

Gauging Family Intimacy

# Dogs Edge Cats (Dads Trail Both)

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Paul Taylor, Executive Vice President  
Cary Funk, Senior Project Director  
Peyton Craighill, Project Director

MEDIA INQUIRIES CONTACT:  
Pew Research Center  
202 419 4328  
<http://pewresearch.org>

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A Social Trends Report

# Gauging Family Intimacy: Dogs Edge Cats (Dads Trail Both)

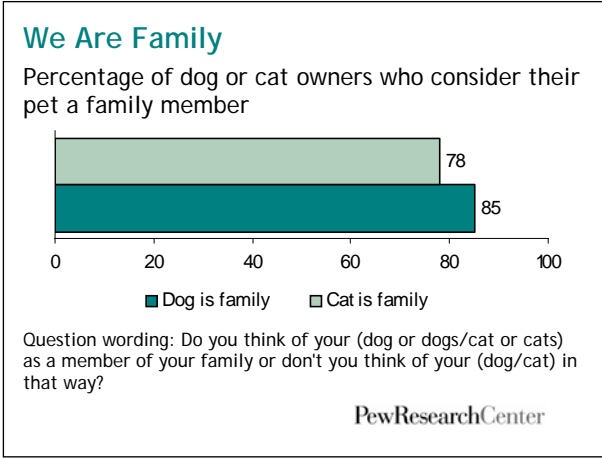
Dogs may be known as man’s best friend, but for most of their owners, even that lavish sobriquet appears to undershoot the mark. Fully 85% of dog owners say they consider their pet to be a member of their family, according to a Pew Research Center survey.

And most cat owners (78%) feel the same way.

The pets-as-four-legged-family-member phenomenon helps explain everything from the heart-tugging scenes during Hurricane Katrina last fall, when some Gulf Coast residents risked staying home because they did not want to abandon their pets, to the explosive recent growth of the pet care industry. Americans spent an

estimated \$35.9 billion on their pets last year, up from \$17 billion in 1994, according to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association. Some of that money went for pet cosmetic surgery, pet insurance, pet strollers, pet waterbeds and, yes, pet spas and hotels. (The “Presidential Suite” at the Ritzly Canine Carriage House in Manhattan is available for \$175 a night, breakfast included.)

The nationwide Pew survey of 3,014 adults finds that just about every breed of human owner considers their pet to be family. But some groups are more disposed than others to feel this way.



**The Family Dog**  
Do you think of your dog or dogs as a member of your family or don't you think of your dog in that way?

	Family	Not Family	Don't Know	N
	%	%	%	
<b>Among dog owners...</b>				
All	85	15	*=100	1,181
Men	80	20	*=100	512
Women	89	11	*=100	669
18-29	90	10	0=100	178
30-49	82	18	*=100	498
50-64	85	15	*=100	326
65+	83	17	0=100	167
Urban	90	10	0=100	290
Suburban	88	12	*=100	578
Rural	73	27	0=100	313
Have kids under 18	81	19	0=100	456
Have kids 18+ only	84	16	*=100	462
Not a parent	91	9	0=100	260
Never married	90	10	0=100	174
Married	83	17	*=100	771
Been married, not married now	85	15	*=100	235

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For example, more women than men describe their dog or cat as a member of the family. So do those who aren't parents, compared with those who have children. Also owners who live in cities or suburbs are more likely than those who live in rural areas to describe their dog or cat as a family member.

### The Family Cat

Do you think of your cat or cats as a member of your family or don't you think of your cat in that way?

	Family	Not Family	Don't Know	N
	%	%	%	
<b>Among cat owners...</b>				
All	78	22	*=100	687
Men	72	28	*=100	271
Women	82	17	1=100	416
18-29	82	18	0=100	100
30-49	75	24	1=100	285
50-64	78	21	1=100	191
65+	76	24	0=100	108
Urban	80	20	*=100	183
Suburban	81	18	1=100	360
Rural	64	36	0=100	144
Have kids under 18	74	26	*=100	230
Have kids 18+ only	74	25	1=100	278
Not a parent	86	14	0=100	178
Never married	86	14	0=100	120
Married	73	26	1=100	415
Been married, not married now	80	20	0=100	151

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**Profile of Pet Owners**

Nearly six-in-ten (57%) of all adults in this country own a pet or pets of one kind or another, with dog owners (39% of all adults) outnumbering cat owners (23%) – and owners of all other pets trailing far behind, the Pew survey finds.

