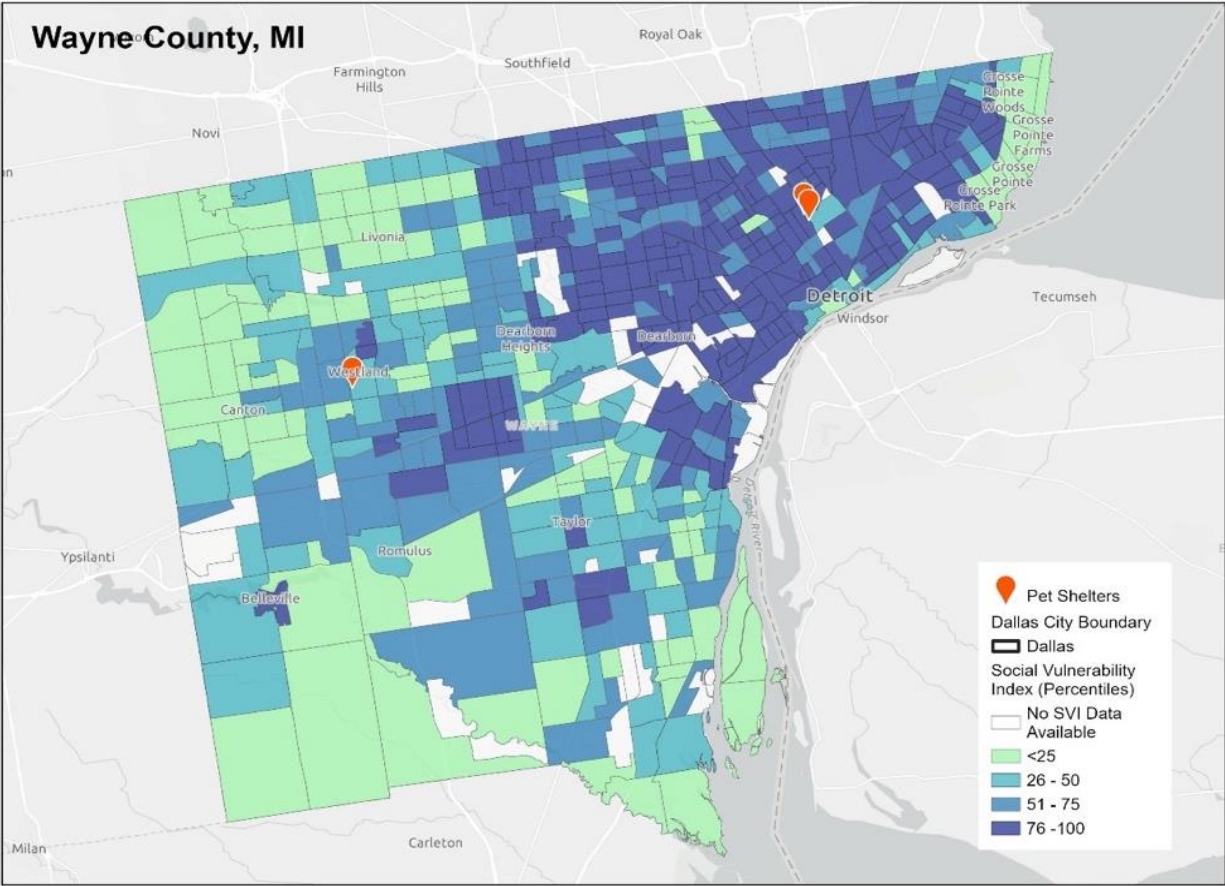


Figure 11: Detroit, MI SVI

DACC and Michigan Humane’s animal shelter are located less than one mile apart. They are located in the middle of an area that has a high social vulnerability score. Consistent with being in the middle of a high vulnerability area, lack of transportation remains a barrier for residents to access the facilities.

Michigan Humane offers free pet food at the Caplan Family Pet Food Pantry. It also offers free vaccine clinics and a mobile veterinary care unit. Friends of the DACC offers a free Pet Ownership Class for people to learn more about vet care, pet health, grooming, pet manners and behavior, and introducing a new pet into the home. The classes are offered at local public library branches.



Adoption Process

Detroit Animal Services and Michigan Humane have eliminated most of the barriers that were in place for adoptions. People who adopt a pet from Detroit Animal Services receive free behavior consultation within the first two weeks for dogs with identified behavior issues.

“If it's something that is beyond their scope of training, we'll cover the additional training for up to three trainings to make sure it's a good flow into the household. If it still doesn't work, they'll return the animal to us, and we'll try again. The only thing I force them to pay is if they're a Detroit resident, they have to pay for a dog license, which is only \$10, but everything else is given to them. They get a leash, collar, and harness.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional



Michigan Humane adopted a conversational approach for adoption about ten years ago. The application has gone from a two-page application to a conversation that tries to find a good fit for both the animal and the human.

“It's gone through several iterations, but it went through a major overhaul probably about 10 or 11 years ago. It went from two pages, front and back, whole life story to just tell me your name and address; got any other pets? And now I'm going to have a conversation with you. What are you looking for? What's a deal breaker for you on a pet? What would not be ideal?... Having that natural conversation, finding the right fit through that natural conversation, understanding where people are coming from, what they're looking for, and how we can support them in a successful adoption [is the current process].”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

Los Angeles, California

Los Angeles County is the most populous county in the country with more than 9.7 million residents estimated in 2022 living within 4,059 square miles. It is home to a diverse population – both racially and economically. Half of the residents (49%) are Hispanic or Latino and one out of six residents are Asian (15.8%). The racial makeup of Los Angeles has the lowest population of Black or African Americans (9.0%) compared to the other three communities included in this study.



Table 1: Los Angeles County racial and ethnic makeup Source:
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts>

Race and Hispanic Origin	
American Indian and Alaska Native	1.5%
Asian	15.8%
Black or African American	9.0%
Hispanic or Latino	49.0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.4%
White, not Hispanic or Latino,	25.2%
Two or More Races, percent	3.4%

* Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories

The county also has inequities in household income. Similar to trends found in other communities, BIPOC households consistently have lower incomes than White households. Black or African American households are significantly more likely than others to have annual incomes below \$50,000.

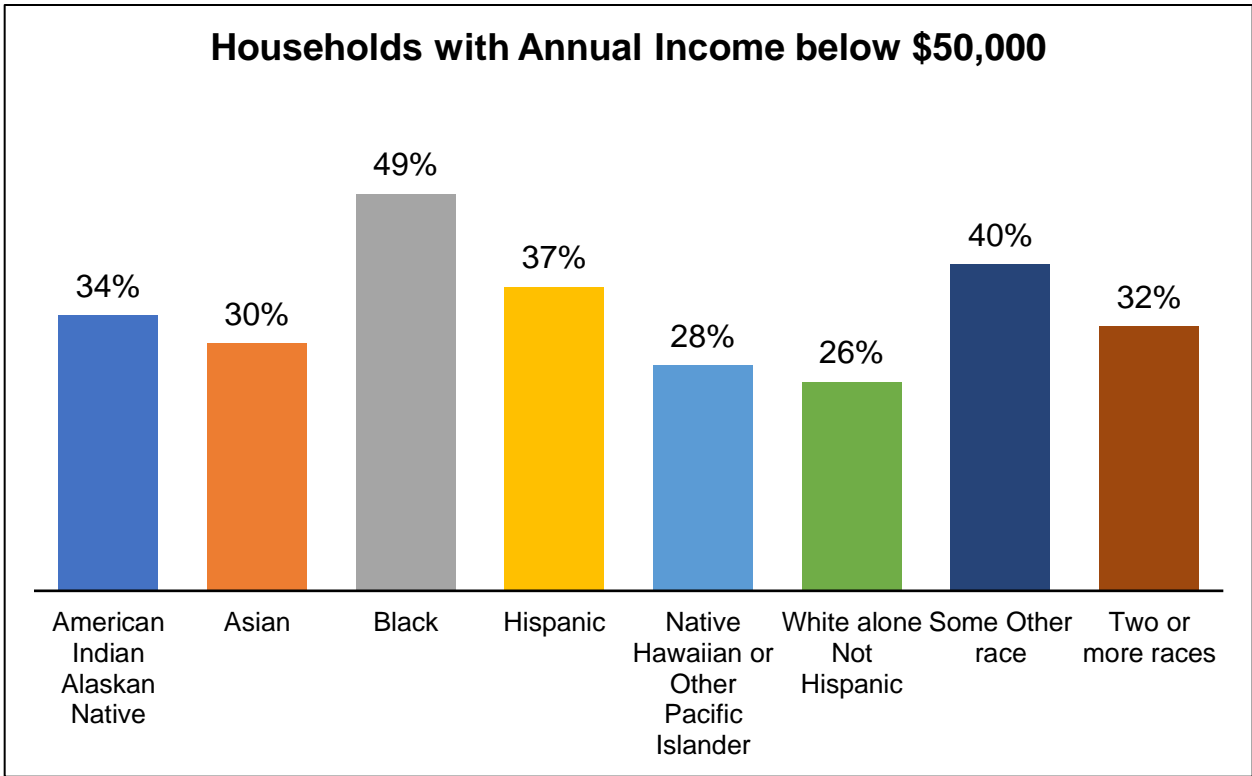


Figure 12: Los Angeles County Household Income Source: U.S. Census Bureau Table B19001



Black or African American and Pacific Islander households are least likely to own the homes they are living in. Asian American and White households are most likely – more than half own their home. Collectively, BIPOC households are less likely than White households to own their home – 41% compared to 53%.

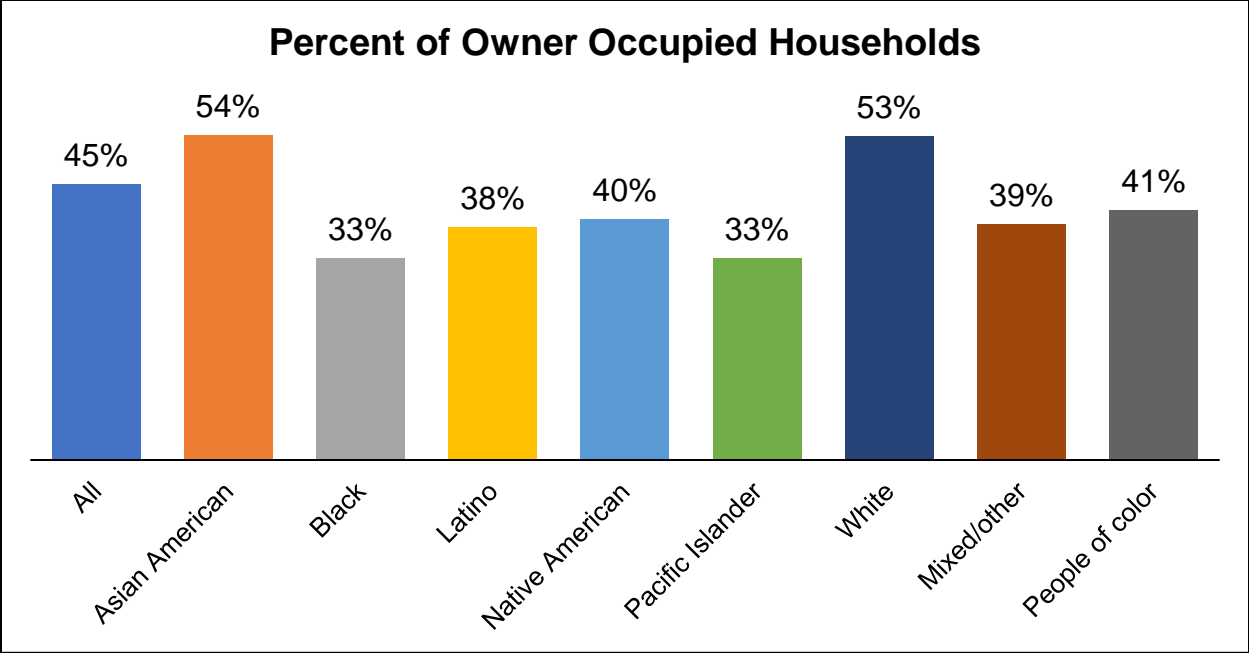


Figure 13: Los Angeles Home ownership rate Source: www.nationalequityatlas.org

While the disproportion is not as stark when comparing income and home ownership rates, BIPOC households are more likely than White households to not have access to a vehicle. Black and Native American households are most likely to not have access to a vehicle.

