

# Affinity Foundation Children and Animals Study 2015



FOUNDATION  
— 1987 —

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## Details of the population studied

- We received 537 valid questionnaires.
- Age range: between 9 and 13 years.
- Gender distribution: 51% boys and 49% girls.
- Keeping pets: around 62% of children surveyed say they live with a pet.

## Is it beneficial to live with a pet?

- Around 94% of children feel better with a pet nearby.

### **Our interpretation:**

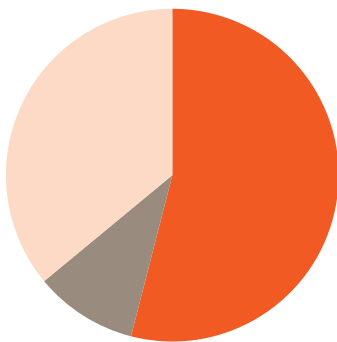
- The results are consistent with several international studies which indicate that children not only feel a natural attraction towards animals but also feel comforted when they are with them.

## Which pet do children like best?

## Which animal do they believe they resemble the most?

- Around 54% of children say that dogs are their favourite pet, around 10% opt for cats and 36% rate them both equally (Figure 1).
- Around 75% of children identify more with a dog than with a cat (Figure 2).

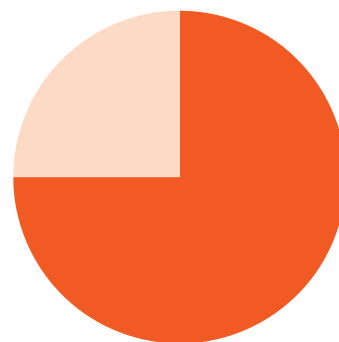
Figure 1 What animal do you like the most?



Total=100

- 54% Dog
- 10 % Cat
- 36% Both equally

Figure 2 What animal do you resemble the most?



Total=100

- 75% Dog
- 25% Cat

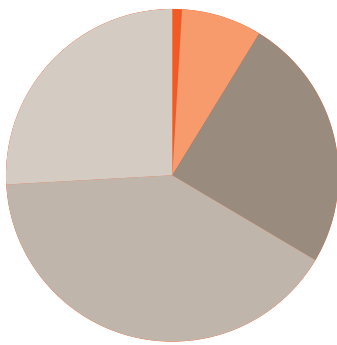
### Our interpretation:

- Children seem to be more “canine” than “feline”.
- This result may have two complementary explanations:
  - The behaviour profile of a dog fits in better with a child’s expectations regarding play and interaction than that of a cat.
  - The general temperamental traits of a dog, such as sociability and extroversion, are more consistent with those of a majority of children than those of a cat, which is a much more reserved animal.

## What do children think about the happiness of pets?

- 91% of children believe that dogs are fairly or very happy in our society (Figure 3).
- 78% of children believe that cats are fairly or very happy in our society (Figure 4).

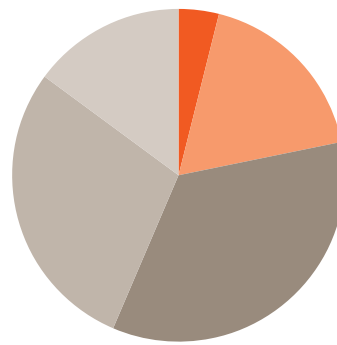
**Figura 3 Do you believe dogs are happy in our society?**



**Total=100**

- 0.93% Not happy at all
- 7.82% A little happy
- 24.76% Fairly happy
- 40.59% Very happy
- 25.88% Completely happy

**Figura 4 Do you believe cats are happy in our society?**



**Total=100**

- 3.91% Not happy at all
- 17.87% A little happy
- 34.63% Fairly happy
- 28.67% Very happy
- 14.89% Completely happy

### **Our interpretation:**

- The perception of happiness, albeit high, is somewhat lower for cats than it is for dogs. This result may be explained by the greater number of stray cats there are nowadays compared to dogs.
- Another interpretation may be that children perceive cats as being animals that are more distant from humans than dogs. This means that children may be humanising cats to a lesser extent than dogs and, therefore, see cats as less able to feel happiness.

