

Responsible Cat Ownership

Community Research

Prepared By: Micromex Research

Date: July 2011



Background

Background & Core Research Objectives

This survey was conducted on behalf of Planning, Conservation and Land (PCL), Nature Conservation Division, Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate (ESDD).

The objectives were to measure and explore the community's behaviour, perceptions and attitude towards domestic cats, specifically with regard to cat containment.

The outcomes of this research will inform the development of future policy making and cat management approaches within the ACT.



A random telephone survey with n=1,277 households was completed during the course of this research.

Specifics of the Research

Questionnaire

Micromex Research, together with the ACT Government, RSPCA and Australian National University, developed the questionnaire.

Data collection period

The random survey was conducted by telephone during the period May 2011.

Key Subgroups

Overall ACT (Excluding Forde & Bonner) n=1,085

Residents of Forde & Bonner n=192

Cat Owners (Random & Boost) n=506

Key Findings

Cat Ownership Profile

- In mainstream ACT, around ¼ of households own cats – in Forde and Bonner, ownership levels are significantly lower
- Around 40% of cats are sourced from an animal shelter

Current Behaviour

- Roaming cats are not an issue of strong concern for residents
- According to householders, the Containment Program in Forde and Bonner is successfully reducing the ability of cats to roam. The majority of householders in Forde and Bonner feel the cat containment measures are working well
- Residents outside of Forde and Bonner are 5 times more likely to have experienced a cat related problem compared to residents living in Forde and Bonner
- In the broader ACT, around 25% of residents make no attempt to contain the movements of their cat(s) to just their own property
- Just over ¼ of owners indicated that their cat comes home injured at least once per year

Next Steps - Cat Containment

- A policy of cat containment would be seen to be providing a community benefit. As nearly all households are aware of the risk that cats pose to local fauna, the ACT Government can leverage this understanding to support future containment initiatives
- Although residents who feel that cat containment will create community problems are in the minority, a significant percentage (35%) believe that containment is problematic for cats

There is a moderate to high level of community support for:

- Lifetime registration
- Cat containment from dusk until dawn
- Mandatory cat containment in new suburbs
- Cat containment across the ACT

Not surprisingly, cat owners are significantly less likely to support:

- Lifetime registration
- Mandatory cat containment in new suburbs
- Cat containment across the ACT

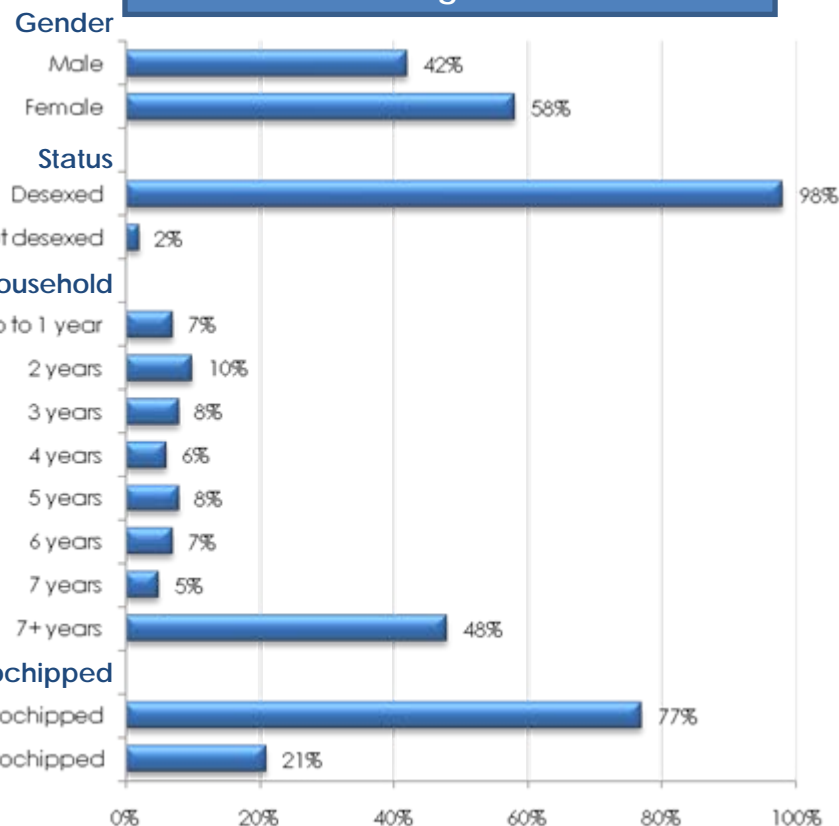
Next Steps – Treatment of Strays & Feral Cats

- Residents would support Government initiatives that address the issue of stray cats . While the majority of residents are willing to transport stray cats to a shelter, there is only niche interest in a stray cat adoption program
- Residents feel that the cat shelter should operate in a manner similar to the current dog pound
- Residents indicated that the following criteria are of high to very high importance when considering feral cat control methods:
 - That the control method doesn't pose a risk to public safety
 - That the control method is effective in reducing the impacts of feral cats
 - That the control method does not pose a risk to animals other than feral cats
 - That the control method does not cause suffering to feral cats

The Detailed Response

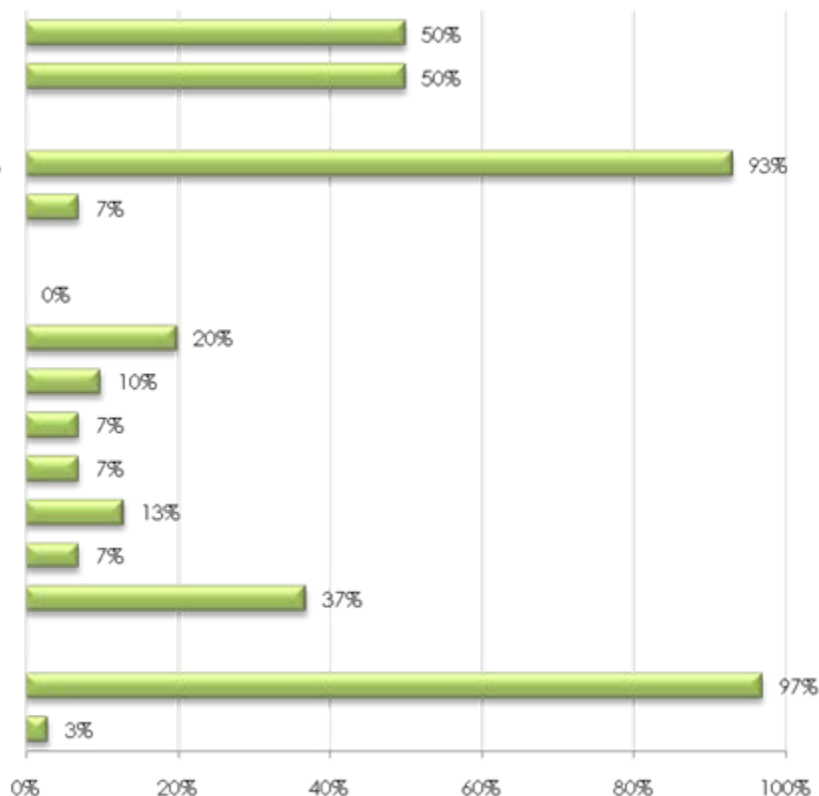
Profile Of Cats In The ACT

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Average number of years owned – 7.19

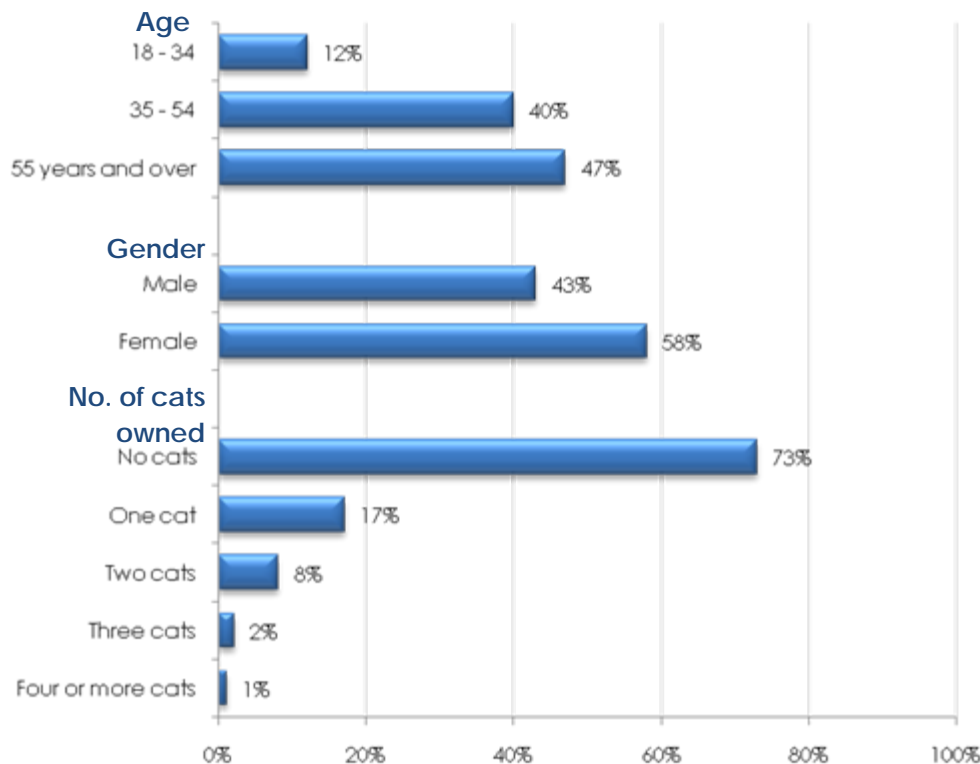
Forde and Bonner



Average number of years owned – 6.83

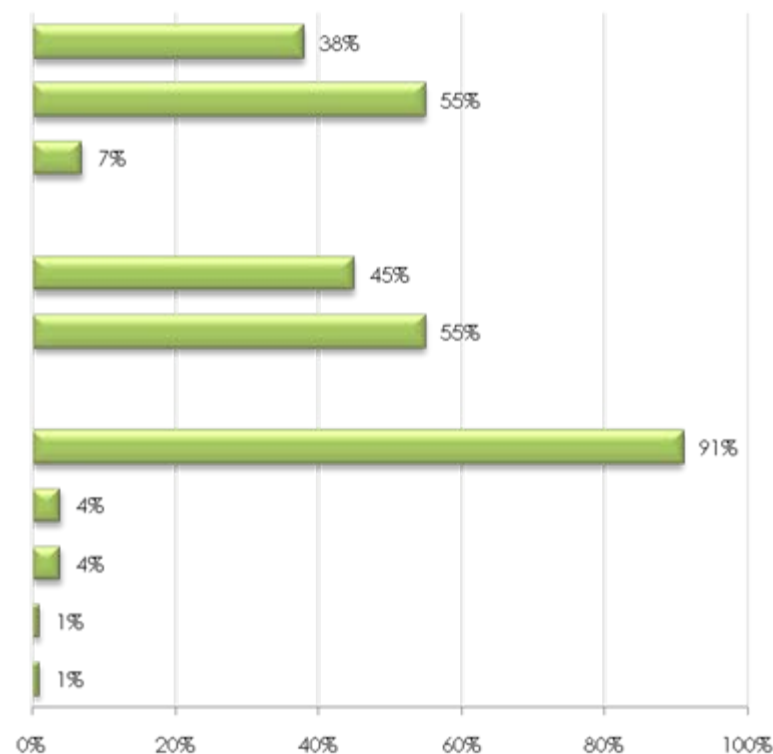
Profile Of Households

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Average number of cats owned – 1.50