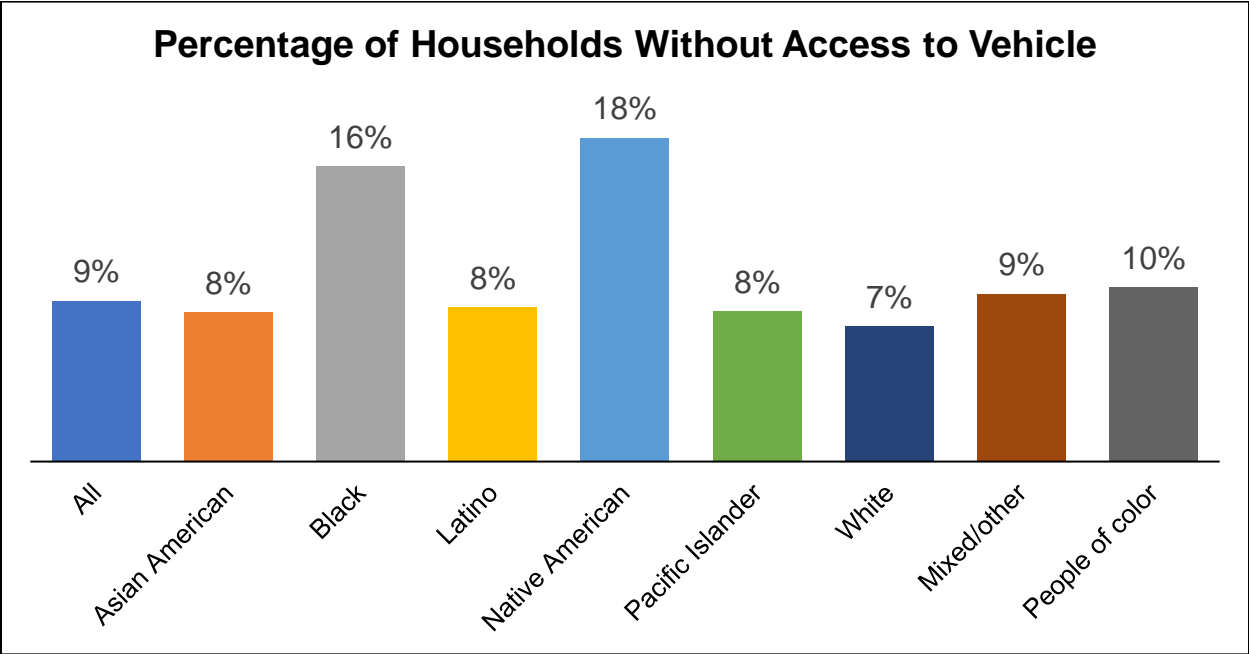


Figure 14: Los Angeles County Lack of access to vehicle Source: www.nationalequityatlas.org

The Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC) is a department that reports to the County of Los Angeles' Board of Supervisors. It operates seven animal care centers across the county – three in the northern part of the county and four in the southern part. Three of the southern centers are located in areas defined as high vulnerability as defined by the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI). Lack of transportation can also be a barrier.

“There are a lot of communities, especially in the north because it's more rural, that are a little bit further away or the distances larger [from the animal care center], even though the traffic's not as bad. The distance is larger from their home to the closest Animal Care Center so accessibility to the care is not always as easy as we think it is.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

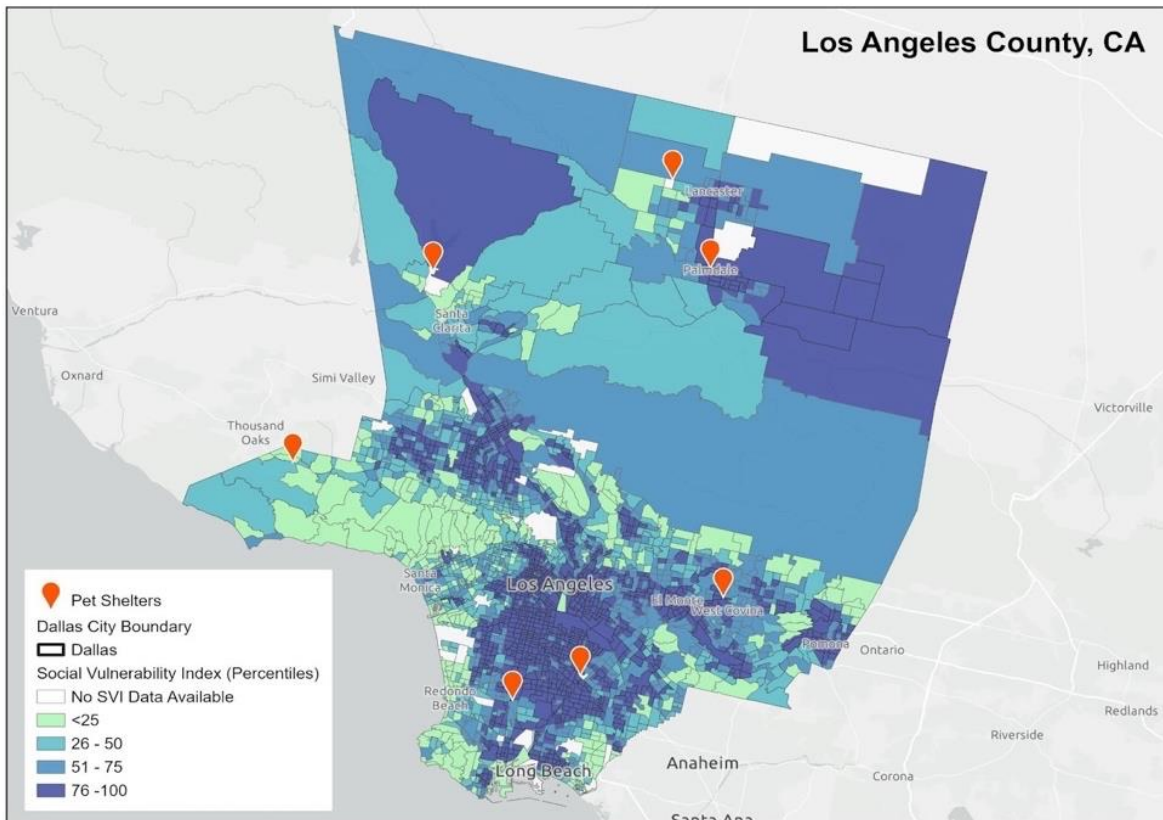


Figure 15: Los Angeles SVI

Local ordinances that regulate pet ownership are referred to as Title 10 in Los Angeles County ([Los Angeles County Code of Ordinances](#)). In 2016, an extensive overhaul of Title 10 was completed with a focus on using language to make the laws more understandable to the public. Included in Title 10 is a requirement that dogs and cats must be licensed within 30 days after obtaining the animal. In order for the license to be issued, the dog or cat must be vaccinated for rabies. A separate provision requires that a dog must receive a rabies vaccination by a licensed veterinarian before the dog turns four months old. The county also requires that dogs and cats be microchipped.



Additionally, all cats and dogs four months or older must be spayed or neutered unless it is not advised for medical reasons. Title 10 also has a provision that authorizes the creation of a volunteer program to promote the department's mission. Volunteers help with return to owner efforts, presentations to youth and other civic groups, and running adoption and spay/neuter events. The efforts have been successful; however, demographic information is not collected so it is not possible to know if volunteers are representative of the overall population.

Los Angeles DACC also provides community services to help pet owners to be able to adhere to local ordinances. Each of the seven care centers offers two community vaccination clinics per month and one spay and neuter clinic per month. They also offer a program called "Vet at the Park" that offers spay and neuter clinic away from the Care Center. LACAC also partners with Spay4LA, a mobile low-cost spay neuter service to serve residents in Los Angeles County.

Adoption Process

Like other communities, the adoption process has changed in the last few years. Prior to COVID, there were restrictions when someone was interested in adopting a dog considered to be a dominant breed. If the person did not own their own home, the landlord had to approve the adoption.

“We used to, I want to say three, four years ago, if [they wanted to adopt] a dominant breed then they had to fill out an application - dominant breed being pit bull, mastiff, something of that nature. And the application asked, “Do you rent? If so what's your landlords phone number?” because we have to call them and verify that the landlord was aware that they would be bringing this animal home because insurance purposes. But I believe it was during when COVID hit, and we closed everything down, and things were chaotic ... they got rid of the dominant breed application.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional



The current adoption process in the care centers is a “conversational” adoption. A person who is interested in adopting a pet completes an application that asks about how many people live in the household, ages of the members of the household, and if there are other animals in the household. The person sees the dogs once they sign



a waiver and have an opportunity to ask questions about the animal. The front-line staff engages the person in conversation so they can help the person find the right animal for their household and circumstances.



<https://www.westladogs.com/the-facilities>

Prior to being available for adoption, all dogs weighing over 35 pounds are evaluated by a Behavioral Enrichment Team (BET). Depending on the behavior of the dog during interactions with the team or in a play group, the BET makes recommendations about what type of household can adopt the dog. The BET may require that the animal be placed in a home without other animals or young children. Living conditions – such as a house or apartment – are not part of the restrictions. These notes are placed in Chameleon, the software system, for the staff members who are interacting with the public.

"We don't look at 'Are you going to live in an apartment? Are you going to be in a home? Do you have a fence?' We don't look at that. What we do look at is [the evaluation notes written] by our behavior team.They [the behavior team] puts them in a play group in the play yard and evaluate them by their behavior. So by their behavior towards other dogs then their history, they could have a bite history,the behavior team watches the behavior of the animals. ... They may say the dog is available for public adoption, but with no kids and then they can say recommended or they can say required. So somebody [a potential adopter who has children] ... and say 'Oh, my goodness, I love this dog, I want to adopt it' and they'll [front line staff] go 'Ooh you know it's no children required and they won't be able to adopt that animal.'"

~ Animal Welfare Professional

Once a person has decided on an animal to adopt, the staff member may recommend that if a person has other animals in the home that they bring them in to determine how they will interact with each other, but it is not a requirement. The only other requirement for being able to adopt is the person must have a valid California identification. All animals are required to be spayed or neutered, microchipped, vaccinated, and licensed before they are adopted.



The animal shelters and care centers in the four communities included in this study have dropped many of the restrictions for adoption that were once used. All have adopted a more “conversational” type application process and focused on finding the best fit for both the person adopting and the pet. The purpose for trying to find the right fit was to minimize the number of pet returns because the pet did not blend well with the other family members or other pets in the home. All had systems that checked to determine that the person who was applying to adopt had not been convicted of an animal cruelty charge in the past. An animal cruelty conviction would make the person ineligible for adoption. Records were also checked for recent adoptions to ensure the person had not exceeded the legal limit in their community.

Historically, this was not the process that people wanting to adopt a pet from an animal shelter would have experienced. In the past, adopters were required to complete lengthy applications, provide proof that other animals in the home were current on the licenses and vaccinations, and meet other requirements. These requirements differed somewhat across the communities, but adopters who lived in a house might be required to have a fenced yard. Renters were often required to show proof that their landlord or housing unit approved the tenant having a pet. This was especially true for larger dogs such as pit bulls.



“When I first started (18 years ago) you had to own your own home or you had to bring in a lease showing that you're allowed to have a dog. Your dogs at home had to be current on their rabies shots and dogs had to be licensed before you can adopt.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional



RESCUE GROUPS

The animal services included in this study partner with private and non-profit foster and rescue groups to help find homes for pets. While many restrictive policies have been dropped by the municipal shelters and care centers included in this study, private and non-profit foster and rescue groups have continued to require adopters to be screened before adoptions are granted. Some groups conduct home visits to ensure that adopters meet the standards of what is defined as a responsible pet owner by the organization. These organizations often charge a substantial fee for the adoption.



“So in my experience, public municipal agencies have reduced requirements for adoption. I can't say that they have no restrictions, because there's definitely agencies out there that are not as accepting as we are. You'll also find a lot of private entities that are doing home checks and things like that. Private entities have a tendency to charge higher adoption fees.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional



“We did, in fact adopt from a rescue group and it was pretty specific. We had to go on camera ... usually they'll come to your home. But we did it on zoom last time where they look over your whole house, see if you have a yard, if you have fences. And you know all the obvious stuff - is your house puppy proof? Do you have big bowls of anti-freeze and chocolate and grapes lying around? Then there's a little contract that you sign which basically says, if you change your mind, for whatever reason, you can just bring the pet back to them versus the other terrible things that people can do which would be, take them to the shelter, abandon them at the Dog Park, abandon them at the vet. I thought it was kind of weird they make you pay upfront (\$500) I did get the feeling that they weren't going to place or home a pet with anybody that they were not comfortable with.”