## What makes a pet happy according to children?

- For both dogs and cats, children believe that being healthy, enjoying the company of the family and playing with their owners are the main reasons for being happy (Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5 Happiness ranking for dogs: What makes a dog happy?

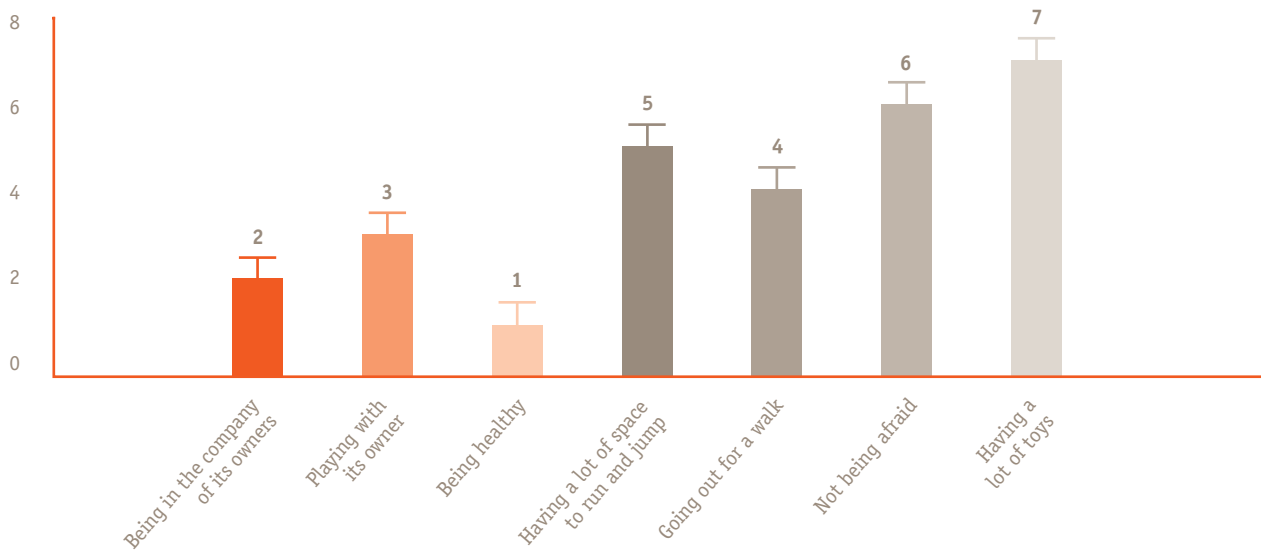
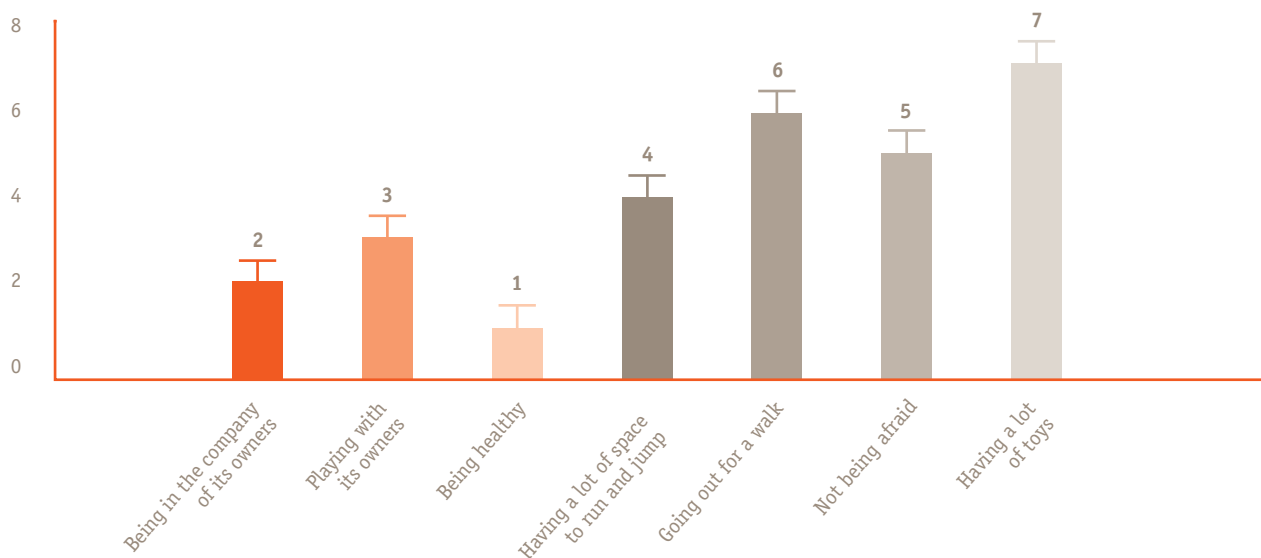