Forde and Bonner



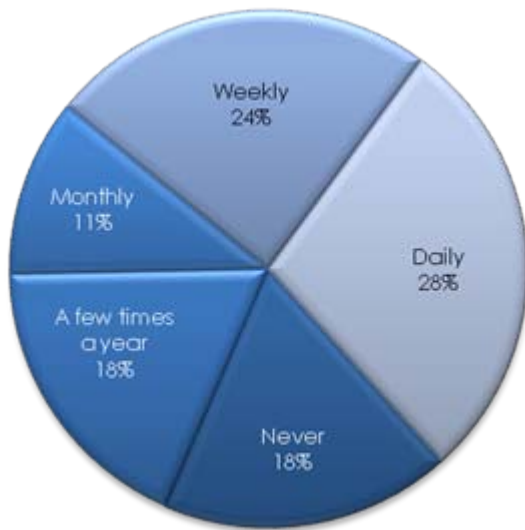
Average number of cats owned – 1.75

A representative sample of households across the ACT

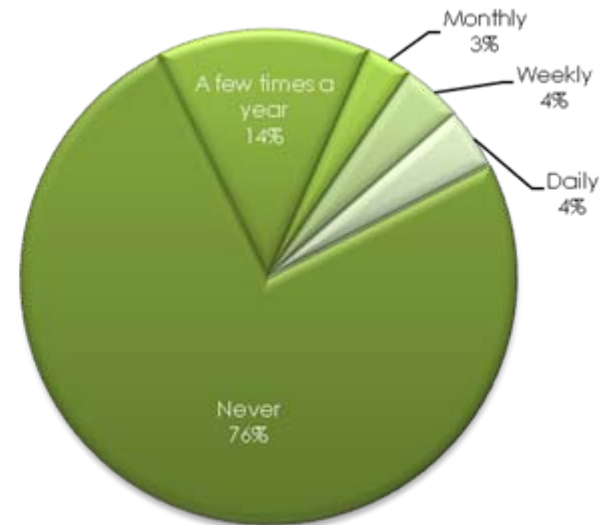
The Containment Program In Forde And Bonner Is Successfully Reducing The Ability Of Cats To Roam

Q. How often do you see cats that are not owned by a member of your household, on your property?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



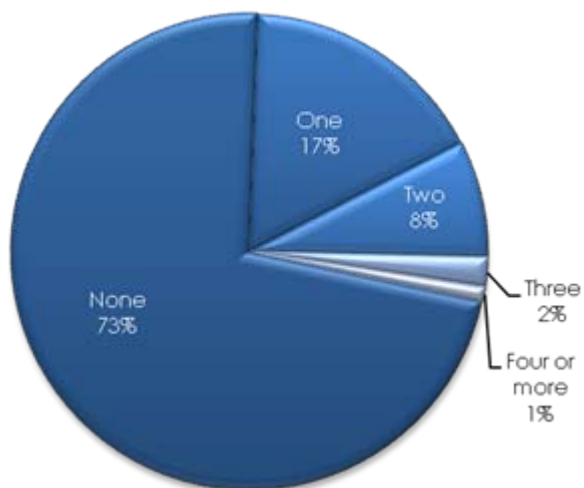
Residents in Forde and Bonner are significantly less likely to see cats not belonging to them on their property

The strategy for containment in Forde and Bonner is working

Forde And Bonner Have Significantly Lower Levels Of Cat Ownership

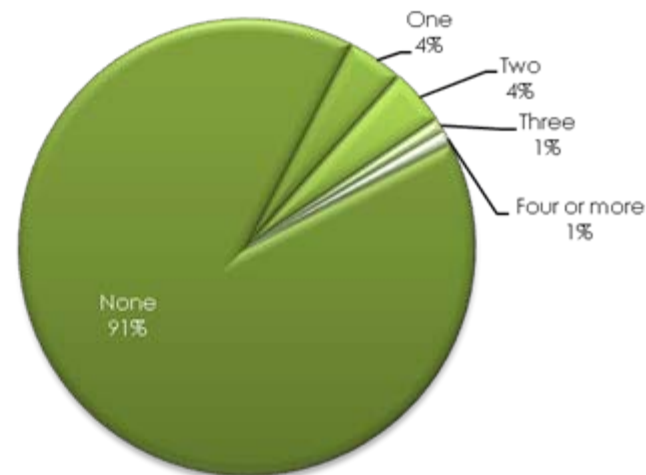
Q. How many cats are owned in your household?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Mean number of cats owned
1.50

Forde and Bonner



Mean number of cats owned
1.75

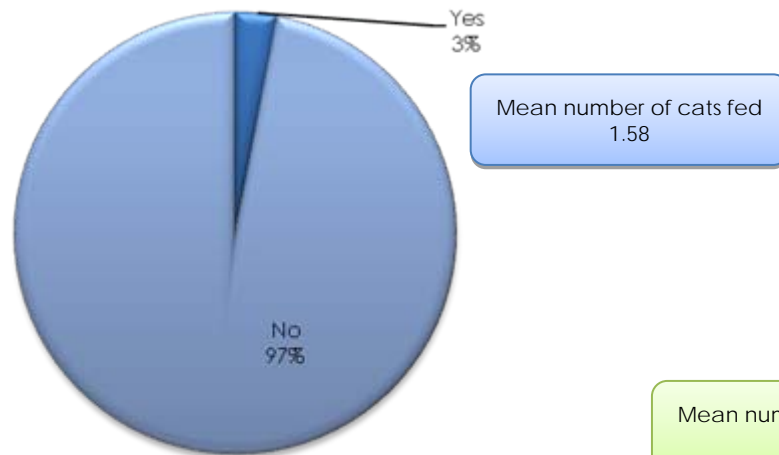
In mainstream ACT, around ¼ of households own cats

No Significant Differences Were Observed Across The Locations

Q. Do you currently feed any cats that do not belong to your household?

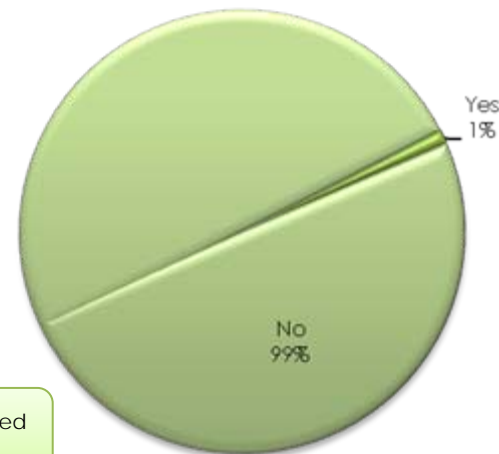
Q. (If yes), how many?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Households with cats are significantly more likely to feed cats not belonging to them (with cats 5%, without cats 1%)

Forde and Bonner

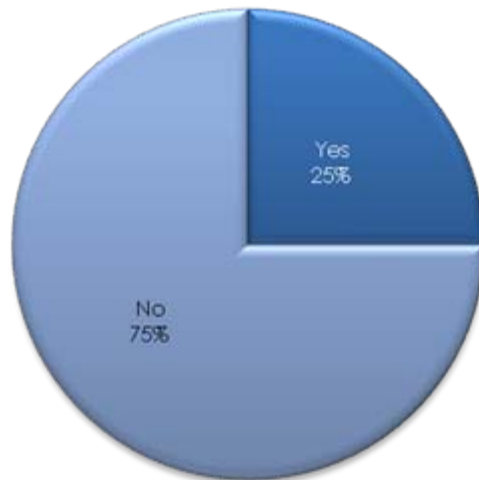


Cat owners are identified as more likely to also feed other cats

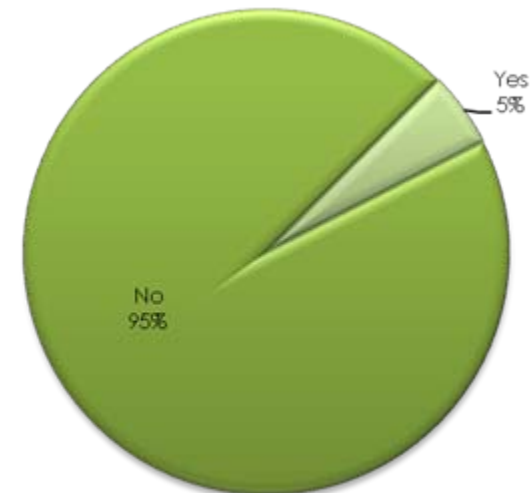
¼ Of ACT Residents Outside Of Forde And Bonner Experienced A Cat Related Problem

Q. In the past 12 months, have you experienced a problem within your household due to cats that were not owned by a member of your household?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



Residents in Forde & Bonner are significantly less likely to experience problems caused by unknown cats

Residents outside of Forde and Bonner are 5 times more likely to have experienced cat related problems compared to residents living in Forde and Bonner

Faeces, Attacks On Pets, Fighting And Predation Of Native Fauna Were Key Problem Areas In The ACT

Q. In the past 12 months, have you experienced a problem within your household due to cats that were not owned by a member of your household?

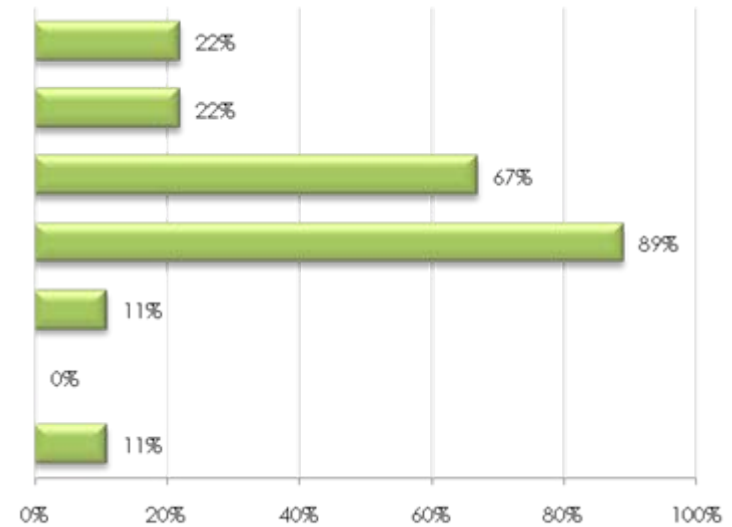
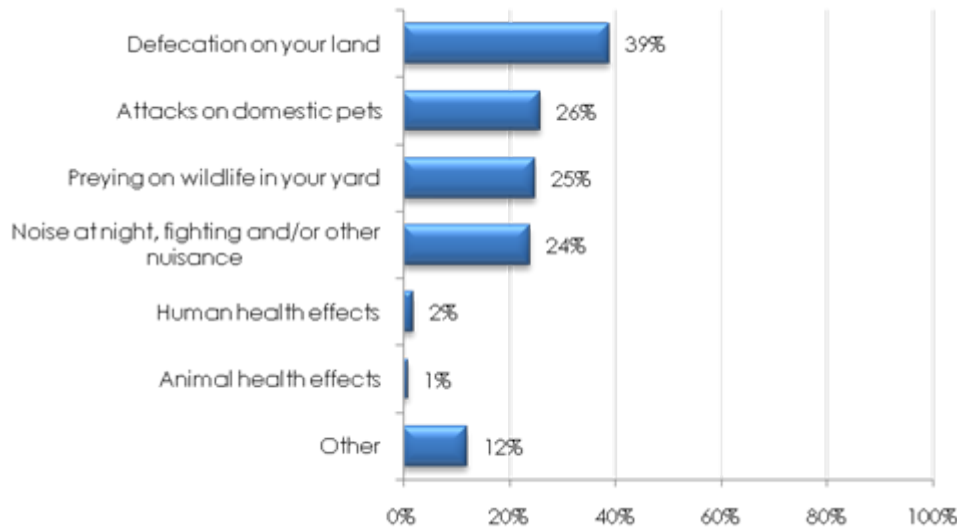
Q. (If yes), what sort of problems?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner

Forde and Bonner

25% experienced a problem

5% experienced a problem



While residents in Forde and Bonner still experience problems, it is important to remember that the incidence is dramatically lower than the rest of the ACT

Residents Of Forde And Bonner Indicated 100% Compliance With The Containment Rules

Q. This question refers to containing your cat, which means that you prevent them from wandering off your property. Do you keep your cats contained?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



Analysis indicates that the longer a cat has been owned the less likely it is to be contained.

