

## Spay and Neuter Practices among Cat Owners in New York City

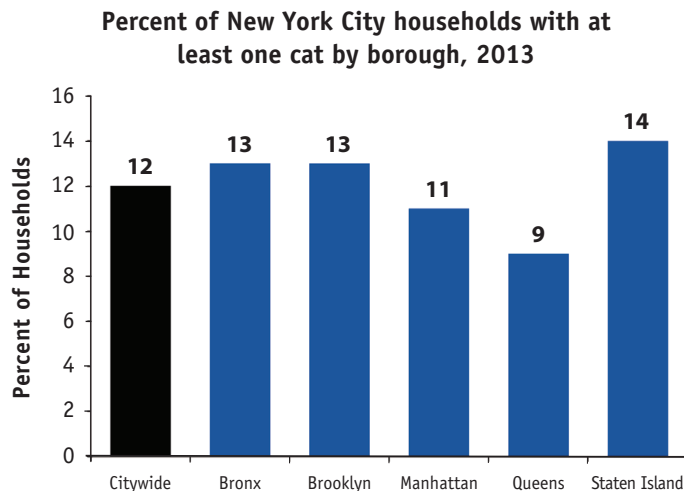
**L**ocal Law 59 was passed in the fall of 2011, requiring pet owners to spay or neuter cats that are allowed to roam outside the home. The law aims to decrease the number of unwanted cats in New York City (NYC) by preventing unaltered, owned cats from reproducing. It also aims to reduce the number of cats abandoned to animal shelters.

A female adult cat can have up to three litters per year, each with one to eight kittens that will need a home. Unwanted cats often end up outdoors, where they may create neighborhood noise and sanitary nuisances. Outdoor cats are also at higher risk of exposure to diseases that are transmissible to humans,

such as rabies and toxoplasmosis. The Animal Care Centers of NYC shelters receive approximately 18,000 unwanted cats each year.

This report describes spay and neuter practices among New York City cat owners, using self-reported data from the 2013 NYC Community Health Survey. The report provides estimates of the number of altered and unaltered owned cats in New York City and describes individual owner characteristics associated with spay/neuter practices. Recommendations for cat owners and policies related to controlling free-roaming or feral cats can be found on page four.

### More than 10% of New York City households own a cat



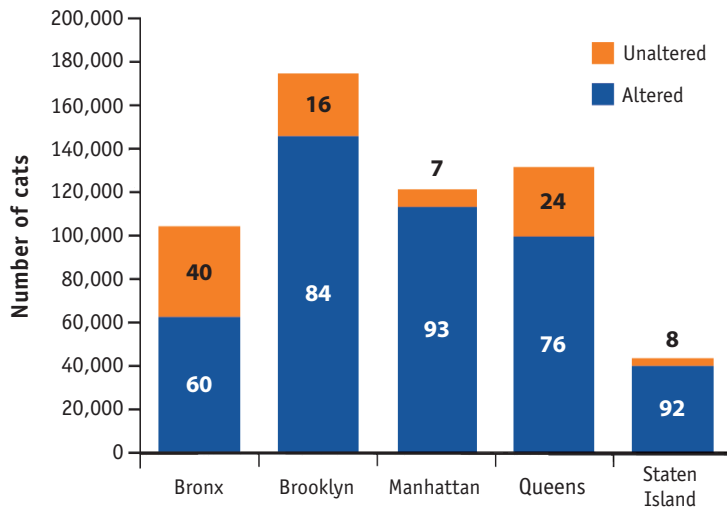
Source: NYC Community Health Survey, 2013

- In 2013, there were an estimated 576,000 owned cats living in approximately 357,000 households – or 11.6% of all NYC households – across the five boroughs.
- Staten Island had the highest proportion of households with cats (14%) and Queens, the lowest (9%).
- The estimated number of owned cats living in each borough were:
  - ▶ 104,000 in the Bronx
  - ▶ 175,000 in Brooklyn
  - ▶ 121,000 in Manhattan
  - ▶ 132,000 in Queens
  - ▶ 44,000 in Staten Island

Data in this report were obtained from two sources: (1) The NYC Community Health Survey (CHS), an annual telephone survey of approximately 9,000 adults aged 18 and older conducted by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). Since 2002, the CHS has included adults with landline phones and, starting in 2009, adults who could be reached by cell phone. Data presented are from 2013 and are based on self-reported responses. For more information about the CHS, visit [nyc.gov/health/survey](http://nyc.gov/health/survey). Three questions were analyzed: “How many cats, if any, does your household have? Do not include stray cats that you may feed from time to time.”, “[How many of these cats are/Is this cat] spayed or neutered?”, and “How many of the unaltered cats go outdoors?” Responses were weighted to the total number of NYC households, except for analyses of owner characteristics, which were weighted to the NYC adult population per Census 2010. (2) 2012-2013 Animal Care Centers (ACC) of NYC data. ACC NYC is a nonprofit animal welfare organization which takes in approximately 30,000 animals each year. ACC NYC provides data on animals received to the DOHMH on a monthly basis.