~ Pet Owner

ADOPTION RATES



The focus of this study was to explore how adoption policies are impacting different communities. Demographic and socioeconomic data reveal that members of the BIPOC community systemically have lower household incomes, less access to a vehicle, and are more likely to rent than to own their home. These factors may impact the ability to adopt a pet from an animal shelter or rescue group. Home ownership or approval from a landlord have historically been used for criteria for adoption. Regardless of these restrictions, lack of a vehicle limits access to being able to visit a shelter or facility. To measure if the BIPOC community is disproportionately impacted by animal welfare policies and practices, a question about where pet owners obtained their pet

was included in a survey conducted in the four communities. Results of the survey found that BIPOC pet owners were significantly less likely than White pet owners to report that they adopted their pet from an animal shelter or rescue group. ([Figure 17](#))

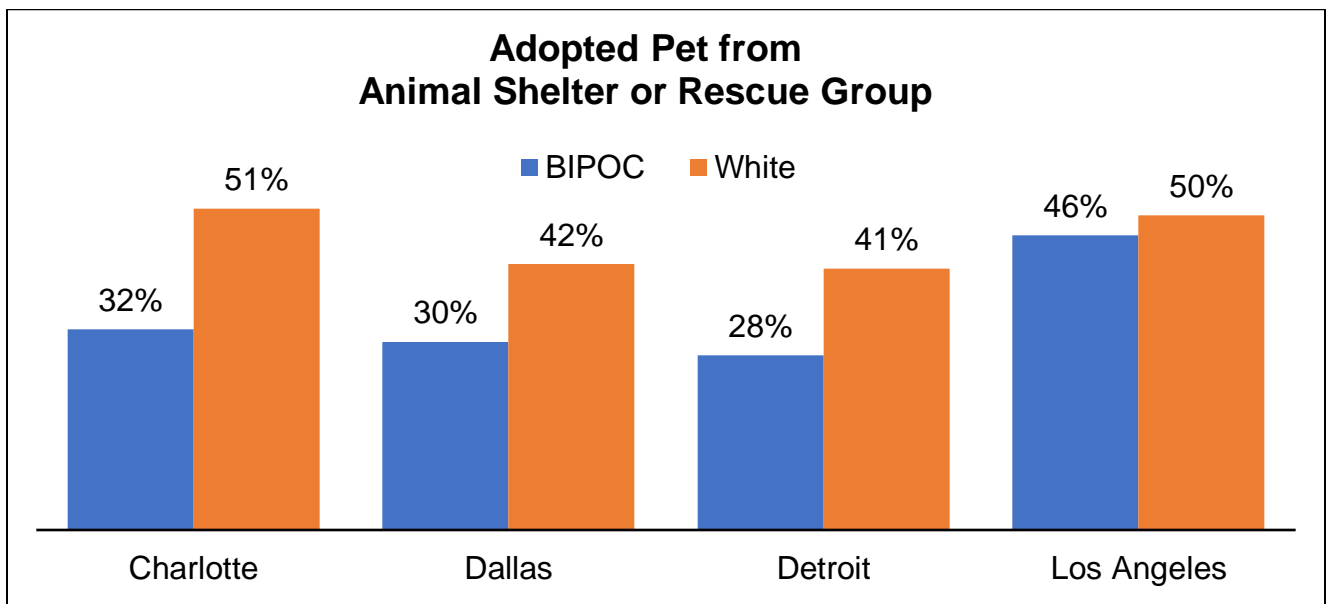


Figure 16: Adoption for shelter or rescue group.

While still the most common source for acquiring a pet, BIPOC pet owners were significantly less likely to have acquired a pet from an animal shelter or rescue group. This difference was seen across all four communities. The gap between BIPOC and white pet owners in Los Angeles was somewhat less pronounced. However, if only Black pet owners in the Los Angeles community are considered, the percentage of those who acquired from an animal shelter or rescue group falls to 38% - a gap of 11%.



The community survey included a question asking the respondent if they had ever been turned down by an animal shelter or rescue when they tried to adopt a pet. About one out of four respondents indicated that they had never tried to get a pet from an animal shelter or animal rescue group. Consistent with other findings, BIPOC respondents were somewhat more likely to report they had never tried to adopt a pet from a shelter or rescue group. Of those who had tried, 14% of BIPOC respondents compared to 10% of white respondents had not been able to adopt. While the sample size gets small when breaking it down by the four communities, the pattern of BIPOC respondents being less likely to try to adopt from a shelter and being more likely to be turned down was consistent across all four communities.

From those who had been turned down when trying to adopt, the reasons that people were given for being denied the opportunity to adopt a pet was explored. The most frequently provided reason was that where they lived did not have a fence. Other reasons frequently provided were having young children living in the home, a landlord would not sign off on the application. While not chosen as frequently, more than one out ten who had been turned were told that it was because they did not own their own home. There were no statistical differences in how these reasons had been experienced between White and BIPOC respondents. However, BIPOC respondents were more likely to report that the reason they were denied was because their yard did not have a fence, their landlord would not sign off on the application, or that they didn't own their home.

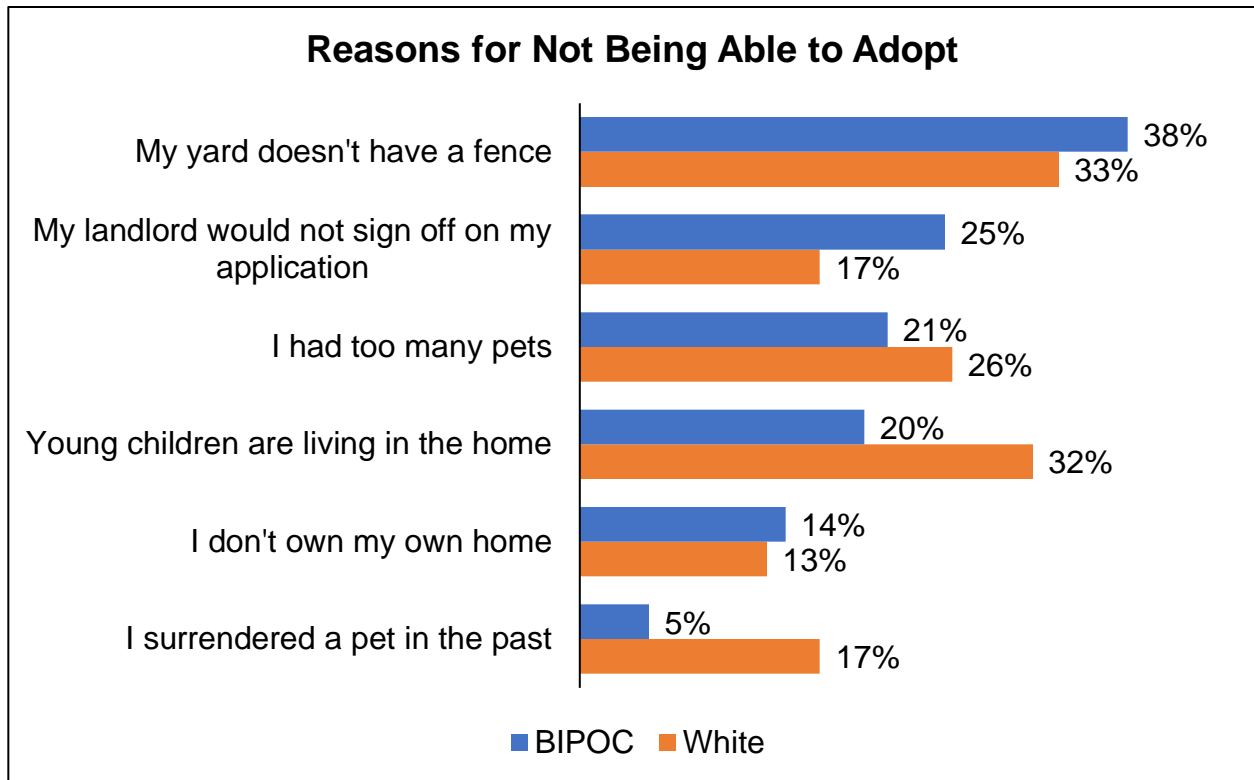


Figure 17: Reasons for not being able to adopt.

Purchasing a pet from a breeder was the second most common source of acquisition. BIPOC pet owners were more likely than white pet owners to report that they purchased a pet from a breeder, received a pet from a friend or family member (Figure 19).

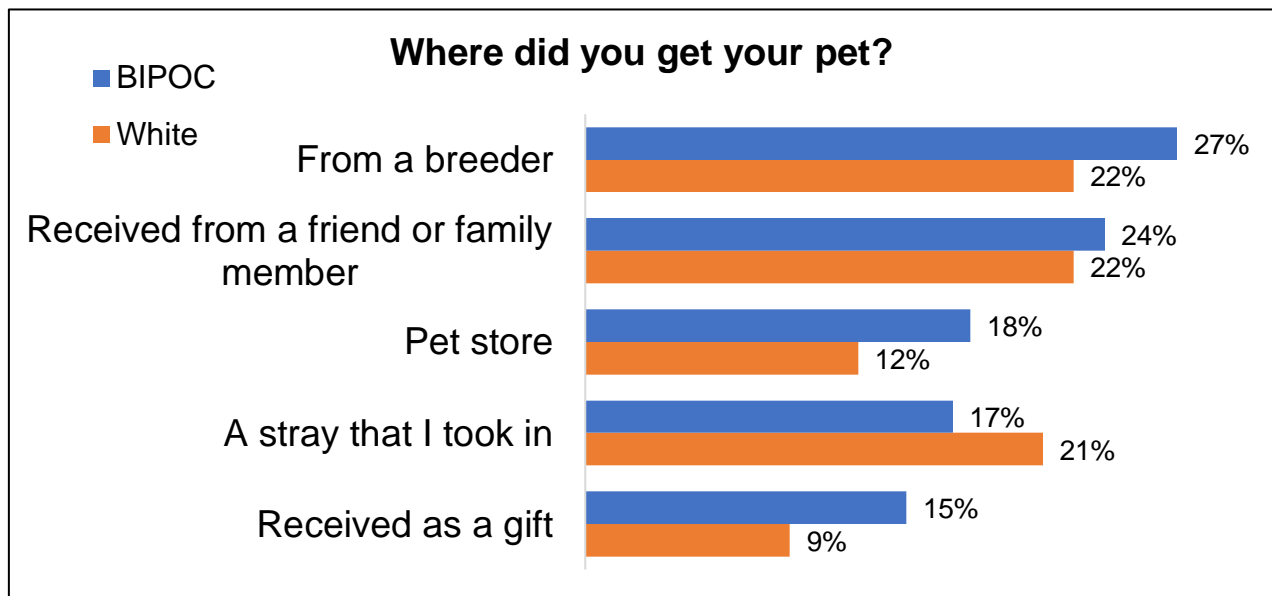


Figure 18: Other sources of pet acquisition.

The trend of BIPOC pet owners being less likely to adopt a pet from an animal shelter or rescue group was further corroborated by adoption data provided by the communities participating in this study. The data obtained from the shelters were detailed at the pet level and provided the zip code where each dog was found or where it lived if it was an owner surrender. The record also included the zip code of the new owner.



Socioeconomic data were obtained from Esri Demographics 2023 estimates and calculated at the zip code level using the enrichment tool in ArcGIS Pro. Esri’s socioeconomic status index includes variables measuring income, poverty, household characteristics, education, employment, and occupation on a scale from 0 to 100. Higher values indicate higher socioeconomic status. The average socioeconomic index scores for each zip code were used to assess the change in socioeconomic status for pets moving between zip codes during the adoption process. For example, if a pet was found in zip code A with a socioeconomic index score of 40 and was adopted to zip code B with a socioeconomic index score of 60, the change for that pet would be +20. Using a paired t-test, the change was analyzed to determine if the change in the overall sample (n=31,530) and within each of the four counties of interest was statistically significant. The results of the paired t-test are found in Table 5. The results indicate a statistically significant difference in the mean socioeconomic index before and after dog adoption ($t(31,529) = 92.28, p < 0.001$).

