

MEDIA RELEASE

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The truth about cats and dogs – and their people

Many pet owners would agree there is more than a little truth in the old saying 'dogs have owners, cats have servants'. And now the latest research from the University of Texas¹ has confirmed that there are distinct personality differences between the owners of dogs and cats.

The research looked at the 'Big Five' personality traits of over 4,500 men and women from countries across the world and found that there were significant differences between people who identified themselves as a 'dog person' or a 'cat person'.

"Taking a cute puppy for a walk is a sure fire way to start a conversation but what the owner may not know is that they are also communicating that they are likely to be an extraverted person who is both agreeable and conscientious," says Susie Willis from the Petcare Information and Advisory Service (PIAS).

"It is a widely held view that dog people and cat people are very distinct groups and that a person has a lifetime membership of one group or the other. Even though the research found that nearly 30% of people identified themselves as both a cat and a dog person, it also found there are significant differences between those that identify themselves as either a dog person or a cat person."

The research found that dog people were more extraverted and less neurotic than cat people. In addition, dog people were higher on conscientiousness and agreeableness but lower on openness than cat people.

"We probably all have friends that we would say are either dog people or cat people but the fact is that Australians are pet people. We have one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world with 36% of households owning a dog and 23% of households owning a cat," says Susie.

"On one level these findings may reinforce the stereotypes many people seem to have about dogs and cats but the information could be very useful in helping match people with pets in shelters or in the use of dogs and cats in pet therapy. The more we understand about the interactions between people and pets, the greater the opportunity to benefit from the role companion animals play in our lives," she added.

PIAS is asking Australians to comment on their choice of pet. To complete the short survey go to www.petnet.com.au

¹ *Personalities of Self-Identified "Dog People" and "Cat People"*. Samuel D Gosling et al Department of Psychology, University of Texas. Published in Volume 23, Issue 3 of *Anthrozoos*

(ENDS)

Issued on behalf of the Petcare Information and Advisory Service

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