- Cats owned 7 years or more – 58% are never contained
- Cats owned less than 7 years – 42% are never contained

Note: This question was not asked of those households who do not own cats.

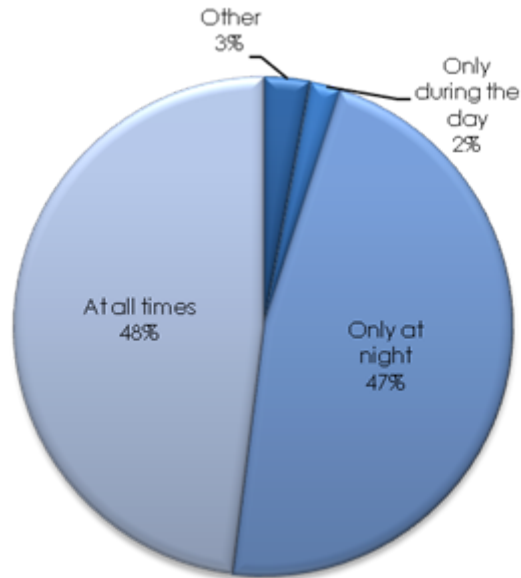
In the broader ACT, around 25% make no attempt to contain the movements of their cat(s) to just their own property

As A Minimum, 95% Of ACT Residents Who Do Practice Containment At Least Contain Their Cat At Night



- Q. This question refers to containing your cat, which means that you prevent them from wandering off your property. Do you keep your cats contained?
Q. (If yes or sometimes), do you contain your cat(s):

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



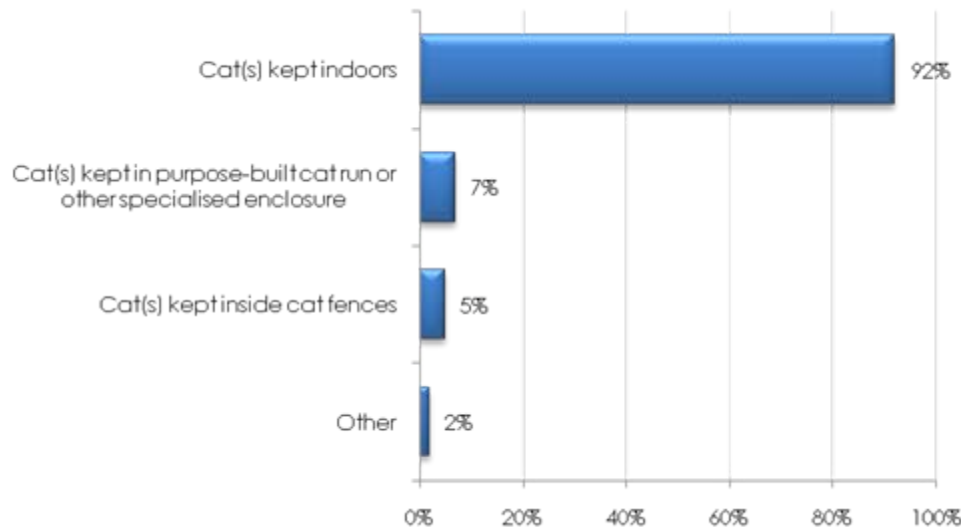
Note: These questions were not asked of those households who do not own cats.

The real challenge for the ACT Government is to get cat owners who don't contain their cats to actually take responsibility for containing them

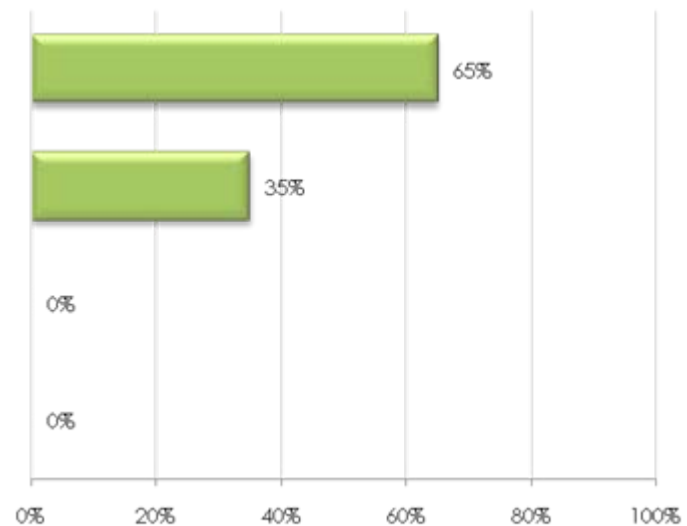
The Most Common Method Of Containment Is Keeping A Cat Indoors

- Q. This question refers to containing your cat, which means that you prevent them from wandering off your property. Do you keep your cats contained?
- Q. How do you contain your cat(s)?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner residents are significantly less likely to keep their cat indoors and significantly more likely to keep their cats in a purpose-built enclosure

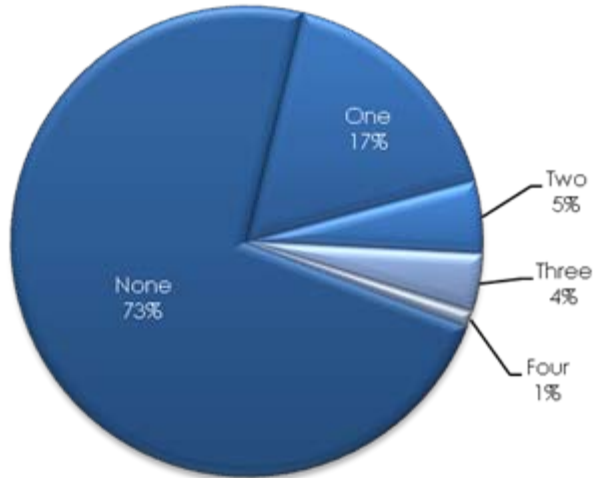
Note: This question was not asked of those households who do not own cats.

Residents of Forde and Bonner are significantly more likely to be using a specially built containment area – Can The ACT Government encourage more residents to use these types of devices?

Just Over ¼ Of Owners Indicated That Their Cat Comes Home Injured At Least Once Per Year

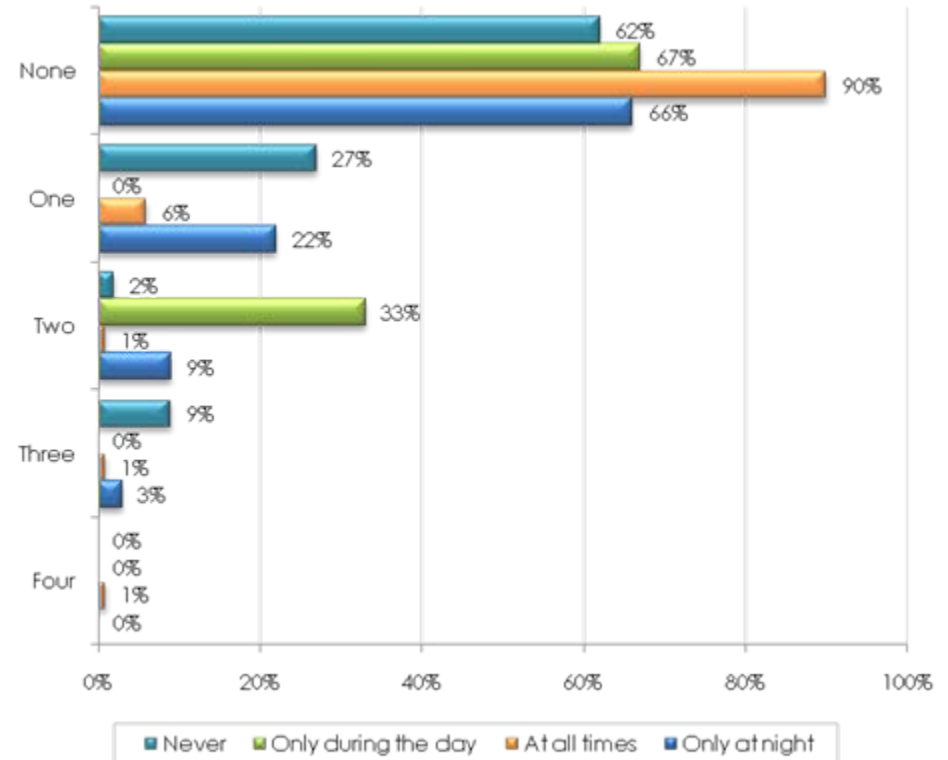
Q. How many times per year on average does your cat(s) come home injured?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Average number of times
cat comes home injured
1.6

Number of times cat comes home
injured by when cat is contained

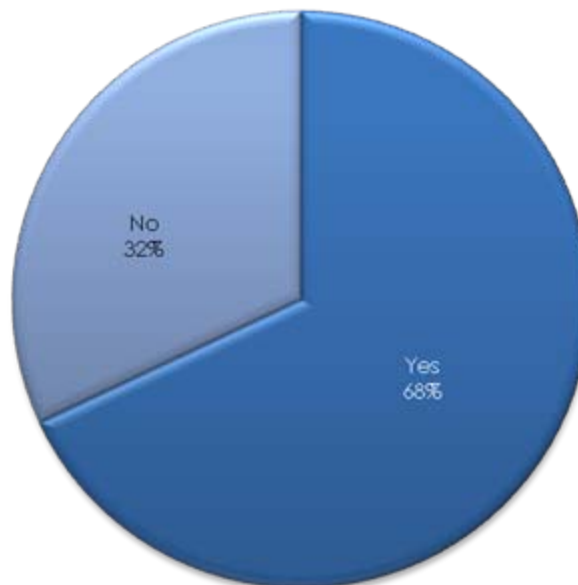


Note: 100% of Forde and Bonner residents reported that their cats 'never' come home injured.

There is little difference in injury rates when comparing partially
contained cats with non contained cats

Of the cats that come home injured, over two thirds require vet care

Q. Has your cat(s) ever needed vet care as a result of these injuries?



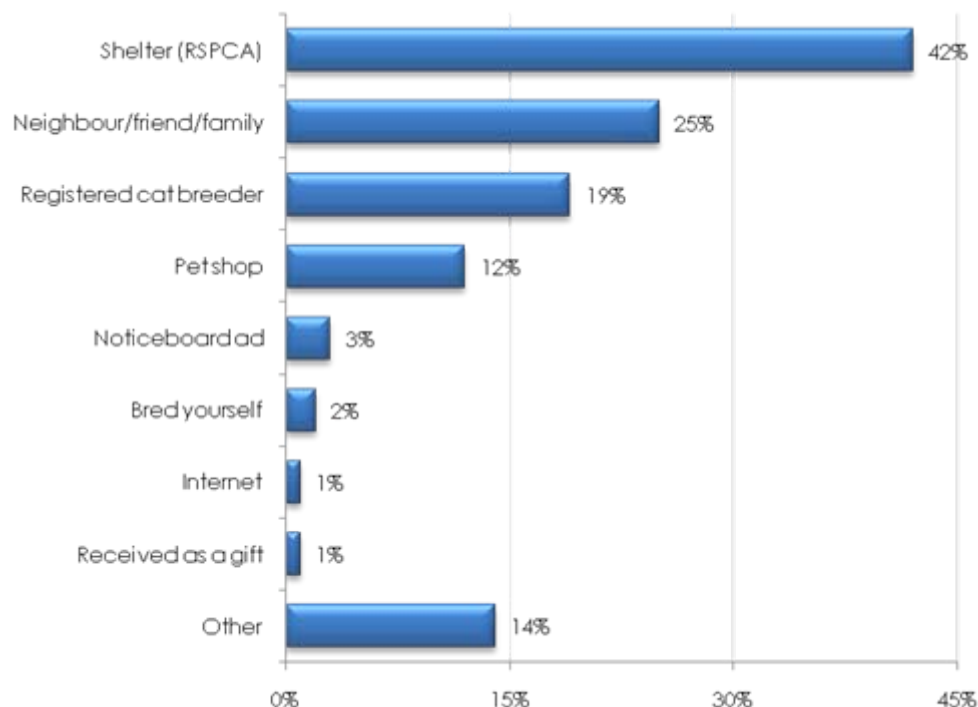
Note: This question was only applicable to 'households with cats' respondents