Results of paired t-test to evaluate changes in mean socioeconomic status for pets before and after adoption			
Zip Intake	Count	Mean Difference	Mean
Overall	31,530	5.88	44.64
Dallas, TX	7,439	7.37	44.85
Wayne County, MI	7,213	4.65	49.04
Los Angeles County, CA	4,220	7.48	42.64
Mecklenburg County, NC	12,612	5.22	49.99

Table 5: Results of Socioeconomic comparison

The overall mean difference in socioeconomic index between the zip codes of retrieval ($M = 44.64$) and the zip codes of adoption ($M = 50.5$) was 5.88 (95% CI [5.79, 5.98]) and 7.37, 4.65, 7.48, and 5.22 for Dallas, Wayne, Los Angeles, and Mecklenburg Counties, respectively. This positive mean difference indicates that, on average, dogs in these four regions were adopted into zip codes with higher average socioeconomic status than the zip codes where they were initially retrieved. The increase in socioeconomic status is reflected in the positive mean difference of 5.88 overall. However, the socioeconomic status of the adopted zip codes may not directly represent the socioeconomic status of the adopting households. This analysis of 31,530 dogs found that there was a statistically significant increase in the socioeconomic status of zip codes where dogs were adopted compared to where they were initially retrieved or relinquished. This result suggests that socioeconomic factors may play a role in the adoption process.



Further, the same data were used to investigate whether there was a statistically significant difference in the racial composition of the zip codes where dogs were retrieved compared to the zip codes where they were adopted. The initial zip codes where the dogs were retrieved had an average percentage of racially white population of 41.4%. The zip codes where the dogs were adopted had an average percentage of the population that was racially white of 55.15%.

A paired t-test was conducted to assess the difference in the percentage of the population that was racially white before and after dog adoption. Results of the paired t-test indicated a statistically significant difference in the mean percentage of the population that was racially white before and after dog adoption ($t(31,529) = 83.2824$, $p < 0.001$).



The mean difference in the percentage of the population that was racially white between the zip codes of retrieval (M = 41.4%) and the zip codes of adoption (M = 55.15%) was 13.72 (95% CI [13.67, 13.77]). This substantial positive mean difference suggests that, on average, dogs tended to be adopted into areas with a significantly higher percentage of white residents than where they were initially retrieved. The findings were statistically significant across all four areas.

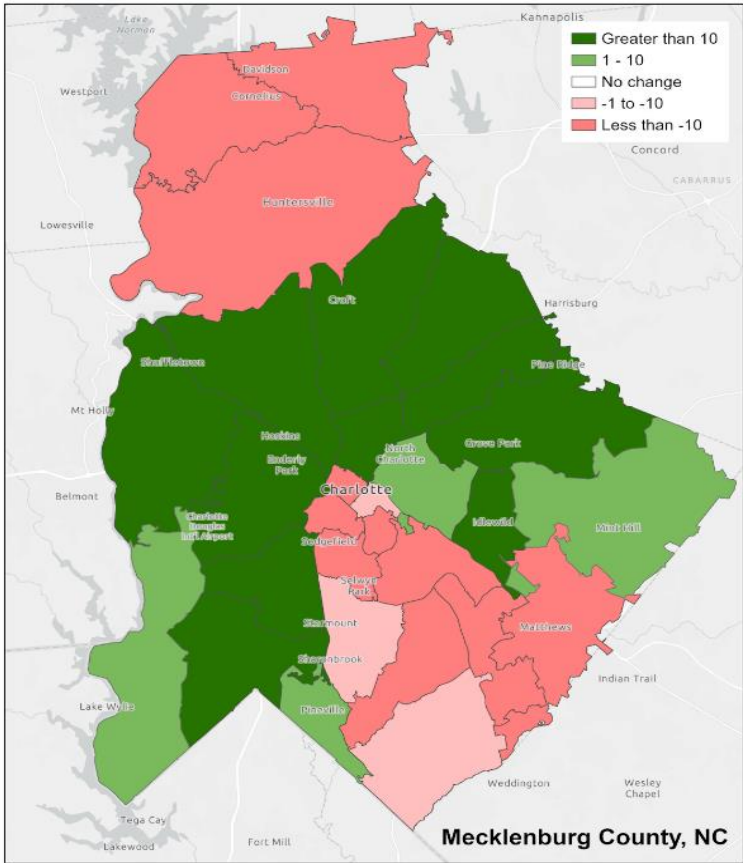
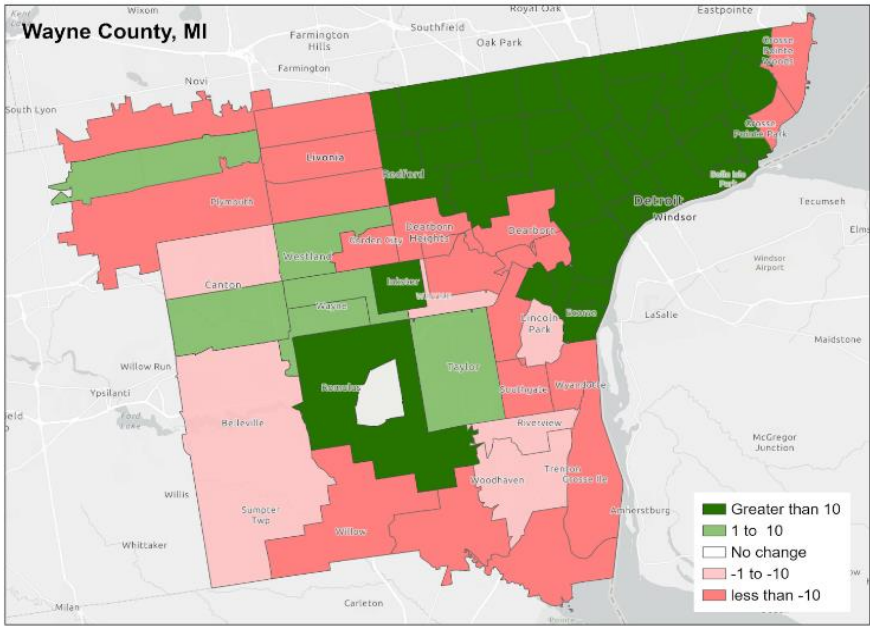
Results of paired t-test to evaluate changes in average white population for pets before and after adoption			
Zip Intake	Count	Mean Difference	Mean
Overall	31,530	13.72	48.29
Dallas, TX	7,439	15.03	42.08
Wayne County, MI	7,213	14.14	58.05
Los Angeles County, CA	4,220	16.67	31.36
Mecklenburg County, NC	12,612	11.85	51.93

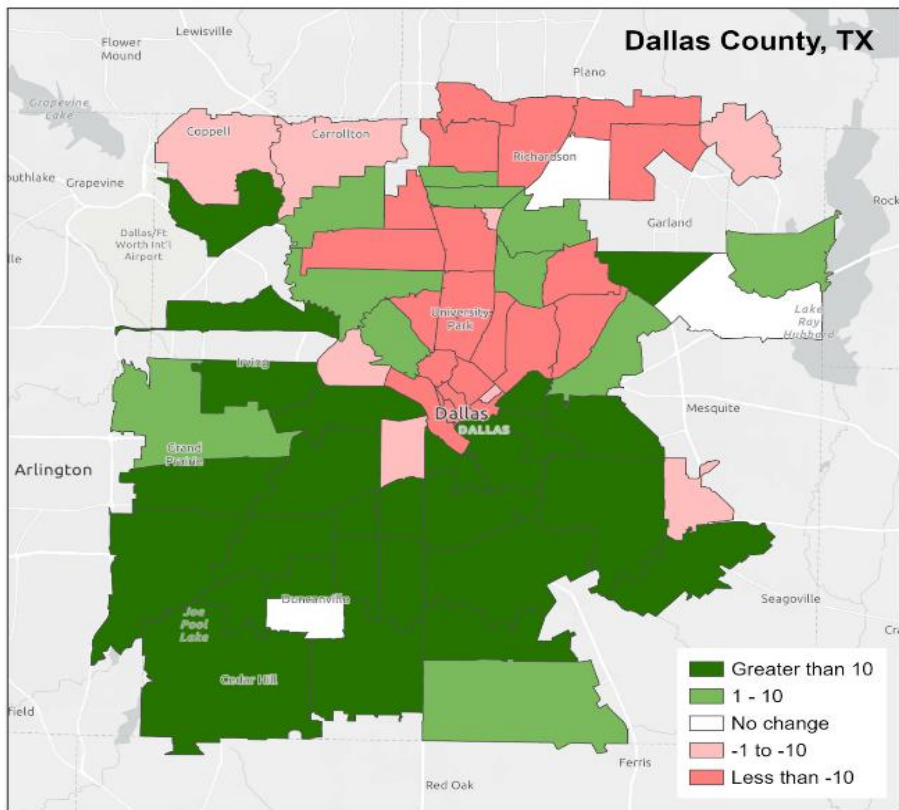
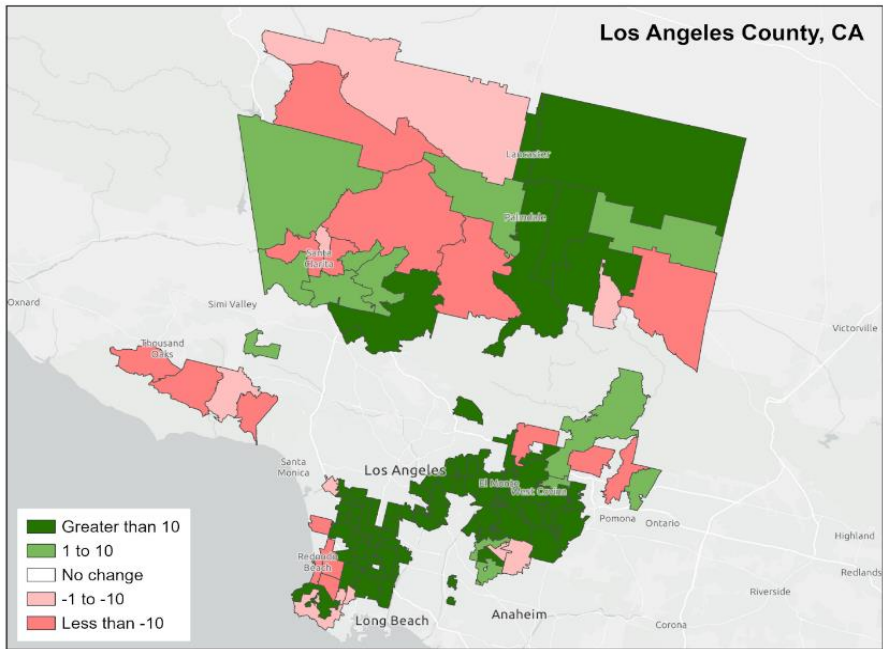
Table 6: Racial differences in adoptions

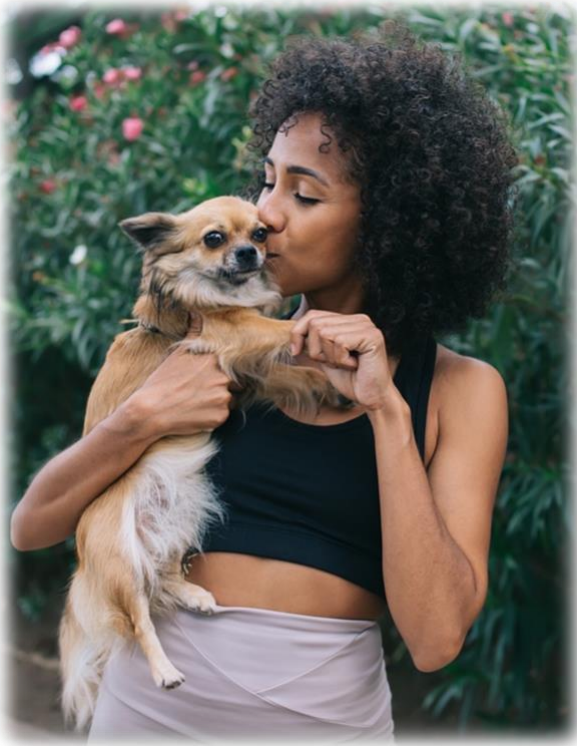
Results from a paired t-test evaluating changes in average white populations before and after adoption are shown in Table 6. The data and results are grouped by community. The count column indicates the number of adopted pets in each community. The mean difference column indicates the average change in white population between the zip codes the pets were adopted out of and those they were adopted into. The direction of change observed indicates the trend that pets are being brought into the shelters from areas with lower white populations and being released to areas with higher white populations.