More whites (64%) than blacks (30%) or Hispanics (39%) have a pet. There is also an income skew to pet ownership: nearly seven-in-ten (69%) adults with an annual family income of \$100,000 or more has a pet, compared with fewer than half (45%) of adults with an income below \$30,000. Also, rural residents (65%) are more likely than suburbanites (57%) or city folks (51%) to have a pet -- though, as noted above, they're a bit less likely to consider their dogs or cats a member of the family.

Profile of Pet Owners					
	Pet Owner	No Pet	Don't know	Have a Dog	Have a Cat
	%	%	%	%	%
All adults	57	43	*=100	39	23
Men	56	44	*=100	40	21
Women	57	43	*=100	39	24
<b>Race/Ethnicity*</b>					
White	64	36	0=100	45	27
Black	30	70	0=100	20	9
Hispanic	39	61	0=100	26	11
<b>Age</b>					
18-29	58	42	0=100	40	23
30-49	64	36	*=100	45	25
50-64	57	43	0=100	40	23
65+	41	59	0=100	26	18
<b>Family Income</b>					
\$100,000 or more	69	31	0=100	50	26
\$50,000 to \$99,999	62	38	0=100	44	24
\$30,000 to \$49,999	60	40	0=100	42	22
Less than \$30,000	45	55	0=100	29	20
<b>Location</b>					
Urban	51	49	0=100	33	21
Suburban	57	43	*=100	39	24
Rural	65	35	0=100	51	23

\*Whites include only non-Hispanic whites. Hispanics are of any race. Interviews conducted in English and Spanish.

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## The Truth about Cats and Dogs... and Mom and Dad

Dogs edge cats by a nose in the human intimacy sweepstakes. Not only are dog owners slightly more likely to think of their pet as family, so too are they more inclined to describe their relationship with their pet as “close” rather than “distant.” Some 94% of dog owners say this, compared with 84% of cat owners.

Needless to say, this finding won’t shut down the never-ending, (mostly) friendly competition between dog people and cat people. To the contrary, when paired with another set of responses from the same survey, it just might open an entirely new can of worms.

It turns out when you ask adults about their parents, 87% say they feel close to mom and 74% say they feel close to dad.

So for anyone keeping score, the family intimacy standings look like this: dog 94%; mom 87%; cat 84%; dad 74%.

### Do You Feel Close to Your Dog, Cat?

	Dog	Cat
	%	%
<b>Which word best describes your relationship with your...</b>		
Close	94	84
Distant	5	14
Neither (vol.)/Don't know	1	2
	100	100
Tense	4	6
Easygoing	94	92
Neither (vol.)/Don't know	2	2
	100	100
Number or respondents	1,181	687
Based on dog owners or cat owners.		
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### Do You Feel Close to Your Mom, Dad?

	Mother	Father
	%	%
<b>Which word best describes your relationship with your...</b>		
Close	87	74
Distant	11	22
Neither (vol.)/Don't know	2	4
	100	100
Tense	12	15
Easygoing	85	82
Neither (vol.)/Don't know	3	3
	100	100
Number or respondents	1,752	1,320
Based on those with a living mother or father.		
PewResearchCenter		

## About the Pew Social Trends Reports

The Pew social trends reports explore the behaviors and attitudes of Americans in key realms of their lives – family, community, health, finance, work and leisure. Reports analyze changes over time in social behaviors and probe for differences and similarities between key sub-groups in the population.

The surveys are conducted by the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan “fact tank” that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

## About the Survey

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted with a nationally representative sample of adults, ages 18 years and older, living in continental U.S. telephone households.

- Interviews conducted October 5-November 6, 2005
- 3,014 interviews
- Margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2 percentage points for results based on the total sample at the 95% confidence level. The margin of sampling error is higher for results based on subgroups of respondents.

Survey interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

In addition to sampling error, bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias in the findings of opinion polls.

Survey reports are the result of the collaborative effort of the social trends staff, which consists of:

Paul Taylor, Executive Vice President

Cary Funk, Senior Project Director

Peyton Craighill, Project Director

PEW SOCIAL TRENDS  
 OCTOBER 5 - NOVEMBER 6, 2005  
 N=3,014

**NO QUESTION 1**

**QUESTIONS 2 THROUGH 20 IN PREVIOUS RELEASE OR NOT ASKED**

Q.21 Is your mother living?

Q.22 Is your father living?