The ACT Government could consider leveraging cat owner concerns regarding the rate of injury

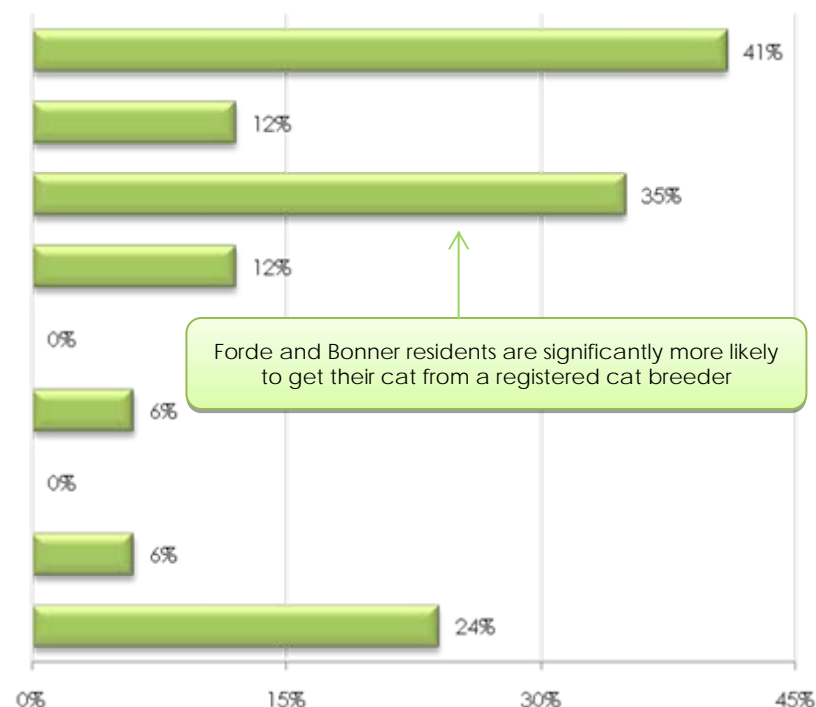
Around 40% Of Cats Are Sourced From An Animal Shelter

Q. Where did you get your cat(s)?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner

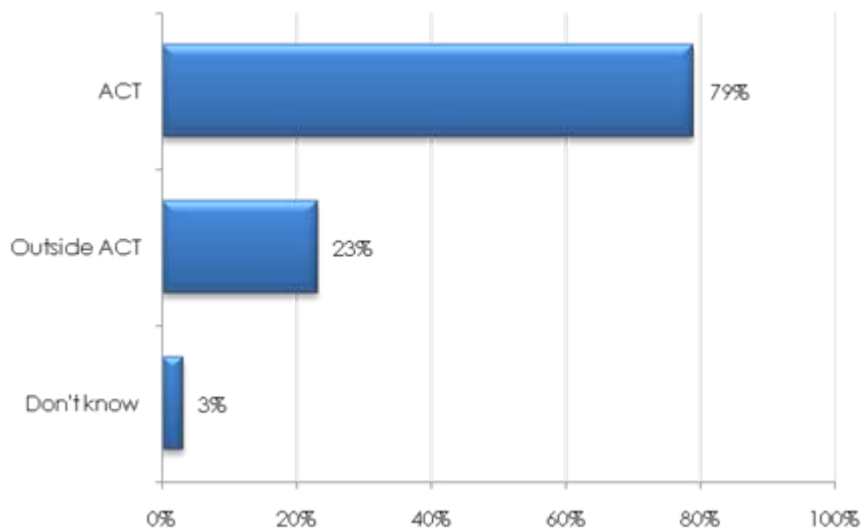


Information about containment should be distributed from shelters and provided to 'new owners'

The Majority Of Cats Are Sourced From Inside The ACT

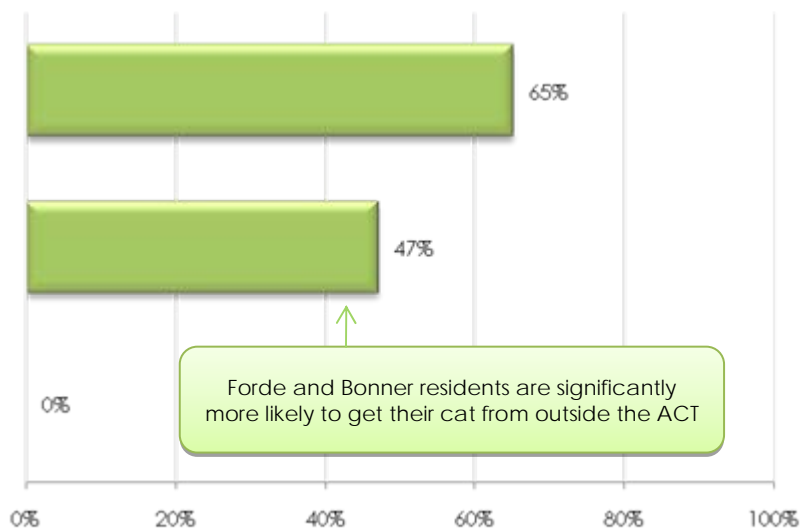
Q. Did your cat(s) come from the ACT or from outside the ACT?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



No significant differences were found when comparing households with cats vs. those without

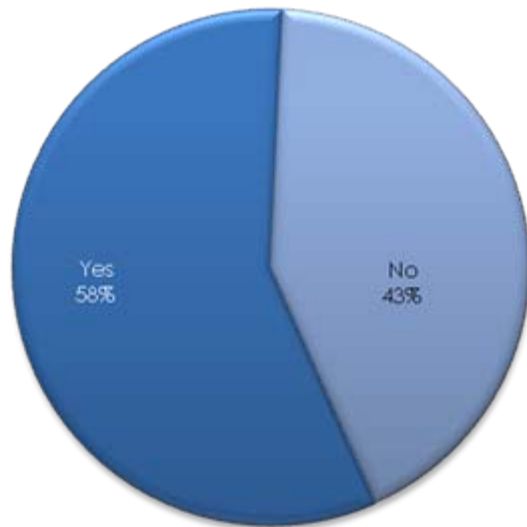
Forde and Bonner



Many Cat Owners Are Unaware Of The Benefits Of Containment For Their Cats

Q. Do you think that there are any benefits for cats if they are contained?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



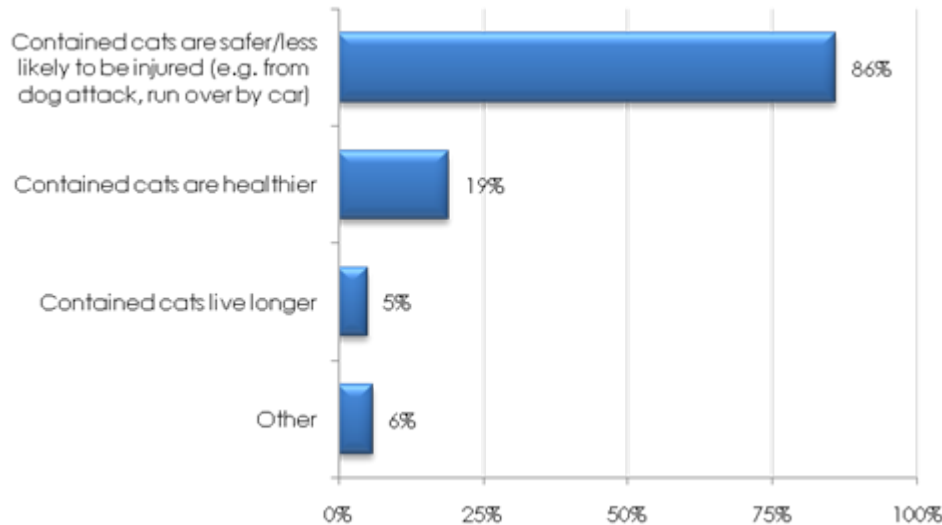
Respondents from Forde and Bonner are significantly more likely to believe that there are benefits for cats in containment

There is an opportunity for ESDD to develop communications that educate cat owners on the benefits of containment

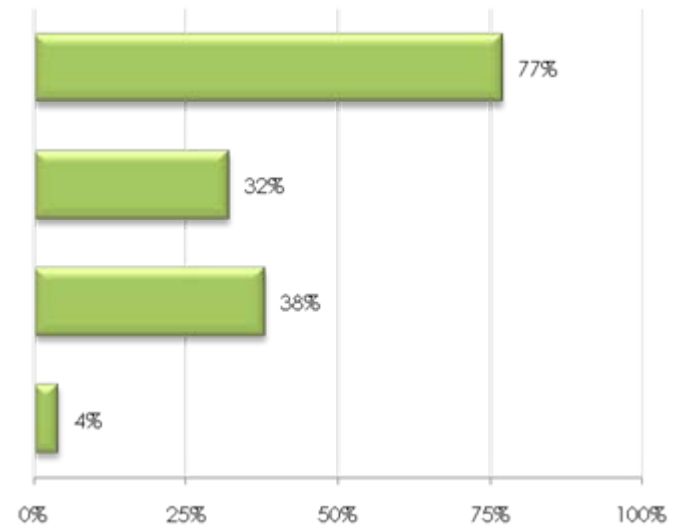
Perceived Benefits Include Reduced Injury Rates, Better Health And Longer Lifespan

- Q. Do you think that there are any benefits for cats if they are contained?
- Q. (If yes), what do you think the benefits for cats are if they are contained?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



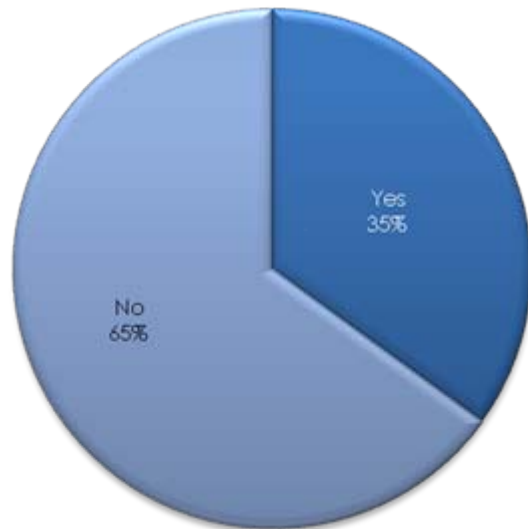
Forde and Bonner residents are significantly more likely to believe that contained cats live longer

These are the messages that ESDD can use to promote containment

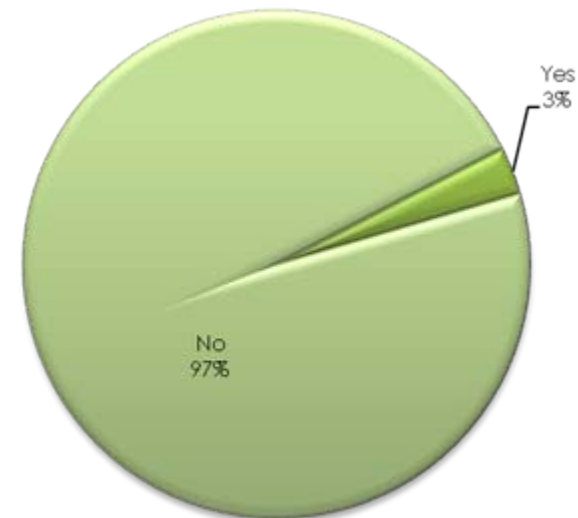
A Significant Percentage Of Residents Believe That Containment Is Problematic For Cats