Mean Changes in % White Population within the Dog's Origination Zip Codes Before and After Adoption







These zip-code level maps of the four counties of interest show the average change in white population for pets after adoption. For example, dark green indicates that pets found in that zip code, on average, experienced a change in white population greater than 10 percentage points after adoption. Pets originating in darker pink areas moved, on average, to zip codes with a greater than 10 percent reduction in percent white population, i.e. more diverse areas.

These findings demonstrate a highly significant change in the racial composition of zip codes where dogs are adopted. The substantial increase in the percentage of the population that was racially white is reflected in the positive mean difference of 13.72. This may have implications for understanding the relationship between dog adoption and racial demographics. Eligibility requirements for adopting a pet historically used by municipal shelters and still used today by animal rescue groups have the potential to disproportionately impact BIPOC pet owners. BIPOC pet owners are less likely to meet adoption requirements, such as home ownership, due to systemic factors that have economically marginalized BIPOC communities. Results of discriminatory housing policies and practices such as red-lining that restricted where people of color could live and purchase homes, and unfair lending practices that charged higher interest rates for people of color continue to be felt today.



ENFORCEMENT - The Other Side of Animal Welfare

Three of the animal control agencies in the communities included in this study have both “care” and “control” in their name and one has neither - instead uses the word “service” in its name. The nomenclature reflects the dual role of the agency – responsibility for the care of animals and responsibility for enforcing state and local animal laws that have been approved by local government. Like changes in adoption processes and policies, agencies are also changing how they approach their enforcement role. Agencies can embrace the enforcement paradigm or the service and community engagement paradigm. However, agencies may be limited by elected and appointed officials and public opinion in how much change can be made. Moreover, because animal control is a function of local government, change can be slow.



“We’ve definitely changed in mentality from a more enforcement mentality when I first joined to more of a community resource and collaboration mentality....but because it is a government agency, it does take a really long time to make those changes. It’s sort of like trying to turn the Titanic.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

While local government is slow to change, public opinion can be just as slow. Attitudes about animal control are often linked to images of seizing and euthanizing animals and to law enforcement.

“We're in the animal welfare industry, the business, and we have the same uniforms as police officers. So automatically they think they're in trouble right off the bat and you know there's not a lot of trust.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

“Because we're under the police department when they see us, they just see police.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

“There is a stigma behind animal care and control that they just euthanize.”

~Community Survey Participant

The community survey included several questions about attitudes regarding animal control, law enforcement, and the local animal shelter. Respondents indicated they had more positive feelings than negative feelings, but a large segment reported they their feelings were neutral. There were no significant differences in results across communities nor between BIPOC and White respondents.

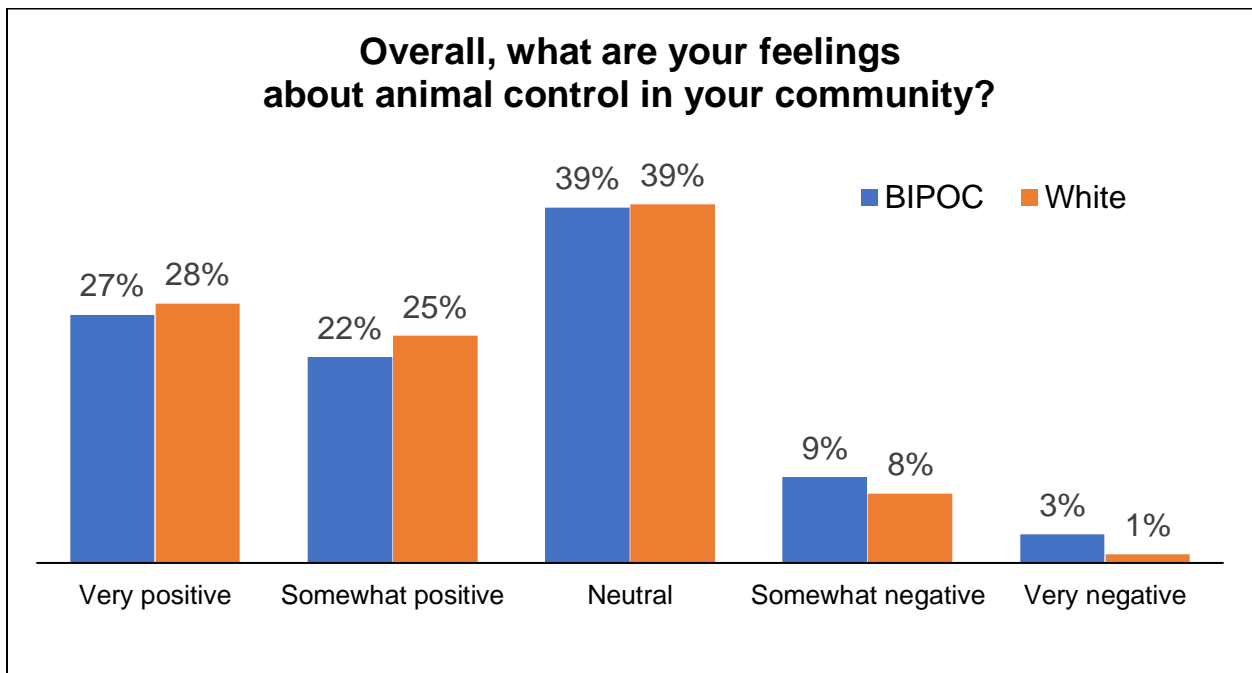


Figure 19: Overall Feelings About Animal Control



Findings from the survey suggest that feelings expressed about animal control in the community are highly correlated with feelings about police officers and the local shelter. Similar feelings as reported above were found when the respondents were asked to share their overall feelings about law enforcement and local animal shelter. Whether the respondent had a past experience with animal control or law enforcement about an animal had not impact on feelings about animal control, police, or the local shelter.

Differences did emerge, however, when asked if they thought law enforcement or animal control were more likely to take pets to punish their owner. Respondents who identified as BIPOC were more likely than White respondents to somewhat or strongly agree that pets were used for punishment – 29% compared to 21%. ([Figure 21](#))

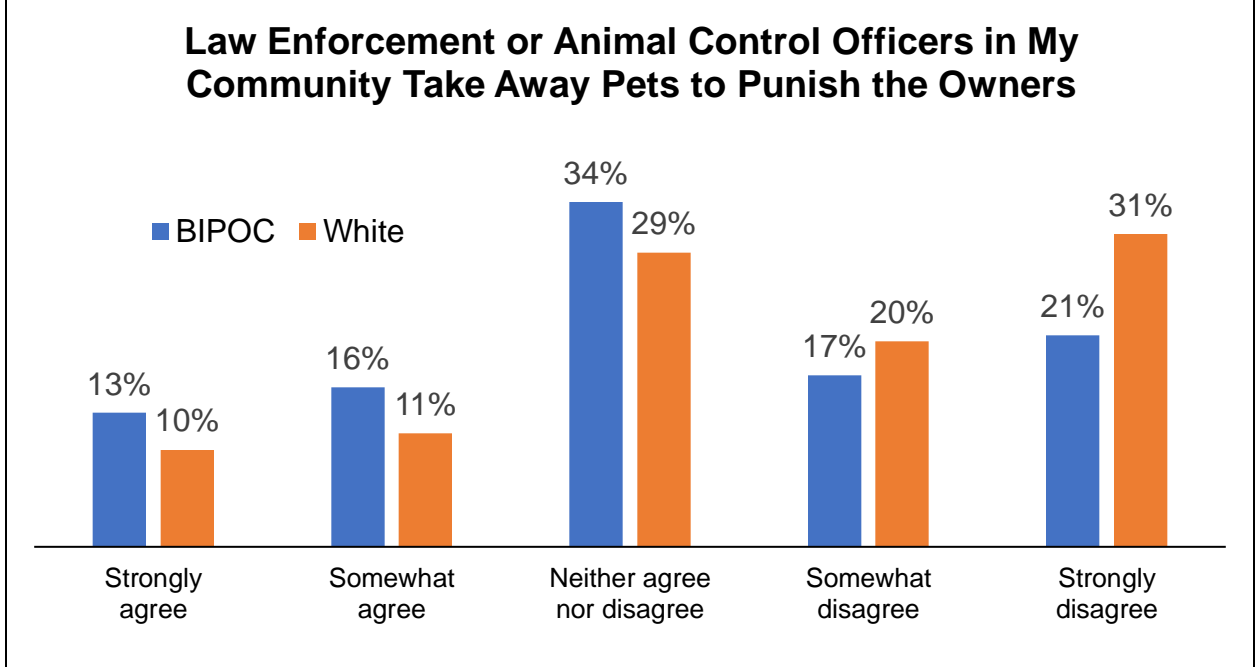


Figure 20: Law Enforcement uses pet to punish owner

Moreover, respondents who had received a citation for an animal related issue were significantly more likely to agree that officials take away pets to punish their owner. While the number of people who had received a citation was small (4.9% of respondents), those who had received a citation were significantly more likely to agree that animal control and police use pets as a means to punish their owner – 66.7% of those who had received a citation in the past compared to 29.4% of those who had not receive a citation.



Comments made during interviews with animal control staff suggest that these feelings may be well founded. When talking about how things have changed, one professional shared that in the past officers cited pet owners so they could not afford to retrieve their pet.

“We used to price people out of their dogs on purpose. so I would go out to a call, and it would be a house that I dealt with before, and all I had to do was just lay those tickets on them.”

~Animal Welfare Professional

“Two years ago, maybe three years ago we were penalizing people for not licensing. Now we first offer support – if they don't want to care about their animals then we will take the dogs, but we do try to support.”

~Animal Welfare Professional

“It was very punitive. If they came to your house and you had a dog for 10 years [that wasn't licensed] they would charge you 10 years of back licenses.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

“If that was the practice even 15 years ago, it's hard to overcome that perception in the community that it's a punitive as opposed to supportive environment.... We chip away at it every day just trying to engage the community. We try to be really open with what we do here. ... reputation is hard to come by. It's hard to get over but we're getting there.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

The way in which animal control engages with the public is not always consistent. Some animal control officers have not embraced the service and community engagement paradigm. Some officers are more inclined to ticket pet owners who are not in compliance while others try to educate the pet owner. The lack of consistency can impact public perception about the role of animal control in their community.

"I'm very much into education. If I drive by a park, and they can't have their dog off leash I would walk up and say, 'Hey, I don't know if you know or not, but you're in [municipality] and even to play with a tennis ball you gotta [sic] have your dog on a leash. I'm so sorry. I know it's a pain. You know you can go to a dog park. That's how I handle it. but a lot of officers ... immediately walk up with that ticket book and say, 'Your dog's off leash, and I want your ID. You're getting a ticket.'... I think that leaves a bad taste in their mouth for everybody else."

~ Animal Welfare Professional



Members of the public can also try to employ animal control to punish their neighbors. Stories were shared in focus groups and in-depth interviews about how people call animal control to harass their neighbors. It was believed by those sharing the stories that these calls may have been racially motivated.

"If she got loose [family dog] that lady called the people on her all the time - never failed - and she would tell me she did. She said 'I called on your dog again.' She did not like Black people, and she let me know that. Some (control officers) were like the next time we come to get her we're gonna [sic] put her to sleep. ... I got fined twice - \$100 each time."

~ Pet Owner

“White people move in and then they're calling on their Hispanic neighbors every day because the dog is in the backyard. There's nothing wrong with the dog being in the backyard, as long as it has the three necessities - food, water and shelter. But gentrification in the city of [municipality] is expanding and ... it is annoying when certain groups call on other groups because they don't like the way they own the pet.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

“People have big dogs and ... somebody calls just because they're annoyed. Nothing even happened and ... the guy [animal control] comes and sees a big dog, and they just automatically assume that they are the aggressor or whatever and that's not always the case.”