Figure 6 Happiness ranking for cats: what makes a cat happy?



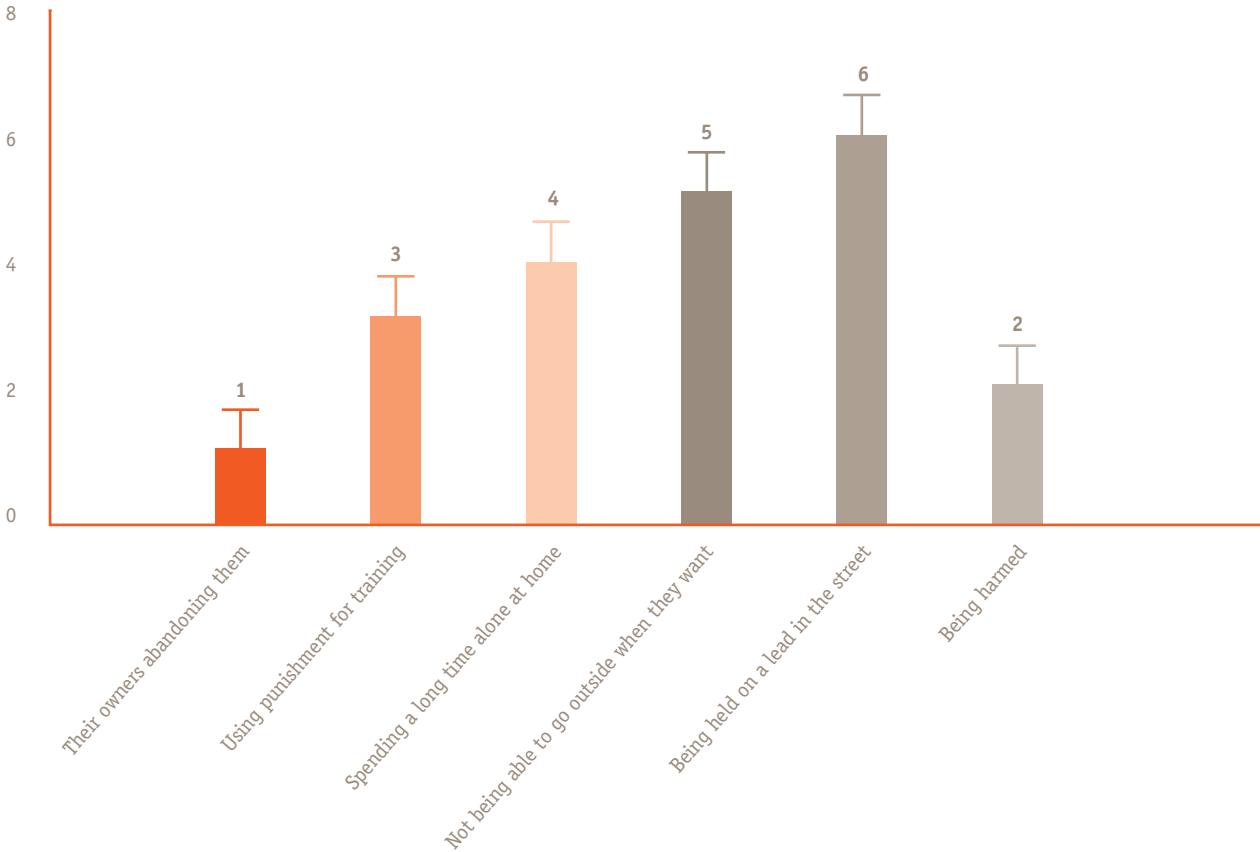
### Our interpretation:

- It is interesting to note that for children, anything related to social interaction and health is more important than, for example, having lots of toys. In our opinion, this scenario offers educators a very interesting educational opportunity for promoting values such as friendship and living together.