Q. Do you think that there are any problems for cat if they are contained?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner

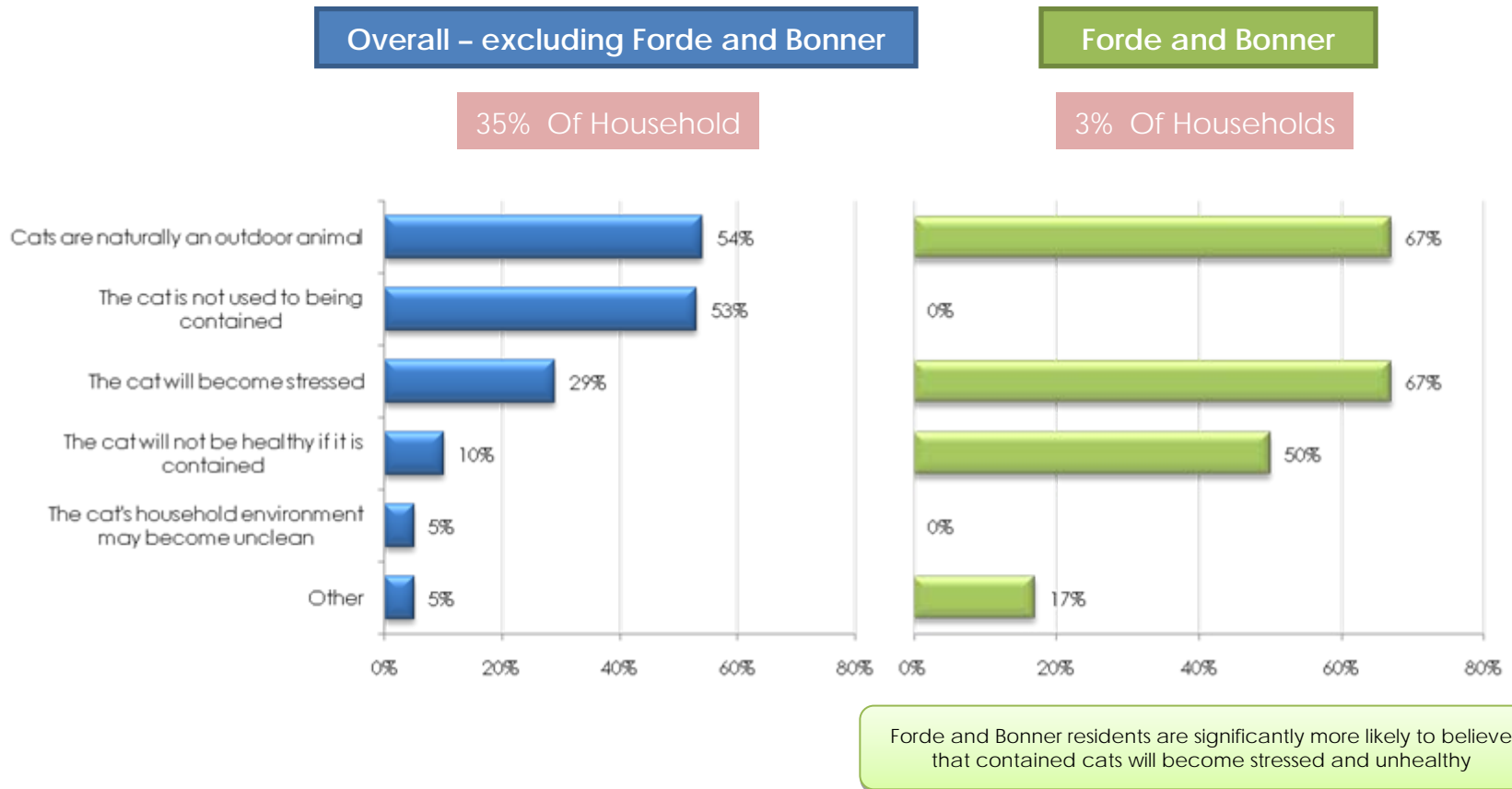


Forde and Bonner residents are significantly less likely to believe that there are problems for the cats if they are contained

Residents in Forde and Bonner are supportive of containment and are much less likely to indicate that there is a downside

Those Who Indicate There Would Be Problems Are Most Likely To State That Cats Are Outdoor Animals Who Are Not Used To Being Contained

- Q. Do you think that there are any problems for cat if they are contained?
Q. (If yes), what do you think the problems for cats are if they are contained?

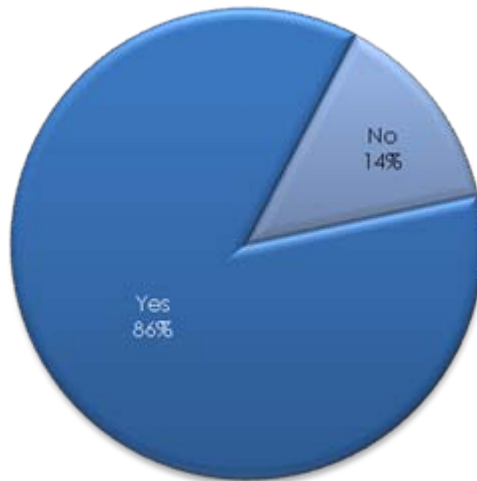


Cat owners are likely to be change resistant - These are the barriers that need to be overcome

At A Macro Level There Is Strong Widespread Community Support For Containing Cats

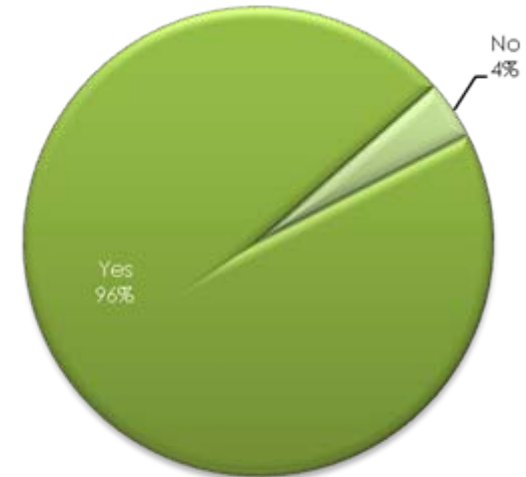
Q. Do you think that there are any benefits for the community if cats are contained?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Households with cats are significantly less likely to believe that contained cats are beneficial to the community (with cats 74%, without cats 91%)

Forde and Bonner



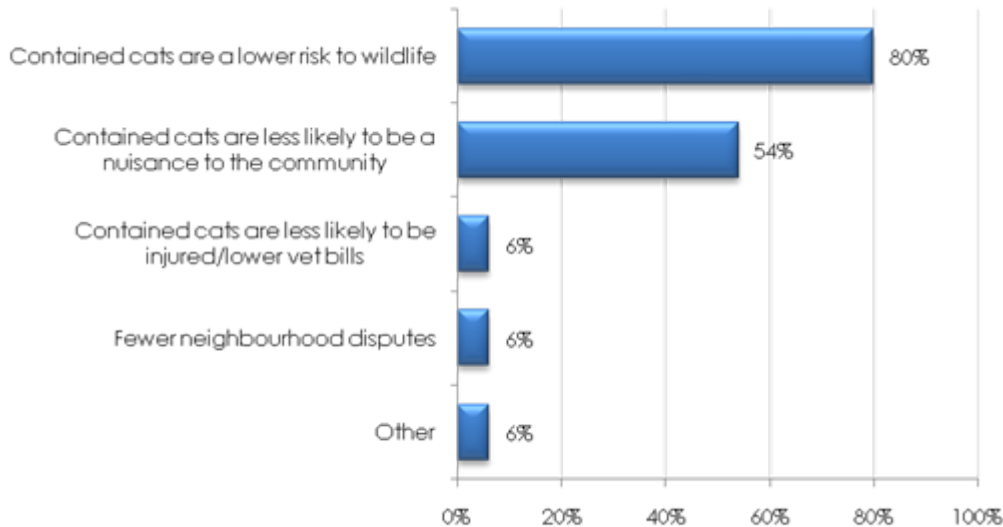
Forde and Bonner residents are significantly more likely to believe that contained cats are beneficial to the community

A policy of cat containment would be seen to be providing a community benefit

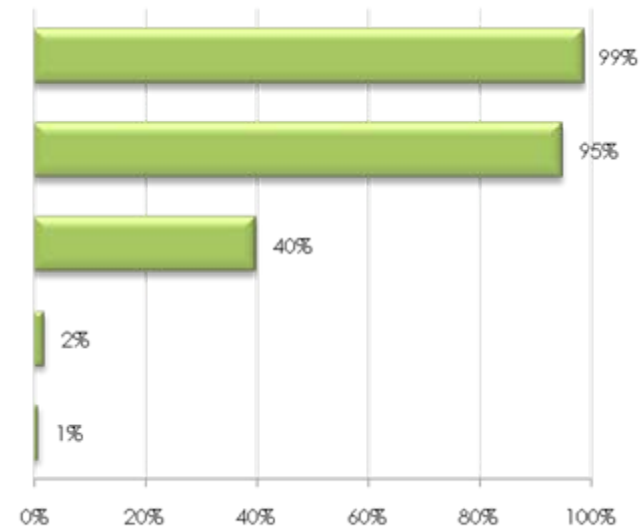
The Key Community Benefit Of Containing Cats Is The Reduced Risk To Local Wildlife

- Q. Do you think that there are any benefits for the community if cats are contained?
- Q. (If yes), what do you think the benefits for the community are if cats are contained?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner residents are significantly more likely to believe that contained cats are a lower risk to wildlife, less likely to be a nuisance and less likely to be injured

Nearly all households are aware of the risk that cats pose to local fauna –
The ACT Government can leverage this understanding to support future
containment initiatives

From A Community Perspective, There Is Little Downside To Introducing Cat Containment

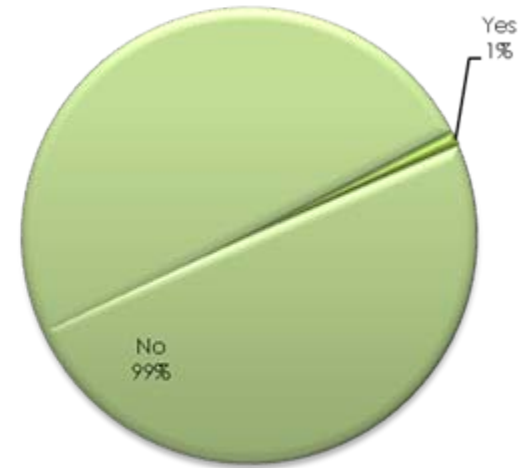
Q. Do you think that there are any problems for the community if cats are contained?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Households with cats are significantly more likely to think there will be problems for the community if cats are contained (with cats 25%, without cats 13%)

Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner residents are significantly less likely to think there will be problems for the community if cats are contained