~ Pet Owner

Consistently, animal control professionals who are responsible for animal control and enforcement shared the need for educating pet owners about local ordinances. Regulations about what is required to have a pet can be confusing because they differ depending upon whether the pet owner lives in the city or the county. Differences in local laws exist across the four communities included in this study. However, there are core requirements that are consistent across the four communities. For instance, all communities require that dogs and cats receive a rabies vaccination. Yet, a large segment of the population is not aware of this law and the lack of awareness is consistent across the communities. While awareness of laws about cats is low regardless of race or ethnicity, BIPOC pet owners are significantly more likely to be unaware that dogs are required to be current on their rabies vaccinations.



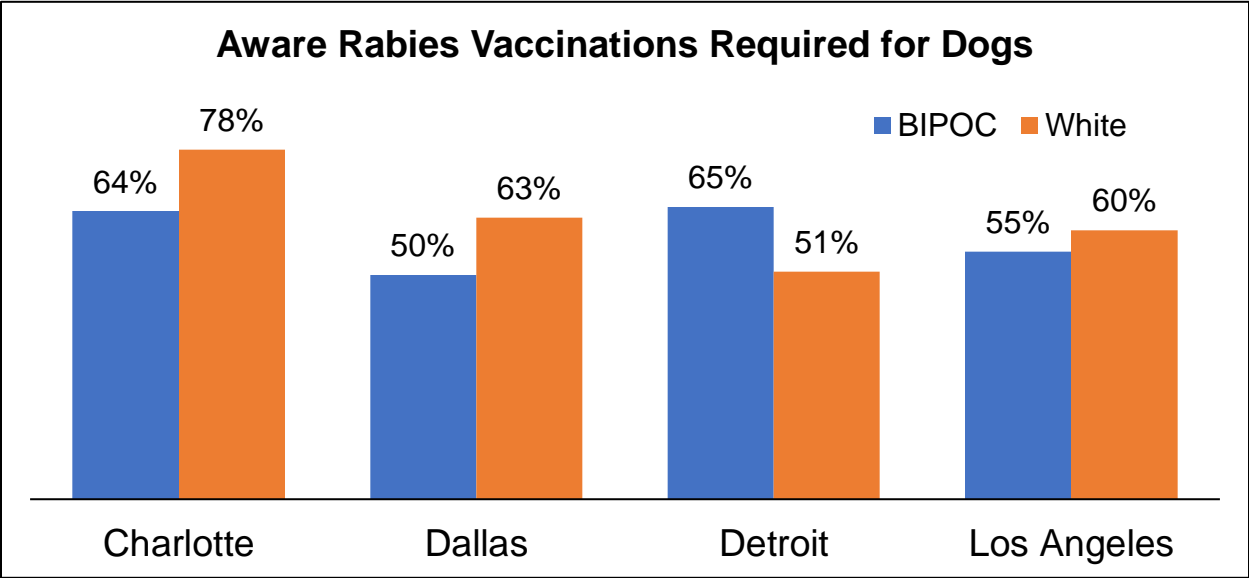


Figure 21: Awareness of vaccination requirement.

Three of the four communities require that dogs are licensed. (Dallas no longer requires a license but does require that a dog have a microchip). Los Angeles County also requires a dog to be microchipped as well as licensed. Awareness that a dog license is required is consistently low across all four communities, especially among BIPOC pet owners. Only one out of three BIPOC pet owners in Charlotte and Detroit were aware of the requirement.

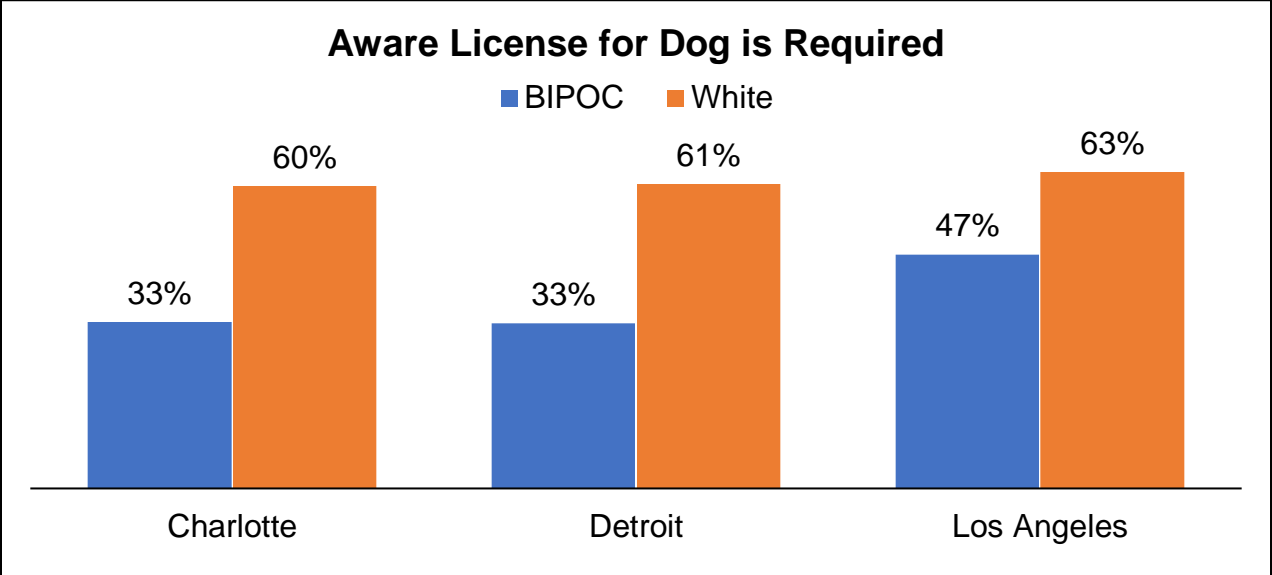


Figure 22: Awareness of license requirement.

Additionally, in Los Angeles County and Dallas, all dogs and cats over the age of 4 months old are required to be spayed or neutered, unless they have secured a breeder’s permit. Yet, a substantial percentage of pet owners participating in the community survey, especially in Dallas, are in violation of this law because not all pets in the household are spayed or neutered. BIPOC pet owners in Dallas are disproportionately more likely to report that all of their pets are not spayed or neutered. The difference between White and BIPOC pet owners in Los Angeles is not as pronounced as the difference that emerged in Dallas (Figure 24). However, if only Black pet owners in Los Angeles are included in the analysis, four out of ten (40.9%) would be considered in violation of this code.

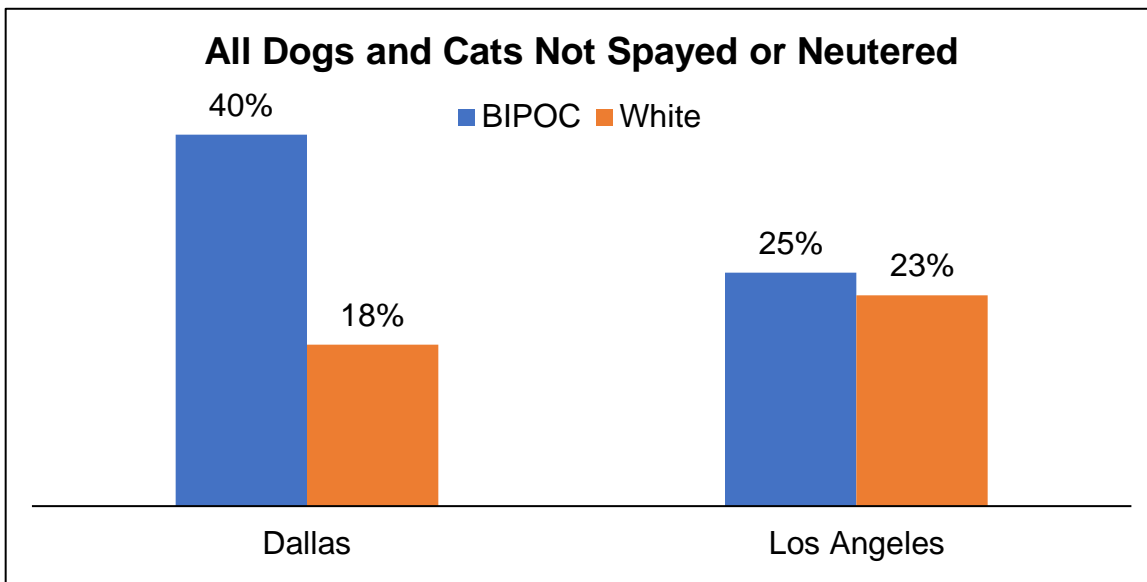


Figure 23: Pets not Spayed or Neutered

Marginalized communities are also more likely to be considered veterinary care deserts. Studies have shown that veterinary care deserts – lack of access to veterinary care - in the United States are linked to areas with high scores on the Social Vulnerability Index (Neal and Greenberg). Inability to find veterinary care – let alone affordable veterinary care – impacts a pet owner’s ability to comply with the law.

“There’s nowhere for residents to spay and neuter (dogs) on the east side of [municipality], especially when it comes to low-cost spay and neutering”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

“Certain areas of [municipality] are considered resource deserts for animal care because they lack of access for even a microchip service.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

Moreover, not having access to a vehicle limits pet owners' ability to seek veterinary care for their pets. As discussed earlier in this report, BIPOC households are consistently less likely to have access to a vehicle. Coupled with living in areas that are considered veterinary care deserts, BIPOC pet owners are more likely to be at risk for citations due to not having the ability to follow local laws. This problem is consistent across all four communities. This suggests that it is a systemic problem.

Effective messaging about services and resources offered by animal welfare organizations has not been designed to reach or resonate with communities that have historically been economically and socially marginalized.

“Most of the animal welfare shelters believe that they are getting the information out to the community but the information that they're putting out there, and how they're putting out there is not connecting with the community. We have to find a way to get the community to tell us what the best way is to communicate with them, and what platform to communicate with them on.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

“We've had free adoptions since 2020, and we still get people who come in and are surprised by the fact that we don't have any adoption fees. So there's definitely still that idea out there that it can cost for them to adopt.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional



The lack of effective messaging might best be addressed by increasing the presence of members of the BIPOC community in animal welfare organizations. This can be accomplished by either increasing the number of BIPOC staff members – especially in management positions - or by building a volunteer base that includes members of historically marginalized groups.

Diversity in the animal welfare industry continues to be a struggle for some agencies. There are several barriers that impact organization’s ability to diversify their workforce. According to animal welfare professionals interviewed for this study⁴, more diversity is found among front-line staff and kennel workers, those in management are predominantly White. Those in management who are not White, are often Hispanic or Asian. Black or African Americans are reported to be disproportionately underrepresented in management positions.

“...when I go to seminars at conferences, I look around and I'm like we're all the same (White). So how do we move forward when we're all the same?”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

“We need more diversity in management. We need our BIPOC staff to be seeing themselves in our management positions.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional



Application Qualification Talent Interview

Municipal shelters face unique challenges related to governmental hiring practices. Animal welfare professionals shared during their interviews that they were not always confident that job postings were widely distributed and made available to all people. Moreover, there was concern shared that perhaps human resource departments screen applicants and do not forward the full candidate pool.

⁴ Organizational data from the animal welfare organizations to corroborate these opinions was not made available for this study.

"I don't think we do a great job of posting positions and getting the word out there about them. I would love to see what the actual candidate list is - not just the referred candidate list, because we don't get access to everyone who applies. We only get access to the HR pushes through."

~ Animal Welfare Professional



Another potential barrier is passing a background check for being eligible for employment. Good candidates – not necessarily BIPOC candidates – have been disqualified because of this regulation.

"We have definitely lost good candidates due to the background investigation. Our employees used to also have to pass a polygraph, which caused us to lose even more, but we have been able to do away with that for civilian employees."

~ Animal Welfare Professional



Research has consistently shown that people of color have been disproportionately policed and suffered from a system of mass incarceration. Michelle Alexander states in her book The New Jim Crow (2020) that mass

incarceration is similar to another caste system. It has caged millions of poor people and people of color and relegated millions more to a permanent second-class status. In one community, eliminating some background restrictions has resulted in a significant increase in BIPOC employees.

Lack of wealth and access to transportation significantly limits a person's ability to volunteer. Shelters and animal welfare organizations shared that their volunteers are predominantly white females, usually between the ages of 40 and 60. This demographic

is more likely to have the economic resources and availability of free time to be able to volunteer.