# What do children think are the most important problems that cats and dogs have to face?

- According to children, the main problem that pets face in our society is abandonment. (Figure 7).
- They also think that mistreatment and the use of punishment are major areas of concern regarding the well-being of pets. (Figure 7).

Figure 7 Ranking of problems for dogs and cats



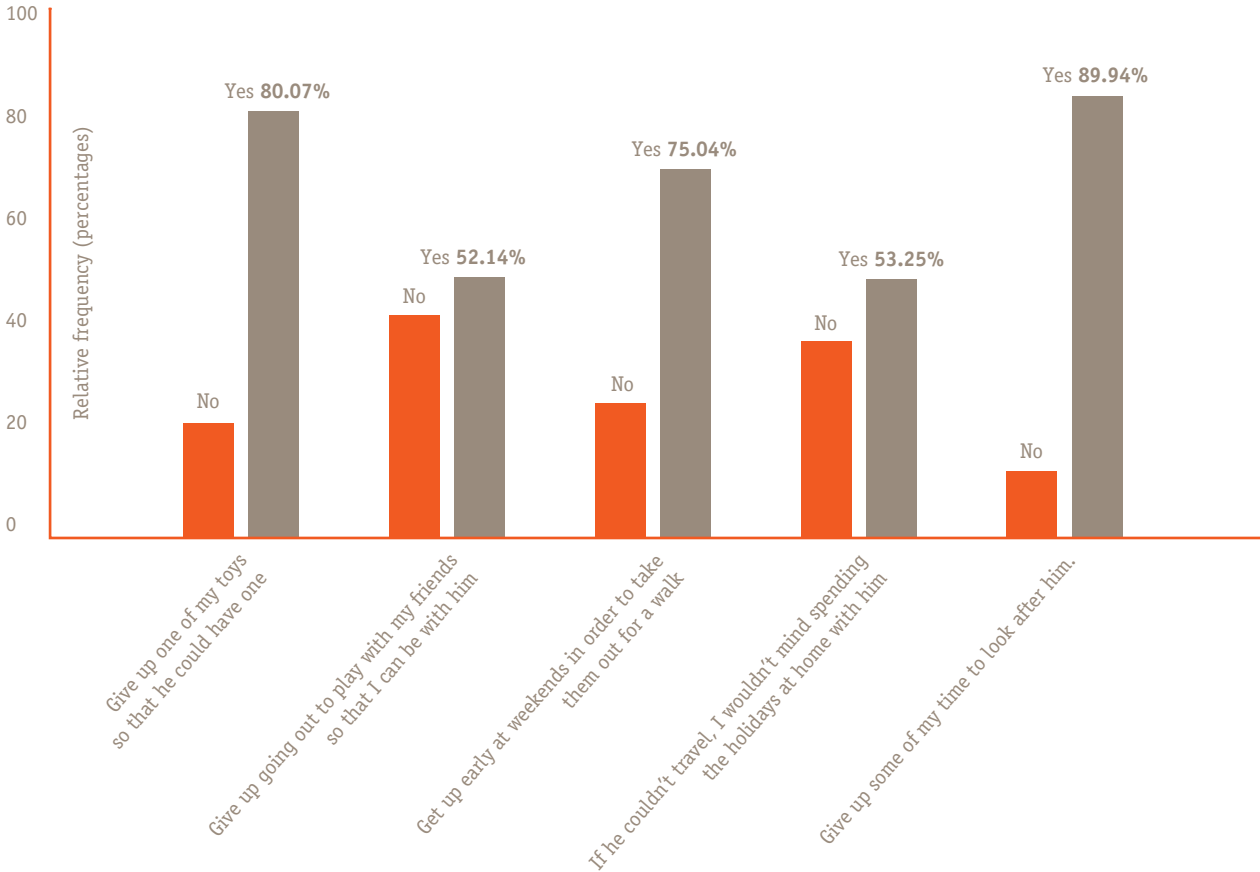
### Our interpretation:

- Children’s perceptions are fully consistent with the opinion of scientists, veterinary professionals and protection organisations on the huge impact that abandonment has on animal welfare. Children perceive the use of punishment as a clear indicator of a lack of well-being.
- This data once again provides important educational opportunities to discuss the different learning methods that are applicable both to animals and to people.