Only a minority feel that cat containment will create problems for the community

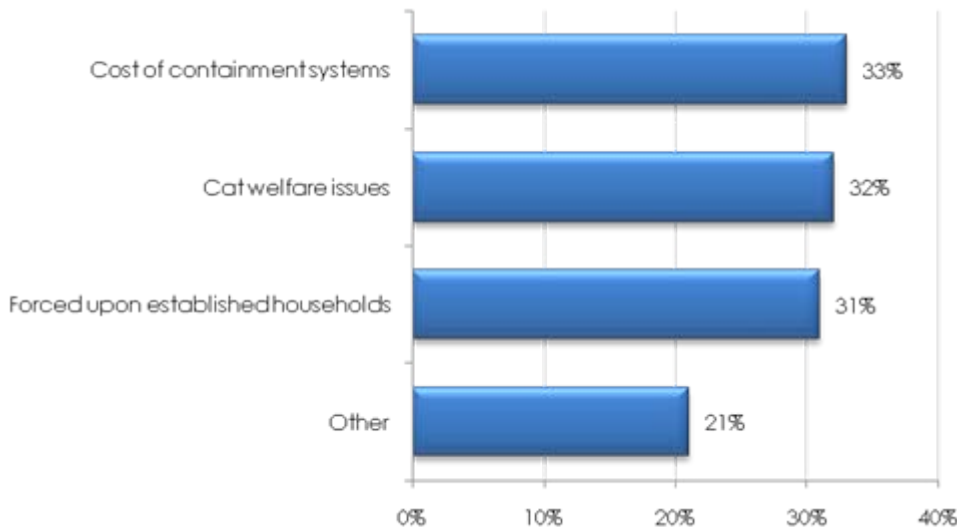
Those Who Feel Cat Containment Will Create Community Problems Cite Cost, Cat Welfare And Change To The Status Quo As The Main Problem Areas

Q. Do you think that there are any problems for the community if cats are contained?

Q. (If yes) what do you think the problems for the community are if cats are contained?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner

Forde and Bonner



The only Forde/Bonner respondent who felt that there would be problems for the community believed there would be an increase in mice

If developing a Territory wide solution, the ACT Government will need to address these issues

Forde And Bonner Residents Are Significantly More Likely To Be Concerned If A Cat Not Belonging To Them Enters Their Property

Q. How concerned are you if a cat not belonging to your household enters your property?

Q. (If moderately to very concerned), why are you concerned?

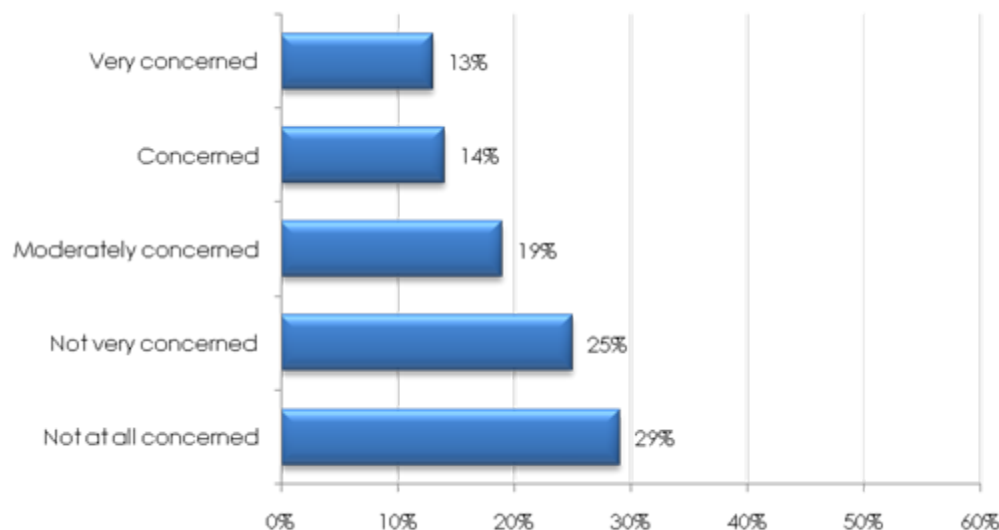
	Overall (excluding Forde and Bonner)	Households with cats	Households without cats	Forde & Bonner
Mean ratings	2.56	2.16	2.71	3.73

Mean ratings: 1 = not at all concerned, 5 = very concerned

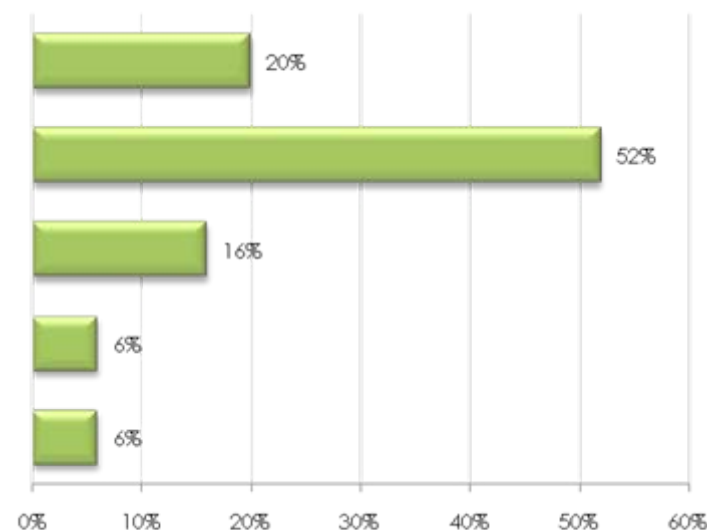
Households with cats are significantly less concerned if a cat not belonging to them enters their property

Forde and Bonner residents are significantly more likely be concerned if a cat not belonging to them enters their property

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



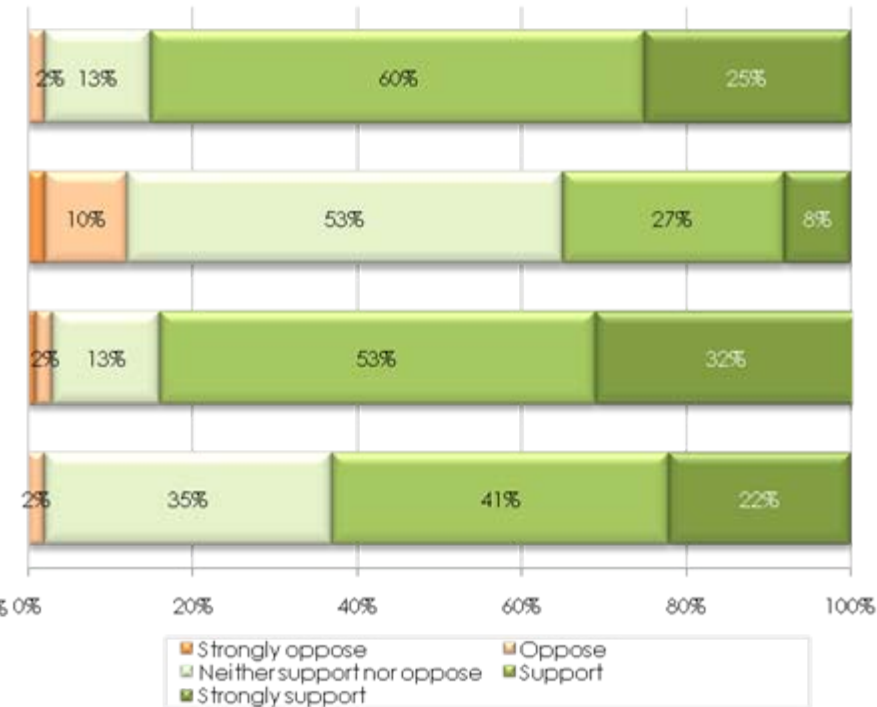
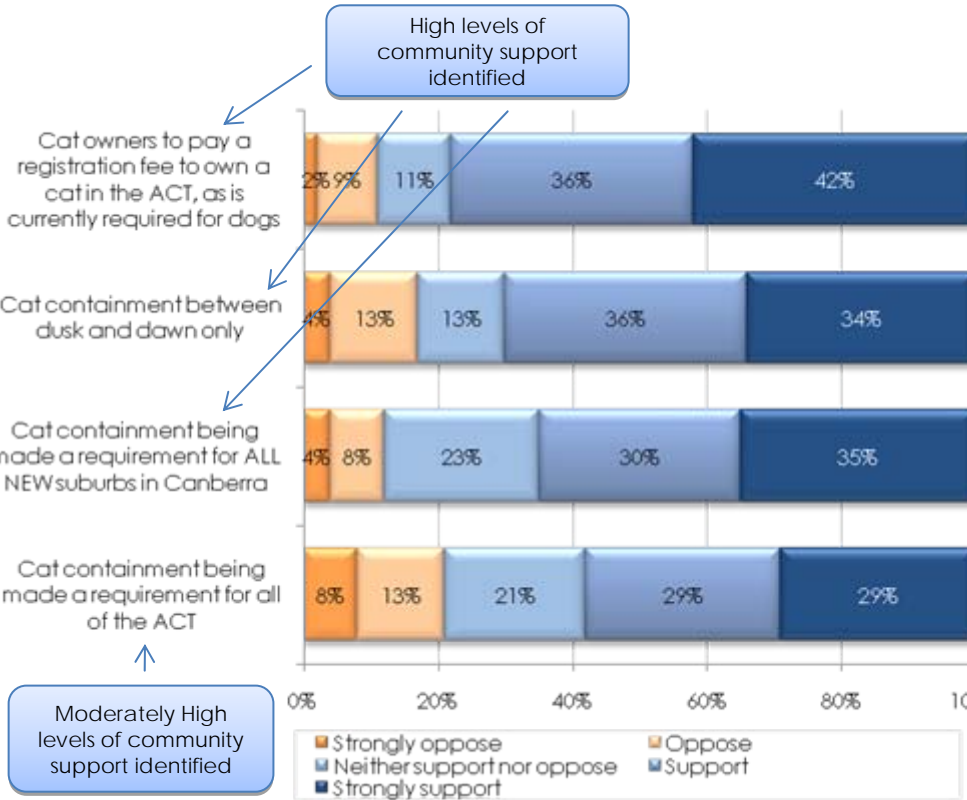
Roaming cats are identified as being not an issue of strong concern for residents

All Four Proposals Have 'Moderately High' To 'High' Levels Of Community Support

Q. In the ACT suburbs of Forde and Bonner, cats must be kept within the property boundary at all times. How strongly would you support or oppose the following?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner

Forde and Bonner



From a whole of community perspective the proposed initiatives should be introduced by the ACT Government

Not Surprisingly, Cat Owners Are Less Likely To Support The Proposed Initiatives

Q. In the ACT suburbs of Forde and Bonner, cats must be kept within the property boundary at all times. How strongly would you support or oppose the following?

	Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner	Households with cats	Households without cats	Forde and Bonner
For cat owners to pay a registration fee to own a cat in the ACT, as is currently required for dogs	4.04	3.28	4.32	4.08
Cat containment between dusk and dawn only	3.85	3.92	3.82	3.27
Cat containment being made a requirement for all new suburbs in Canberra	3.83	3.19	4.06	4.15
Cat containment being made a requirement for all of the ACT	3.58	2.78	3.88	3.83