“Our volunteers are predominantly White women. Our volunteers are typically people of means. We do not have a whole lot of volunteers that are living in lower socio-economic neighborhoods or that are on any kind of public assistance.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

“Our volunteers are still primarily white. But I think that has largely to do with the reality that people of certain income levels in general have more time to devote and the freedom of volunteering.”

~ Animal Welfare Professional

Another barrier for building a diverse volunteer pool is the perception that animal control is part of law enforcement and involvement may risk legal consequences. This is especially true for the immigrant community.

“When we first started [program], one of the volunteers came to me, and [said], ‘I have some people in my community that would be interested in volunteering but they’re undocumented, and they’re concerned about coming to volunteer at the government agency and they need to provide their ID and their ID is from their country.’”

~ Animal Welfare Professional



WHY LACK OF DIVERSITY IS A PROBLEM

Organizations reflect the values of the individuals who design and implement policies. “From within an organization, a solution to a social problem ‘is only seen to be the *right* one if it sustains the institutional thinking that is already in the minds of individuals as they try to decide.” (Irvine, 2003, p.550) How a social problem is defined influences the policies that are developed to ameliorate or mitigate the problem. Lived experiences

contribute to how societal problems are framed. Consequently, how the problem is framed impacts, and may limit, options available to address the problem.

Animal control's image is often linked to law enforcement. There are often tensions between law enforcement and the BIPOC community that may influence how the public interacts with animal control officers whose role is to enforce state and local animal laws. Finding the balance between enforcement and education is difficult but necessary. Learning to discern willful disobedience of the law from lack of awareness of the law will be key. This discernment may be aided by building relationships with the community and knowing the people. Gaining an awareness and appreciation for other cultures can best be achieved through building relationships with co-workers who have different lived experiences.



One of the overarching themes that emerged from this study is the high number of community members who are not aware of animal laws and regulations and the high number of pet owners who are not adhering to these requirements. However, not having access to information was more prevalent for members of BIPOC communities which suggests that efforts to inform the public about pet owner requirements have not been successful. Increasing the number of BIPOC staff and volunteers could provide needed input for creating more effective messaging. Questions that need to be answered are “Where and from whom does the BIPOC community get their information about animal laws and regulations?” “How could information be shared to have the most impact on raising awareness?”



CONCLUSION

This study was designed to explore animal welfare policies and procedures and their impact on different communities. Four communities of varying sizes, in different regions of the United States, were included in the study. Despite differences in location and size, significant similarities were found. In all four locations, members of the BIPOC community have less economic wealth, lower rates of home ownership, and less access to a vehicle. These systemic factors, rooted in discriminatory housing policies, coupled with lack of access to veterinary care directly impact pet owners' ability to adhere to local animal welfare laws – especially those that require all dogs and cats to be spayed or neutered. Animal welfare organizations must recognize the lingering impact of historic and systemic inequities. Recognizing these inequities should inform efforts to best meet the needs of the entire community.



The study found that BIPOC pet owners are less likely than White pet owners to adopt a pet from an animal shelter or rescue group. Factors historically used to determine eligibility for adoption have disproportionately impacted BIPOC households due to economic and social marginalization. The study revealed that animal welfare laws are not consistently enforced. Some control officers are more likely to “educate” those who are not in adherence with local laws while others are more likely to issue a ticket for the same offense.

The study also revealed that the industry is cognizant of the need for change and is shifting toward a “support-based model” or human centered model. Many adoption policies have changed and restrictions on who can adopt a pet have been reduced by municipal shelters. Organizational leaders and staff members expressed a commitment



for their organization to be considered a member of the community and as a resource for pet owners. However, there is recognition that they face challenges in their desire to overcome negative perceptions that are rooted in past behaviors. To overcome these challenges, engaging members of the public – particularly members of the BIPOC community – to develop successful strategies for building a positive relationship is crucial for their success.

Identifying and building partnerships with proximate leaders within the BIPOC community is of particular importance. Because animal welfare is a function of local government and because of their dual role of enforcing local animal welfare laws, disentangling perceptions of law enforcement and animal welfare will help to build trust in the BIPOC community. Proximate leaders can facilitate conversations that are needed to build this trust and can be instrumental in designing and sharing a message of change.

As with all exploratory research projects, many lessons were learned. Future studies that explore racial disparities in animal welfare should engage members of the community impacted by animal welfare policies from the beginning of the research process. Identifying and receiving “buy-in” from proximate leaders within the community will help to build trust in the research process. Proximate leaders can help to facilitate successful recruitment for research activities to ensure that more voices and stories from the community are heard and included in the research.



Attempts should be made to identify former employees of animal welfare organizations to gain a different perspective about the organizational culture. Conversations about equity



and racial disparities can be difficult. Current employees may be reluctant to share information that might be unflattering to their organization. Moreover, current employees may be fearful that their comments might be shared and jeopardize their employment. This may happen regardless of researchers assuring the employee that the information provided is confidential.

Including elected officials in the research would strengthen the study design. Better understanding of the political environment in which animal welfare operates would add an important dimension to the study. Including this group in the research would provide a broader understanding of the issues facing animal welfare and might lead to different solutions for addressing the issues.

Finally, a metric is needed to measure how frequently control officers are providing advice and education instead of citations for similar situations. Counting the number of citations issued is not a valid measure of enforcement because it cannot account for the number of incidents in which a citation could have been issued. Comparing similar situations and demographic information about who and what was involved in an encounter between animal control and a pet owner would help to better understand whether inequities in enforcement exist.



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APPENDIX

**The University of Tennessee/Knoxville College of Social Work
RACIAL DISPARITIES IN ANIMAL WELFARE (RDAW) STUDY
Organization Level Interview Guide (For CEOs/Administrators)**

Part I. Background/Organization Structure/Duties

The University of Tennessee/Knoxville College of Social Work is collaborating with several animal welfare and advocacy agencies to conduct an exploratory study that examines racial disparities in animal welfare (RDAW), with a specific focus on pet rescues/seizures and their subsequent adoptions. As part of the study, we are conducting interviews with CEOs and Administrators of 4 different animal welfare organizations in various locations in the United States.

The interview consists of 4 parts. Part I is a profile of your agency and the specific role you play as (position title). Part II addresses your AGENCY policies, procedures, and experiences regarding rescued/seized pets. Part III has questions about your agency protocols and experiences with rescued/seized pets and their subsequent adoptions. Part IV addresses your agency's engagement and relationships with communities of color.

This interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

1. Tell me about the _____ (Name of organization). (A) What is its purpose in the community? (B) Has the agency experienced any major changes in the last 20 years?
2. What is your job title and role in the agency? (Gender/year of birth)
3. How long have you been in this role? If less than one year, follow up with, were you involved with animal welfare/control prior to this role? If so please tell me about your previous role or role in animal welfare.
4. What do your job responsibilities look like on a daily basis?
5. What are the most frequent issues customers present or want when they come to your agency? Why are they here?
6. Who is the supervisor who you report directly to? What is his/her job title?
7. Tell me about your educational background (Probe)
8. What ethnic or racial group do you identify with?
9. What area of the community do you live in, and how long have you lived there? What zip code would that be?

-
- 10. How many staff members do you have, and what are their position titles? (Probe for organization Chart)
 - 11. Approximately how many volunteers do you use and what roles do they play?
 - 12. What is the ethnic and gender composition of your staff? (Probe for percentages)
 - 13. What are your organizations sources of income besides County taxes? (e.g., state, city, foundations, donations)? (Approximate percentages for each)
 - 14. Does your organization receive non-monetary (in-kind) donations? Can you describe what they are?
 - 15. Our research focus is on pet rescues/seizures and adoptions, but what other specific services are provided at your organization? Who are the other services typically provided to?
 - 16. What are your normal operating hours? Do you have after hours operations for emergencies?

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Part II. Seized or Rescued pets

- 17. Describe the circumstances that would lead to an animal or pet being seized or rescued by your agency. (Probe for examples)
 - (A) In the event of a pet rescue/seizure by your agency, how does the process work from the beginning of an incident until its closure, and what does closure of a case look like? Please walk me through the process and who is typically involved, including staff, volunteers, and/or other organizations. What is the “decision chain” on this process? Describe activities, decisions, and your specific involvement related to pet rescues or seizures. To what extent are County or City animal control authorities involved when your organization conducts pet rescues/seizures? How does that work? What is the nature of their involvement. (Probe for details)
 - (B) In your experiences at the agency, have you seen any patterns emerge about specific **reasons** pet seizures/rescues have been needed or requested in different communities? For instance, do you see different trends or patterns in white, black, brown, or other communities in your target area? What did these trends or patterns look like?
- 18. When your agency conducts a pet rescue/seizure, what local or state ordinances are most often cited as being violated?

-
19. How often are citations actually issued when pets are rescued/seized by local animal control authorities?
 20. What is the protocol used by your agency to document pet rescues/seizures? (B) Who actually completes what specific paperwork, and what information is actually recorded? (C) What types of forms are used, and do the form elements include location information or demographic information on the individual/family from which a pet is being seized? Do you have the address or neighborhood zip codes for pets who have been seized/rescued by your organization in the past 5 years?
 21. To what extent or how often do you encounter resistance when rescuing/seizing a pet from an owner? Describe how that process works and how it is handled.
 22. For those individuals whose pet(s) have been seized for an ordinance violation, (A) what opportunities exist for legal remediation and return of the pets to their owners? How does that work? (B) What is your organization's policy on this matter, and what have been your past experiences?
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Part III. Adopted Pets

23. Describe the most common reasons pets are available at your agency for adoptions. Describe how rescued/seized animals are put up for adoption by your organization. How does the process work from start to finish? Describe activities, the "decision chain," for adoptions, and your involvement in the pet adoption process. Are there specific criteria? For instance, are they required to own their own home, have fenced yards, live in their own home for a certain length of time, etc.? Please explain. What fees are involved, and what is the total cost for an adoption? Re their income or related guidelines?
 24. Who are the other individuals on your staff that are typically involved in the adoption process and final decisions?
 25. What other organizations do you collaborate with when doing pet adoptions, and what is the nature of the collaboration?
 26. Does your agency have records (including characteristics, addresses and zip codes) for (a) seized/rescued pets and their owners; and (b) similar information for individuals who have subsequently adopted them in the past 5 years?
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Part IV: Community Engagement and Relations with Communities of Color

Part IV of the survey has questions that deal with two issues of interest to us: (1) Marketing/Public Relation Strategies and Targets, and; (2) Engagement and Relations with Individuals and Communities of Color.

Marketing /PR Strategies and Targets

27. What marketing strategies are used to promote and inform the public about your agency? Examples: Billboards/signage, public service announcements (PSAs) via electronic and printed media, “adopt-a-thons,” etc. (Probe for details)
28. What specific communities or neighborhoods are targeted with marketing/ads about your agency? Where are the sources of ads/PSAs read and/or heard in the communities (Example: Radio/TV stations, podcasts, newspapers, etc.) (Probe for existence of “targeted” messages). Who makes marketing decisions for the agency?

Engagement and Relations with Individuals and Communities of Color

Intro: Our country has a long history of racial issues and racial conflicts, but the death of George Floyd re-ignited the issue like never before, and it raises the issue of community race relations. Sometimes it is an uncomfortable topic to discuss, but part of our challenge is to understand your thoughts and points of view about race relations in (name of city) in a non-judgmental fashion. The final questions address your views on local race relations, and the extent of contact (or lack of contact) and interaction your agency has with African American, Latinx/Hispanic, or Native American individuals, customers, or communities.

29. Generally speaking, how would you describe race relations in the City of _____? (Probe? Why does s/he feel that way?)
30. On a scale of 1 – 10, with “1” being Poor, and “10” being Excellent, how would you rate race relations in (name of city)?
31. Generally speaking, how would you describe your level of engagement in communities of color in _____? (Probe? Why does s/he feel that way?)
32. On a scale of 1 – 10, with “1” being Poor, and “10” being Excellent, how would your agency’s current level of engagement with communities of color?

-
33. To what extent has your agency participated in or sponsored on-site or off-site community events where your services and/or information is provided to attendees? (Probe for details, locations, etc.)
 34. On a typical day, or during a typical week, what is your estimate of the percentage of customers of color (i.e., African American, Latinx/Hispanic, or Native American) who are there to address issues related to their own pet that has been rescued/seized? (Probe for recent example)
 35. On a typical day, or during a typical week, what is your estimate of the percentage of customers of color (i.e., African American, Latinx/Hispanic, or Native American) who are there to address issues related to their adoption of new pet(s)? (Probe for recent example)
 36. Are you aware of any conflicts or problems with individuals or communities of color in the last 5 years related to pet rescues/seizures or subsequent adoptions? (Probe)

SCREENING QUESTIONS

S1. What is your age?