# What are children prepared to do for their pets?

- 90% of children would devote some of their time to looking after their pet, 80% would give up a toy to enable their pet to have one and 75% would get up early to take their pet for a walk.
- Around 1 in 2 children would change their holidays to accommodate the needs of their animal and would give up being with their friends in order to be with their pet.

Figure 8 What are you prepared to do for your pet?



**Our interpretation:**

- Children seem to be prepared to sacrifice certain aspects of their quality of life for their pet. However, it is important to remember that the wishes expressed by children must then be turned into action. Therefore, as has already been stated in other studies, taking care of and living with a pet provide an excellent opportunity to promote a sense of responsibility and commitment.

## How do children think that pets help people?

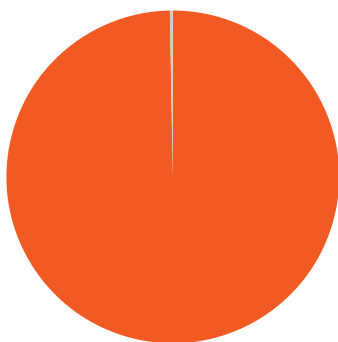
- Virtually 100% of the children surveyed think that company is the main benefit of living with pets and 92% state that pets bring love to people (Figure 9).
- Around 60% of children think that being with animals helps us love and respect people more (Figure 9).
- The fun and entertainment that come from living with pets are also mentioned by over 90% of the children surveyed (Figure 9).
- How children rank the beneficial aspects of living with pets.
  1. Provide company
  2. They bring happiness
  3. Entertain us
  4. They give love
  5. Teach us to be responsible
  6. Teach us to be affectionate
  7. Teach us to treat other people well
  8. Teach us to respect those who are different

### Our interpretation:

- According to children, living with pets helps people to be happier.
- Also, many of them think that relationships with pets would help us to show more empathy and better social skills towards others.