## Owners reported approximately 80% of New York City cats were altered

Number of owned cats by NYC borough by spay/neuter status, 2013

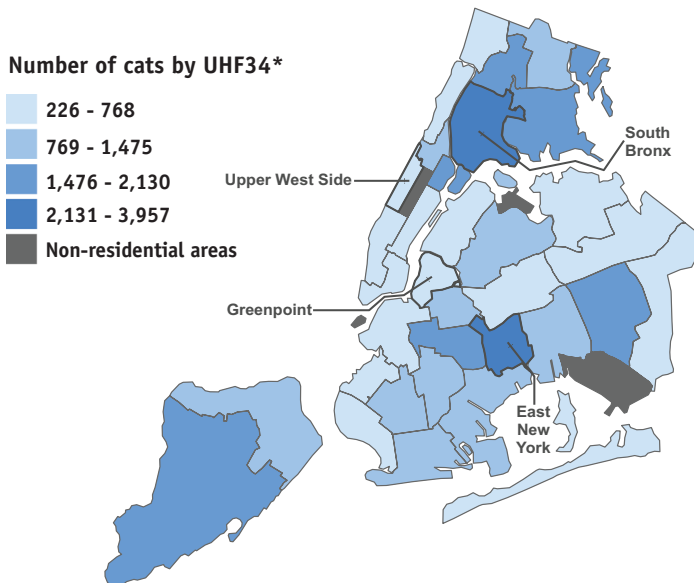


Source: NYC Community Health Survey, 2013

- Approximately 20% of owned cats in New York – about 113,600 cats – were unaltered
- Owned cats in Manhattan were most likely (93%) and cats in the Bronx were least likely (60%) to be altered.
- An estimated 16,000 (3%) of owned, unaltered cats were allowed outdoors.

## New York City Animal Care Centers receive nearly 18,000 cats each year

Number of cats that New York City Animal Care Centers received, by UHF\* neighborhood, 2012-2013



Labeled neighborhoods have the two highest and lowest numbers of cats received by ACC

\* The United Hospital Fund (UHF) classifies New York City into 42 neighborhoods, composed of contiguous ZIP codes, several of which were combined to create the 34 neighborhoods represented above.

Source: Animal Care Centers (ACC) of NYC, 2012-2013

- In 2012 and 2013, more than 80% of all cats received by Animal Care Centers (ACC) of NYC shelters were unaltered – four times more than owned cats.
- The neighborhoods with the fewest number of cats received by ACC were Greenpoint, in Brooklyn, and the Upper West Side, in Manhattan, with 226 and 236 cats, respectively.
- During the same time period, East New York, in Brooklyn, and the South Bronx had the most cats abandoned or surrendered to ACC (3,150 and 3,958 cats, respectively).

## Residents of households with altered cats vary by demographic and socioeconomic status

### Individual characteristics associated with having spayed/neutered cats

	All cats in household spayed or neutered Percent
<b>Number of cats in household</b>	
One	79%
Two	85%
Three or more	70%*
<b>Birthplace</b>	
US born	83%
Foreign born	71%
<b>Age group</b>	
20-39	76%
40-59	78%
60+	89%
<b>Educational status</b>	
Less than high school	61%*
High school graduate	78%
Some college/technical school	77%
College graduate	92%
<b>Household income as % of Federal Poverty Level (FPL)</b>	
<200% FPL (Poorest)	67%
200 - <400%	81%
≥400%	93%
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	
White, non-Hispanic	91%
Black, non-Hispanic	68%
Hispanic	64%
Asian/PI, non-Hispanic	**
Other, non-Hispanic	80%

\*Estimate should be interpreted with caution due to small sample size.

\*\*Data suppressed due to imprecise and unreliable estimates.

Source: NYC Community Health Survey, 2013

Among individuals living in a household with an owned cat:

- Those with three or more cats were least likely to have all cats spayed or neutered.
- NYC residents born in the US were more likely to be living with altered cats than foreign-born residents.
- Older adults (aged 60 years and older) were most likely to be living with altered cats.
- Adults with a college education and those with the highest incomes were more likely to be living with altered cats than those with less than a college education or lower household incomes.
- Non-Hispanic Whites were most likely to have altered cats, while non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanics were the least likely.

#### Local Law 59:

Every owner of a cat who permits such cat to roam outside the interior of the owner's dwelling shall have such cat sterilized. At the request of employees or authorized agents of the department [*New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene*], owners shall provide proof satisfactory to the department that a cat found roaming has been sterilized. The Department shall not seize a cat solely on the ground that the cat has not been sterilized.

## Recommendations

### Veterinarians should counsel cat owners to spay or neuter their cats.

In addition to population control benefits, these procedures improve behavior, reduce risks of feline cancers and prolong life.

### Veterinarians, animal welfare groups and local government should work together to provide low-cost spay/neuter services to improve the health of cats and to reduce the number of cats received by city shelters.

### New York City residents should spay or neuter their cats.

- If your new pet is not altered, visit a veterinarian to spay or neuter your cat.
- The City offers free spay/neuter services to low-income residents with cats. Visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) and search “low-cost spay/neuter clinics” or call 311 for more information.
- Never allow unaltered cats outside of your home, in accordance with Local Law 59 of 2011.
- Talk to a veterinarian about the appropriate time to have your kitten spayed or neutered. Kittens can become pregnant as early as four months of age.
- Keep your kitten indoors until it has been spayed or neutered.

### New Yorkers can help lost, abandoned, sick or injured animals.

- Call 311 to report:
  - Lost, found, stray or abandoned dogs or kittens
  - Injured or sick animals requiring care
  - Animal abuse or cruelty
- Call 911 to report an animal that is dangerous or displays signs of rabies.
- If you are bitten or scratched by a cat or other animal, seek medical attention immediately.
  - Call 311 or the Animal Bite Unit at 646-632-6074 to report the bite.
- Consider adopting a cat from the city’s animal shelters. All New York City shelters are required to spay or neuter cats provided for adoption. For information on adoptions, visit [nycacc.org](http://nycacc.org).
- Some organizations promote Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs that capture, alter and vaccinate stray and feral cats. For more information, visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) and search “TNR.”

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