<i>Mother</i>	<i>Father</i>	
62	47	Yes
38	52	No
*	1	Don't know/Refused
100	100	

Q.22a Do you have any living stepparents who played an important role in your life?

12	Yes
88	No
*	Don't know/Refused
100	

**IF YES Q22a=1**

Q.22b Would that be a stepmother, a stepfather or both?

**BASED ON HAVE STEPPARENT WHO PLAYED IMPORTANT ROLE [N=316]:**

30	Stepmother
50	Stepfather
20	Both stepmother and stepfather
*	Don't know/Refused
100	

**QUESTIONS 23 THROUGH 25 IN PREVIOUS RELEASE**

**ASK Q26 IF MOTHER IS LIVING (Q21=1) OR MOTHER NOT LIVING/DK AND IMPORTANT STEPMOTHER (Q21=2,9 & Q22b=1,3):**

Q.26 Which word best describes your relationship with your (mother/stepmother)? (First/Next,...)<sup>1</sup> [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]

**ASK Q28 IF FATHER IS LIVING (Q22=1) OR FATHER NOT LIVING/DK AND IMPORTANT STEPFATHER (Q22=2,9 & Q22B=2,3):**

Q.28 Which word best describes your relationship with your (father/stepfather)? (First/Next,...) [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]

**“MOTHER” BASED ON THOSE WITH MOTHER OR STEPMOTHER LIVING [N=1752]:**  
**“FATHER” BASED ON THOSE WITH FATHER OR STEPFATHER LIVING [N=1320]:**

a. Close or distant

			<i>Gallup</i>	
			May 1989	
<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>		<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
87	74	Close	90	69
11	22	Distant	7	24
2	3	Neither <b>(VOL.)</b>	3	7
<u>*</u>	<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>
100	100		100	100

b. Tense or easygoing

			<i>Gallup</i>	
			May 1989	
<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>		<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
12	15	Tense	12	21
85	82	Easygoing	84	74
2	2	Neither <b>(VOL.)</b>	3	3
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
100	100		100	100

**QUESTIONS 29 THROUGH 74 IN PREVIOUS RELEASE OR NOT ASKED**

On a different subject...

Q.75 Do you have a pet?

		<i>Great TV Poll</i>
		<u>Feb 1991</u>
57	Yes	60
43	No	40
<u>*</u>	Don't know/Refused	
100		100

<sup>1</sup> In the 1989 Gallup survey, Q26 and Q28 had the following introductory language: "Now I'm going to read some phrases that might describe the kind of relationship you have with your (mother/father). For each pair of words or phrases that I read, please tell me which one best describes your relationship with your (mother/father)."



**ASK IF HAVE PET (Q75=1):**

Q.76 What kind of pet do you have? [OPEN END; ALLOW MULTIPLE RESPONSES]

**BASED ON PET OWNERS [N=1703]:**

		<i>Great TV Poll</i>
		<u>Feb 1991</u>
69	Dog	70
40	Cat	46
4	Bird	8
4	Fish	8
8	Other	9
*	Don't know/Refused	

[RESPONSES SUM TO MORE THE 100% BECAUSE MULTIPLE ANSWERS WERE ALLOWED]

**IF Q76=1 OR Q76=2****READ:** People think about their pets in different ways.**ASK IF DOG (Q76=1):**

Q.77 Do you think of your dog or dogs as a member of your family or don't you think of your dog in that way?

**ASK IF CAT (Q76=2):**

Q.78 Do you think of your cat or cats as a member of your family or don't you think of your cat in that way?

**“DOG” BASED ON DOG OWNERS [N=1181]:****“CAT” BASED ON CAT OWNERS [N=687]:**

<u>Cat</u>	<u>Dog</u>	
78	85	Yes
22	15	No
*	*	Don't know/Refused
100	100	

**ASK IF DOG (Q76=1):**

D1 Which word best describes your relationship with your dog or dogs. [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]

**ASK IF CAT (Q76=2):**

C1 Which word best describes your relationship with your cat or cats. [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]

**“DOG” BASED ON DOG OWNERS [N=1181]:****“CAT” BASED ON CAT OWNERS [N=687]:**

## a. Close or distant

<u>Cat</u>	<u>Dog</u>	
84	94	Close
14	5	Distant
2	*	Neither (VOL.)
*	1	Don't know/Refused
100	100	

## b. Tense or easygoing

<u>Cat</u>	<u>Dog</u>	
6	4	Tense
92	94	Easygoing
1	1	Neither (VOL.)
1	1	Don't know/Refused
100	100	