Figure 9

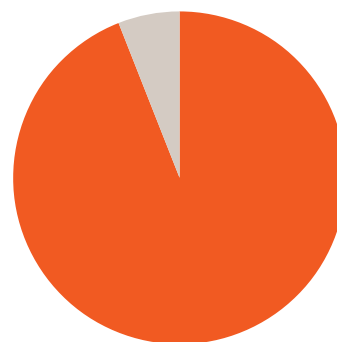
They provide company



Total=100

■ 0.38% No  
■ 99.62% Yes

They bring happiness

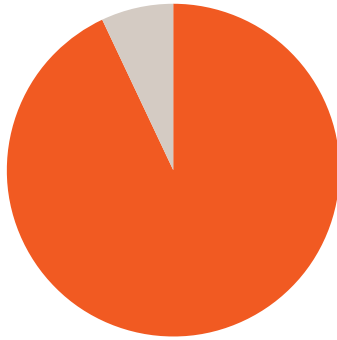


Total=100

■ 5.96% No  
■ 94.04% Yes



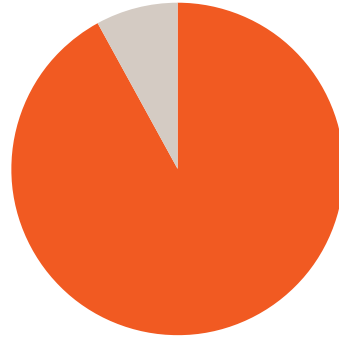
**They bring fun and entertainment**



**Total=100**

■ 7.27% No  
■ 92.73% Yes

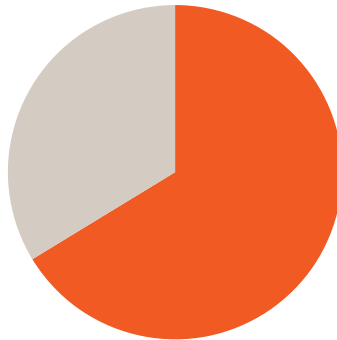
**They give love**



**Total=100**

■ 7.83% No  
■ 92.17% Yes

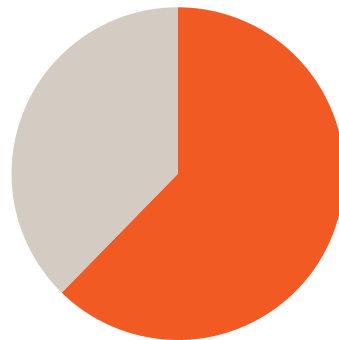
**Teach us to be responsible**



**Total=100**

■ 33.15% No  
■ 66.85% Yes

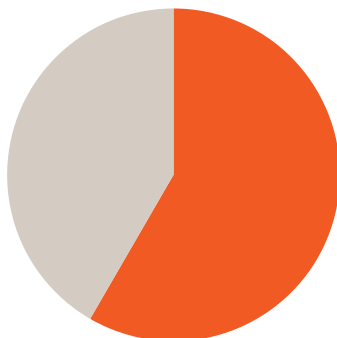
**Teach us to be affectionate**



**Total=100**

■ 37.62% No  
■ 62.38% Yes

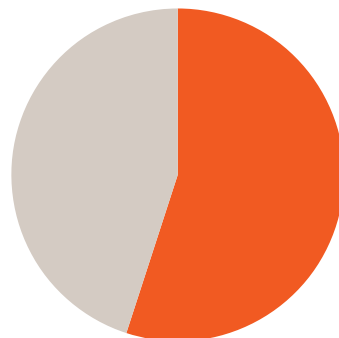
**Teach us to treat other people well**



**Total=100**

■ 41.16% No  
■ 58.84% Yes

**Teach us to respect those who are different**



**Total=100**

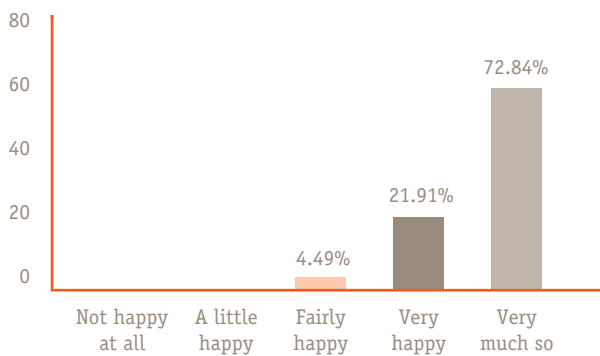
■ 44.7% No  
■ 55.30% Yes

## To what extent do children believe their pets have feelings? To what extent do children believe their pets are intelligent?

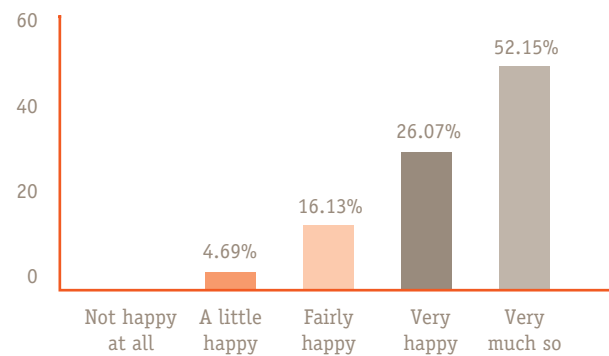
- 99.5% of children believe that dogs have feelings and 94% think the same about cats (Figure 10).
- There is a statistically significant difference between what children think about dogs and cats having feelings and it is weighted in favour of dogs (Wilcoxon Test,  $p < 0.0001$ ).
- 98% of children think that dogs are quite or very intelligent and 95% think the same about cats (Figure 10).
- There is a statistically significant difference between what children think about the intelligence of dogs and cats and it is weighted in favour of dogs (Wilcoxon Test,  $p < 0.0001$ ).