S2 What state do you live in?

S3. What county do you live in? [IF NOT IN ONE OF THE STUDY COUMMUNITIES, PERSON IS NOT QUALIFIED TO CONTINUE]

S4. Do you currently have any pets in your household?

1. No
2. Yes

S5. Do you routinely provide food for one or more companion animals – dogs or cats - that don't live in your home?

1. No
2. Yes

S6. Do you currently work or volunteer for any of the following?

PLEASE CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY

- Veterinary office
- Low-cost veterinary care clinic
- Animal welfare/rescue group
- Animal control
- Animal shelter
- Other – Please specify:
- None of the above

IF S.2. AND S.3. ARE NO, SKIP TO Q7

1. How many dogs currently live in your household?

[IF 1 OR MORE] 1.a. What breed(s) is/are the dog(s)?

2. How many cats currently live in your household?

3a. [IF YES TO S.3.] How many cats not living in your home do you routinely feed?

3b. [IF YES TO S.3.] How many dogs not living in your home do you routinely feed?

4. Where did you get your pet(s)? Please choose all that apply.

- An animal shelter/rescue organization
- Pet store
- From a breeder
- Received as a gift
- Was a stray that I took in
- Received from a friend or family member
- Other: PLEASE SPECIFY
- Not sure

5. Is/Are your pet(s) spayed or neutered?
1. Yes, all are spayed or neutered
 2. Some are spayed or neutered
 3. No
 4. Not sure
6. [IF ANY NOT SPAYED OR NEUTERED] Why are they not spayed or neutered?
Please choose all that apply.
- I didn't know where to have the service done
 - Cost
 - I had no way to get there
 - I was not able to find an appointment
 - I don't believe in spaying or neutering pets
 - Other please specify:
7. If you are interested in getting [another] pet but have not yet done so, what factors have kept you from getting a pet? Please choose all that apply.
- Cost of getting a pet is too expensive
 - Not sure where to go to get a pet
 - Additional housing fee (pet deposit or additional rent required)
 - Current housing does not allow pets
 - Don't have space needed for a pet
 - Lack of transportation
 - Family member is allergic to pets
 - Not everyone in the household agreed on getting a pet
 - Not able to find the breed or age of pet I want
 - Not sure I would be able to meet the care needs of a pet (time and attention)
 - Not sure what type of pet to get
 - Ongoing cost of pet is too expensive
 - Other, please specify:
 - I am not interested in getting another pet
8. Overall, what are your feelings about law enforcement in your community?
1. Very positive
 2. Somewhat positive
 3. Neutral
 4. Somewhat negative
 5. Very negative
 6. Not sure
9. [IF ANYTHING OTHER THAN NEUTRAL OR NOT SURE]
Please tell us why you feel that way.
10. Overall, what are your feelings about animal control in your community?
1. Very positive
 2. Somewhat positive

3. Neutral
4. Somewhat negative
5. Very negative
6. Not sure

11. [IF ANYTHING OTHER THAN NEUTRAL OR NOT SURE] Please tell us why you feel that way.

12. Overall, what are your feelings about the animal shelter in your community?

1. Very positive
2. Somewhat positive
3. Neutral
4. Somewhat negative
5. Very negative
6. Not sure

13. [IF ANYTHING OTHER THAN NEUTRAL OR NOT SURE]

Please tell us why you feel that way.

14. Have you ever been turned down by a shelter or rescue group when you tried to get a pet?

1. No
2. Yes
3. Not sure
4. I have never tried to get a pet from a shelter or rescue group

[IF YES TO 14]

15. What reasons were you given for not getting a pet?

PLEASE CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY

- I don't own my own home
- My yard doesn't have a fence
- My landlord would not sign off on my application
- I had too many pets
- Young children are living in the home
- I surrendered a pet in the past
- Other – please specify:

City or county governments have laws about pets. We want to know how familiar people are with laws about owning and caring for a pet and the services available for pet owners in your community.

16. If a pet is lost, who should the pet owner contact to try to find it?

17. Have you lost a pet in the past 2 years?

1. No
2. Yes

18. [IF YES to 17] Were you able to find your pet?

1. No
2. Yes

19. Please tell us about this experience.

20. How many days does animal control keep an animal before it can be adopted or rehomed?

- 1 – 3 days
- 4 – 7 days
- 8 – 15 days
- 16 – 30 days
- Not sure

21. Which of the following are laws where you live? Please choose all that apply.

- A license is required for dogs
- A license is required for cats
- Proof of up-to-date rabies vaccination for dogs is required
- Proof of up-to-date rabies vaccination for cats is required
- Dogs must be on a leash when not on the owner's property
- Abandoning a pet is a misdemeanor
- Tying an animal for more than three hours per day is a misdemeanor
- Not providing food or water for an animal is a misdemeanor
- The owner of a pet who bites or attacks another pet or human is in violation of a misdemeanor charge
- Not sure

22. What are the consequences for not following these rules? Please choose all that apply.

- Fine or fee
- Animal is seized or taken
- Jail time
- Other please specify:
- Not sure

23. How much does a license cost for a dog?

1. \$1 - \$10
2. \$11 - \$20
3. \$21 - \$30
4. \$31 - \$40
5. \$41 - \$50
6. More than \$50
7. No license is required
8. Not sure

24. How much would it cost if a pet owner received a citation not having a current license or proof of current rabies vaccinations?

1. \$1 - \$10
2. \$11 - \$20
3. \$21 - \$30
4. \$31 - \$40
5. \$41 - \$50
6. More than \$50
7. Not sure

25. Has a police or animal control officer ever spoken with you or someone living in your household about a pet?

1. No
2. Yes
3. Not sure

[IF YES TO 25] 26. Did the police or animal control officer issue a citation?

4. No
5. Yes

[IF YES TO 25] 27. Please tell us what happened?

28. Has one of your pets ever been seized by an animal control officer and taken to an animal shelter?

1. No
2. Yes

29. [IF YES] When did this happen?

1. In the past year
2. 1 – 2 years ago
3. 3 -5 years ago
4. More than 5 years ago

30. [IF YES] What happened to your pet?

1. I was able to get the pet without paying a fee
2. I was able to get the pet but had to pay a fee
3. I was not able to get the pet because I could not afford to pay the fee
4. I was told the pet had been adopted
5. I was told the pet had been euthanized
6. I was never able to find the pet
7. Other

31. IF Options 2 - 4 are chosen: How much was the fee?

32. [IF YES TO 28] Please tell us what happened?

33. Which of the following services does the animal shelter in your community offer?

Please choose all that apply.

- Pet food
- Training or Behavior resources
- Pet supplies like leash, collar, or carrier
- Flea or tick prevention medication
- Vaccines
- Grooming (matting, overgrown nails)
- Spay or neuter service
- Trap/Neuter/Release (TNR) services for community cats
- Other: Please specify

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements. [THE ORDER WILL BE RANDOMIZED]

34. Law enforcement or animal control officers in my community take away pets to punish the owners.

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Strongly disagree

35. Law enforcement or animal control officers are more likely to take away pets from pet owners of color than from pet owners who are White.

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Strongly disagree

36. Law enforcement or animal control officers try to support pet owners in their efforts to take care of their pets.

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Strongly disagree

DEMOGRAPHIC AND WELL-BEING SECTION

We have a few more questions so that we can compare your answers to others. Please remember that your answers are confidential.

D1. Including yourself, how many people 18 and older currently live in your household?

D2. How many children under 18 currently live in your household?

D3. What best describes your gender identity?

1. Female
2. Male
3. Transgender Male to Female
4. Transgender Female to Male
5. Gender Non-Conforming
6. Other (please specify)
7. Prefer Not to Answer

D4. What best describes your sexual orientation?

1. Straight/Heterosexual
2. Bisexual
3. Gay/Lesbian
4. Queer
5. Other (please specify)
6. Prefer Not to Answer

D5. What is your zip code?

D6. In which type of housing do you reside?

1. House
2. Apartment
3. Condo
4. Duplex
5. Mobile home
6. In a temporary housing situation – staying with others, in a hotel, or in a car
7. Unhoused
8. Other please specify:

D7. [IF D.6. IS 1,2,3,4,5] Do you own or rent?

1. Own
2. Rent
3. Other please specify:

D8. How long have you lived there/ How long have you been in a temporary housing situation/unhoused?

1. Less than 1 year
2. 1 – 5 years

3. 6 – 10 years
4. 11-15 years
5. 16 -20 years
6. More than 20 years

[IF D6 IS 1 – 5 AND D8 IS LESS THAN 1 YEAR

D9. In the last 12 months, how many times have you or your family moved from one home to another?

D10. Are you Hispanic, Latino/a or Spanish origin ?

1. No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
2. Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
3. Yes, Puerto Rican
4. Yes, Cuban
5. Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin – Print, for example, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc [PLEASE SPECIFY]:
6. Not sure
7. Prefer not to answer

D11. Which one or more of the following would you say is your race? Please choose all that apply.

1. American Indian / Alaska Native
2. Asian
3. Black or African American
4. Native Hawaiian
5. Other Pacific Islander
6. White
7. Other please specify:
8. Prefer not to answer

IF AMERICAN INDIAN/ ALASKA Which of the following is your enrolled or principal tribe?

1. Cherokee Indian
2. Navajo Nation
3. Blackfeet Tribe
4. Mayan
5. Aztec
6. Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government
7. Nome Eskimo Community
8. Other please specify:
9. Prefer not to answer

IF ASIAN What is your origin?

1. Chinese
2. Vietnamese

3. Asian Indian
4. Pakistani
5. Cambodian
6. Hmong
7. Filipino
8. Korean
9. Samoan
10. Chamorro
11. Other please specify:
12. Prefer not to answer

IF BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN What is your origin?

1. African American
2. Jamaican
3. Haitian
4. Nigerian
5. Ethiopian
6. Somali
7. Other please specify:
8. Prefer not to answer

IF WHITE What is your origin?

1. German
2. Irish
3. English
4. Italian
5. Lebanese
6. Egyptian
7. Other please specify:
8. Prefer not to answer

D12. Do you consider yourself to be indigenous to the United States, two or more generations of my family have lived in the United States, first generation, or new American?

1. indigenous to the United States
2. Enslaved descendants
3. Two or more generation have lived in the United States
4. First generation
5. New American
6. Prefer not to answer

D13. Do you consider yourself to be a person of color or a member of the BIPOC community?

1. No
2. Yes
3. Not sure

4. Prefer not to answer

D.14. How much total combined money did all members of your HOUSEHOLD earn in 2022, before taxes?

1. Less than \$15,000
2. \$15,000 to \$34,999
3. \$35,000 to \$49,999
4. \$50,000 to \$74,999
5. \$75,000 to \$99,999
6. \$100,000 to \$149,999
7. \$150,000 or more
8. Not sure
9. Prefer not to answer

HAW.1. Thinking about YOUR physical health, which includes physical illness and injury, for how many days during the past 30 days was your physical health not good?

OF DAYS:

DON'T KNOW/REFUSAL

HAW.2. Thinking about YOUR mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, for how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good?

OF DAYS:

DON'T KNOW/REFUSAL

IF (Q2 = 0) AND IF (Q3 = 0) SKIP TO D.4.

HAW.3. During the past 30 days for about how many days did poor physical or mental health keep you from doing your usual activities such as self care, work or recreation?

OF DAYS:

DON'T KNOW/REFUSAL

HAW.4. Do you live with a mental or physical disability?

1. No
2. Yes
3. Prefer Not to Answer

HAW.5. Are you easily able to get enough healthy food to eat?

1. No
2. Yes
3. Not sure
4. Prefer not to answer

HAW.6. In the past 3 months, how often have you worried that your food would run out before you had money to buy more?

1. Never
2. Sometimes

3. Often
4. Very often
5. Not sure

HAW.7. Do you have any concerns about safety in your neighborhood?

1. No
2. Yes
3. Not sure

HAW.8. Do you have concerns about any immigration matters for you or your family?

1. No
2. Yes
3. Not sure