Figure 10

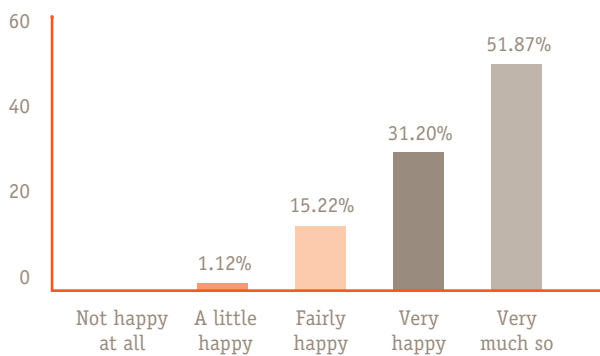
### Do you believe that dogs have feelings?



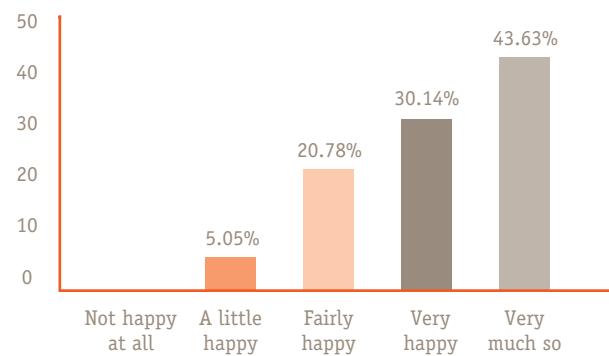
### Do you believe that cats have feelings?



### Do you believe that dogs are intelligent?



### Do you believe that cats are intelligent?



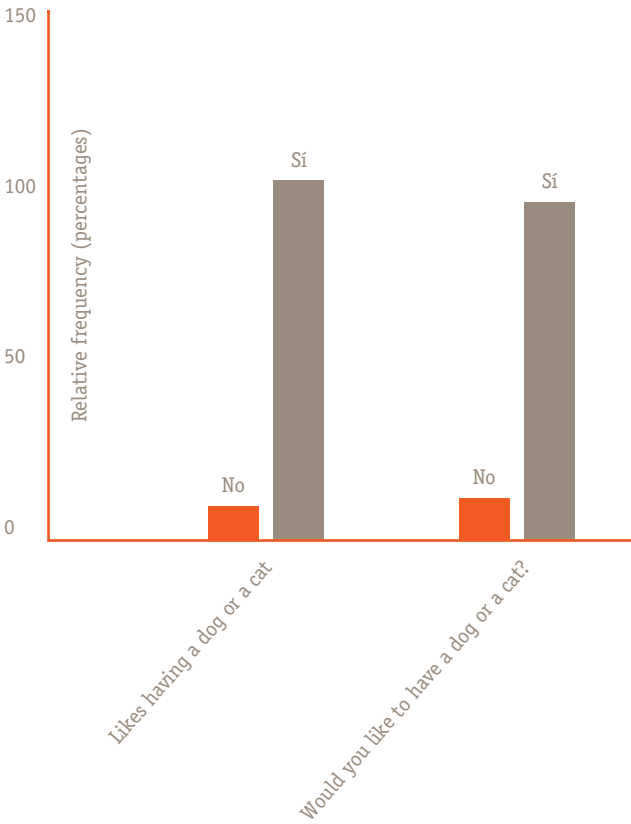
### Our interpretation:

- According to the children, both dogs and cats have feelings, but the former have more than the latter. The same applies to intelligence. Earlier we said that children identified more with the image of the dog than with that of the cat and this mechanism could lead to a greater degree of humanisation towards the dog compared to the cat.

# What are children’s attitudes to getting and keeping a dog or a cat?

- 94% of the children surveyed who have a dog or a cat like living with their pet.
- Of those who don’t have a pet, 86% would like to live with a dog or a cat.

Figure 11 About having a dog or a cat



**Likes having a dog or a cat**

No 5.96%  
Yes 94.04%

**Would you like to have a dog or a cat?**

No 13.63%  
Yes 86.36%

**Our interpretation:**

- Most children enjoy or would like to enjoy having the company of a dog or a cat.
- It is important for both educators and parents to be able to channel this tendency towards becoming responsible pet owners based on responsibility and commitment.



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