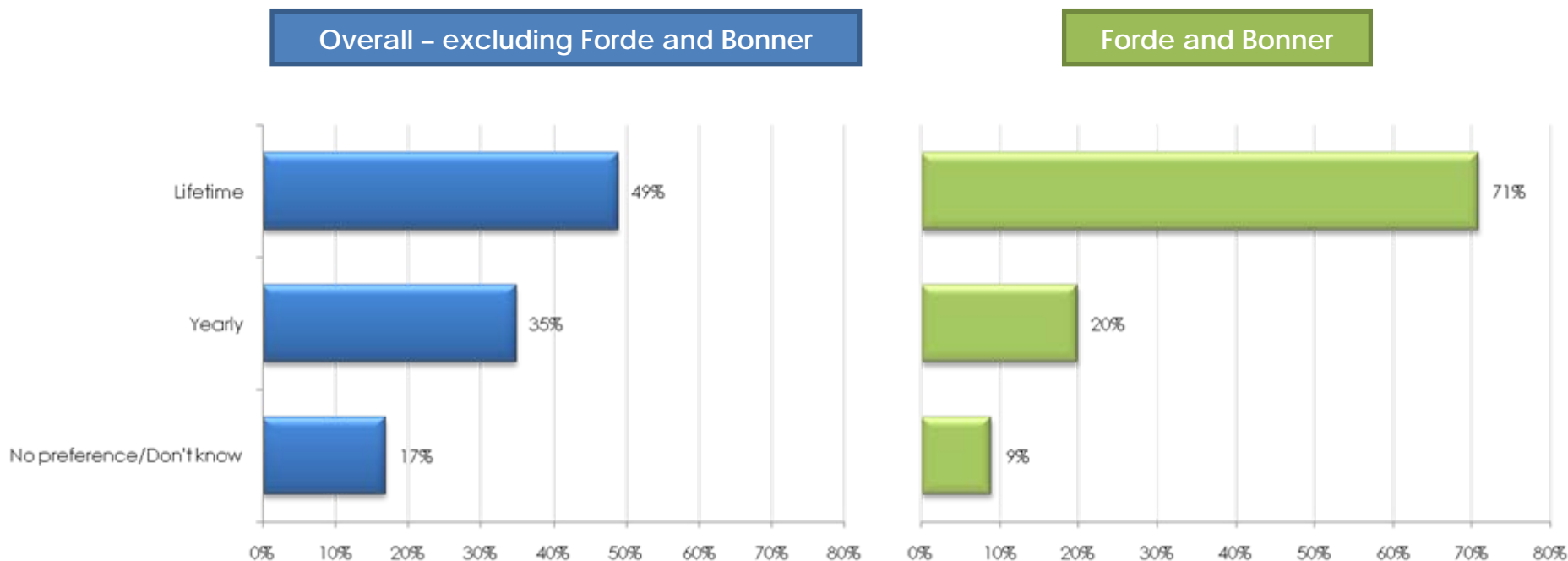
Mean ratings: 1 = strongly oppose, 5 = strongly support

Significantly less supportive

Whilst Forde and Bonner residents are supportive, the majority are not cat owners

Lifetime Registration Fees Have The Highest Level Of Support

Q. (If answered 3 to 5 for registration), do you believe the registration fee should apply on a yearly basis or for the lifetime of the cat?

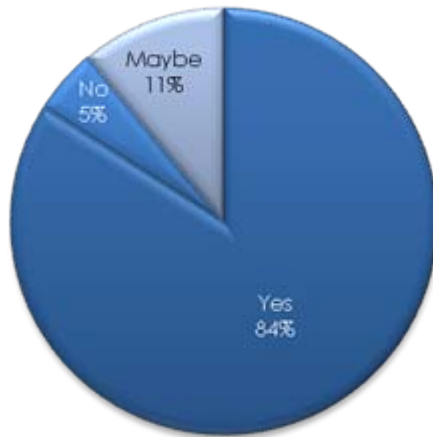


If registration is introduced, consideration should be given to making it a one off lifetime fee

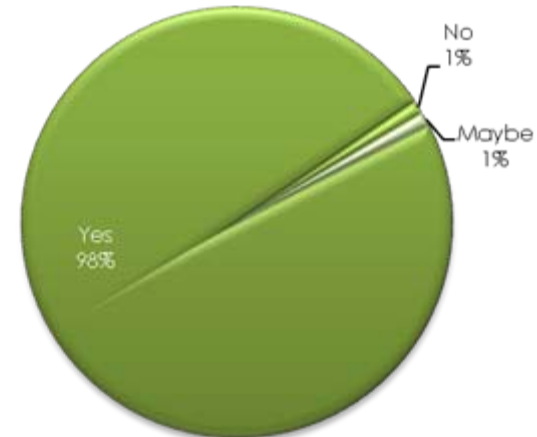
There Is Strong Support For The Government To Introduce Measures To Control Stray Cats

Q. Stray cats are those who rely to some extent on humans. Do you believe that measures should be undertaken to control Canberra's stray cat population?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



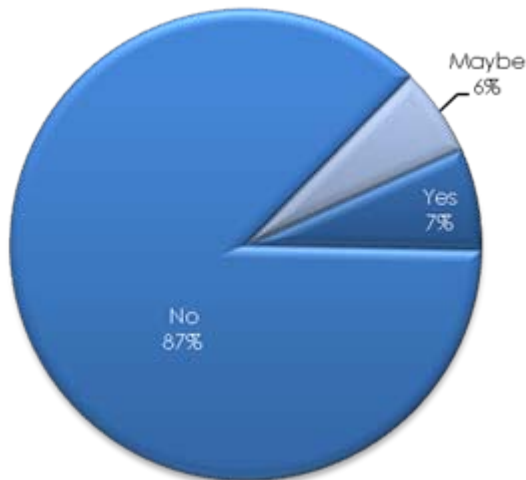
Forde and Bonner residents are significantly more in favour of measures being undertaken to control Canberra's stray cat population

Residents would support Government initiatives that address the issue of stray cats

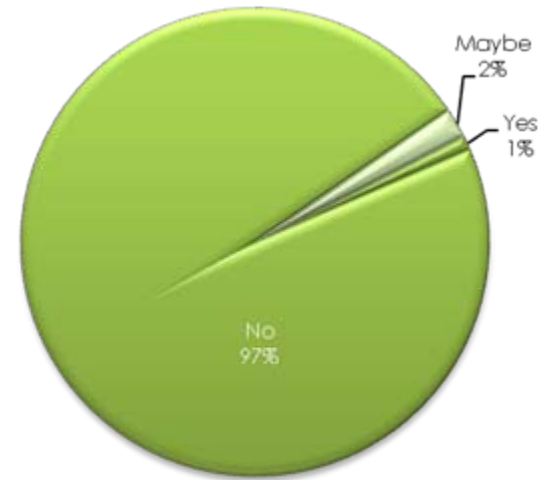
Response To The Stray Cat Adoption Program

Q. As your contribution to an ACT wide, organised control program, would you be willing to take part in an adoption program for stray cats?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner residents are significantly less likely to be willing to take part in an adoption program for stray cats

There is only niche interest in a stray cat adoption program

Willingness To Transport Stray Cats To A Shelter

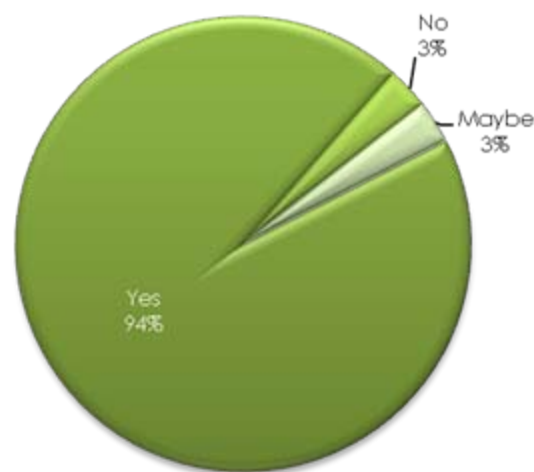
Q. Again, thinking about an ACT wide control program, would you be willing to take stray cats to a vet, shelter or rescue centre, e.g. RSPCA?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Households with cats are significantly more willing to take stray cats to a vet, shelter or rescue centre (with cats 83%, without cats 67%)

Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner residents are significantly more willing to take stray cats to a vet, shelter or rescue centre

The majority of residents are willing to transport stray cats to a shelter

Response To Specific Criteria In Regards To Feral Cat Control Methods

Q. Feral cats are cats which live without human support. In Australia the lethal methods for controlling feral cats are baiting, shooting and trapping then shooting. If you were to consider controlling feral cats, how important are the following criteria to you?

Overall, the community perceives these to be of very high importance

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner

Forde and Bonner

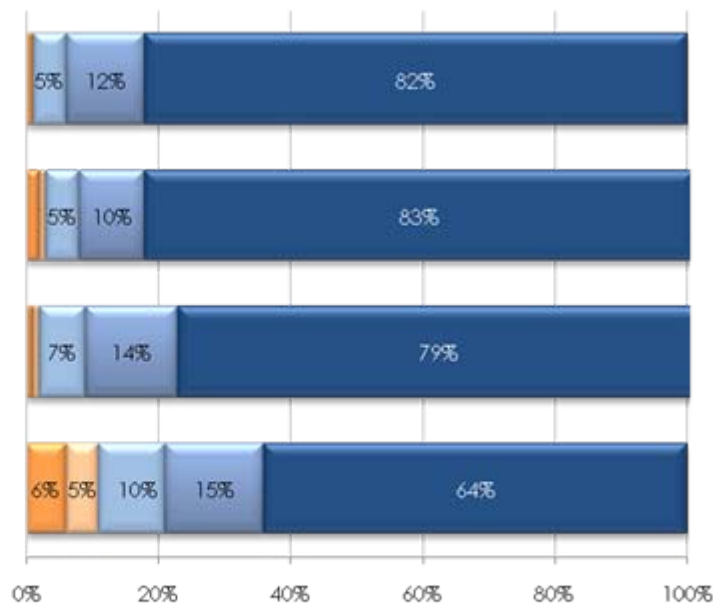
That the control method does not pose a risk to animals other than feral cats

That the control method doesn't pose a risk to public safety

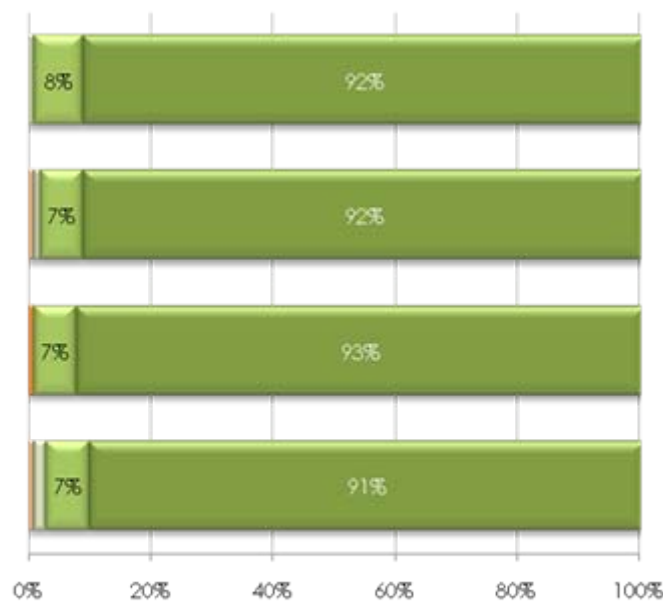
That the control method is effective in reducing the impacts of feral cats

That the control method does not cause suffering to feral cats

Overall, the community perceives this to be of high importance



Not at all important Not very important
Moderately important Important
Very important



Not at all important Not very important
Moderately important Important
Very important

Note: As there were no significant differences in the results before and after the changing of the wording for this question, all responses were included.

All 4 criteria in regards to feral cat control methods are perceived to be of 'high' to 'very high' importance

Importance Of Specific Criteria In Regards To Feral Cat Control Methods By Location

Q. Feral cats are cats which live without human support. In Australia the lethal methods for controlling feral cats are baiting, shooting and trapping then shooting. If you were to consider controlling feral cats, how important are the following criteria to you?

	Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner	Households with cats	Households without cats	Forde and Bonner
That the control method does not pose a risk to animals other than feral cats	4.73	4.78	4.71	4.91
That the control method doesn't pose a risk to public safety	4.71	4.67	4.73	4.91
That the control method is effective in reducing the impacts of feral cats	4.69	4.65	4.70	4.91
That the control method does not cause suffering to feral cats	4.23	4.44	4.16	4.89

Mean ratings: 1 = not at all important, 5 = very important

Significantly more important

Residents of Forde and Bonner identify each of the criteria as significantly more important than other ACT residents

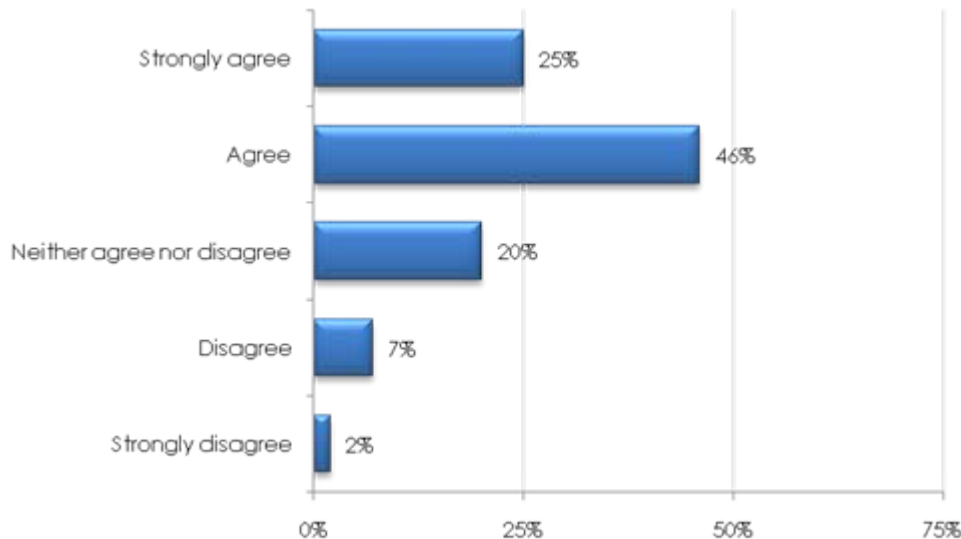
There Are Moderately High Levels Of Support For The Government To Operate Cat Shelters Similar To Current Dog Pounds

Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree that the ACT Government should operate and own a cat shelter, operating similarly to the current dog pound?

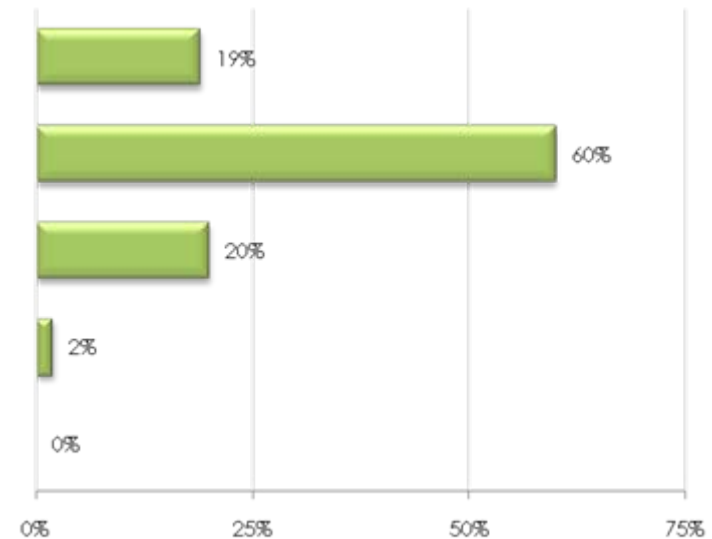
	Overall	Households with cats	Households without cats	Forde & Bonner
Mean ratings	3.86	3.85	3.86	3.96

Mean ratings: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



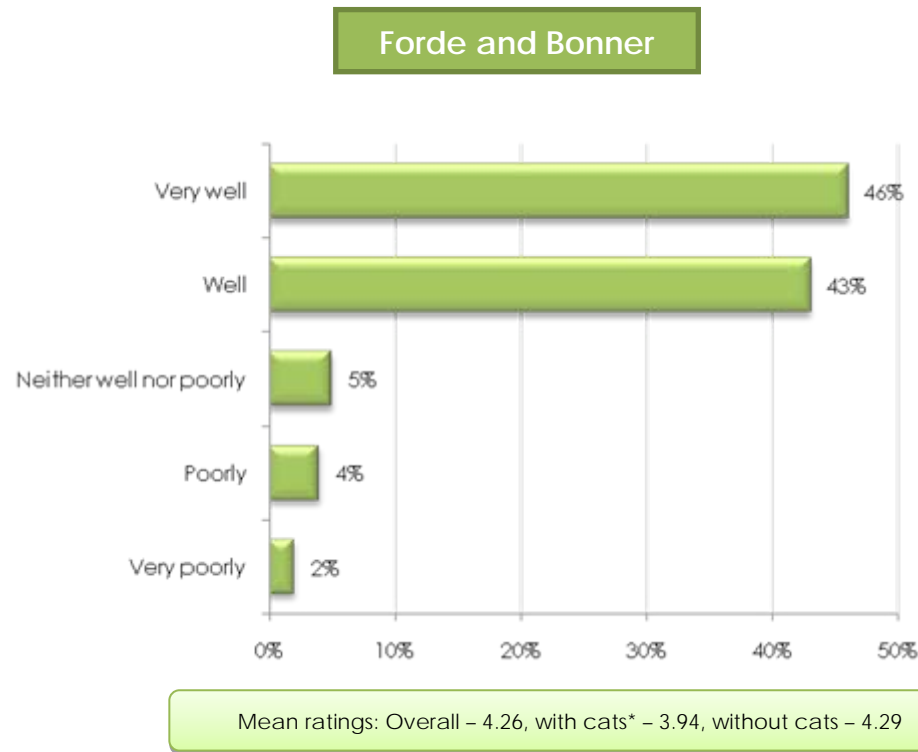
Forde and Bonner



No significant differences are identified between Forde and Bonner and the rest of the ACT

Perception Of Cat Containment In Forde And Bonner

Q. In your opinion, how are the cat containment controls working in your suburb? – Asked only of Forde and Bonner residents



Mean ratings: 1 = very poorly, 5 = very well

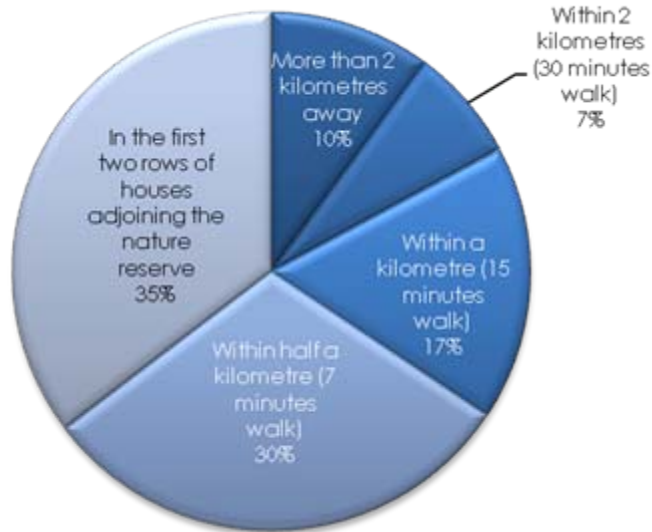
*Note: Small sample size

Residents of Forde and Bonner feel the cat containment measures are working well

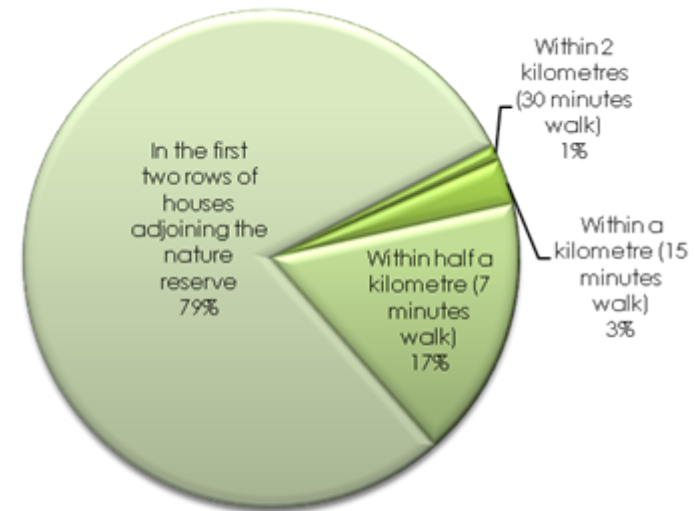
Proximity To Bushland By Location

Q. How far do you live from a nature reserve or natural bushland, i.e. not counting suburban parks/ovals?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



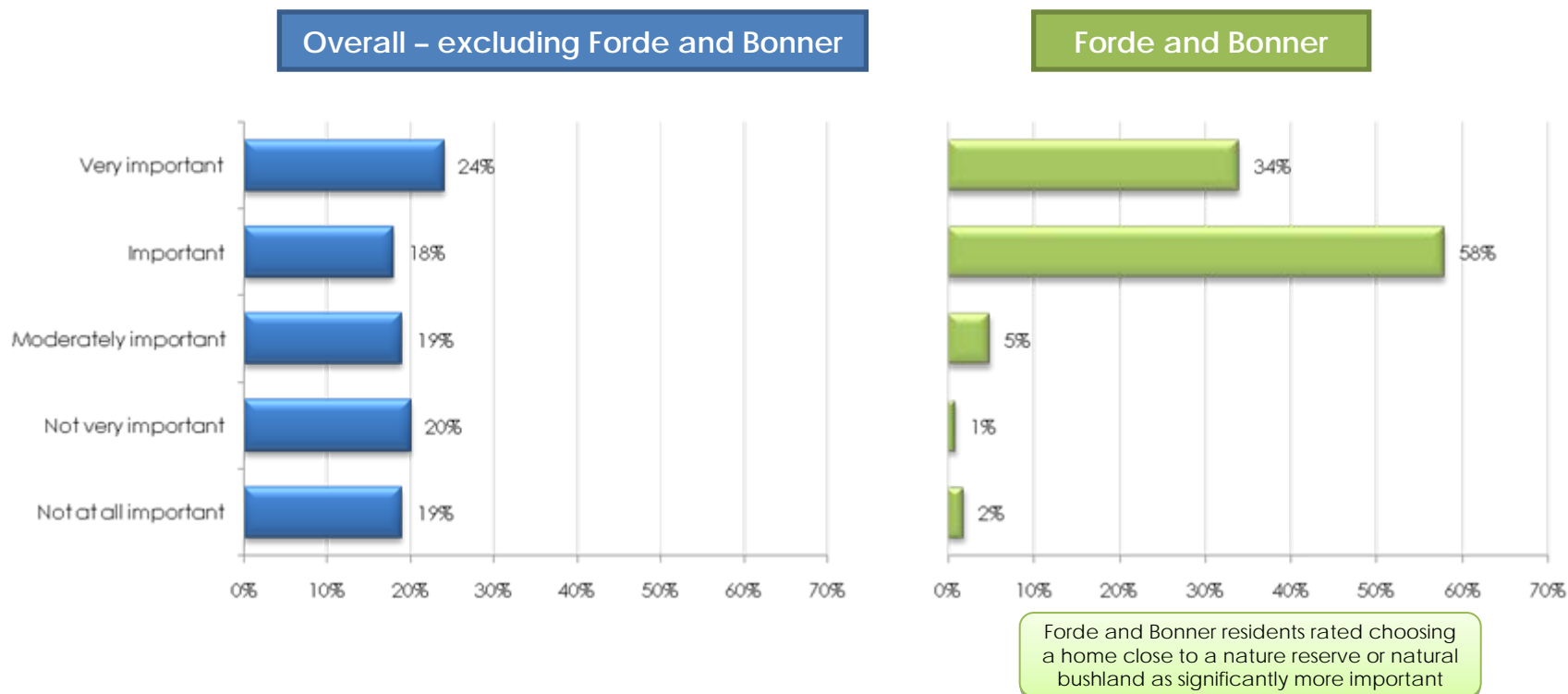
Residents in Forde and Bonner are much more likely to be living in close proximity to bushland

Importance Of Proximity To Bushland By Location

Q. How important to you was being close to a nature reserve or natural bushland when choosing your home?

	Overall	Households with cats	Households without cats	Forde & Bonner
Mean ratings	3.06	2.79	3.16	4.23

Mean ratings: 1 = not at all important, 5 = very important



When choosing their home, residents of Forde and Bonner were significantly influenced by its proximity to bushland

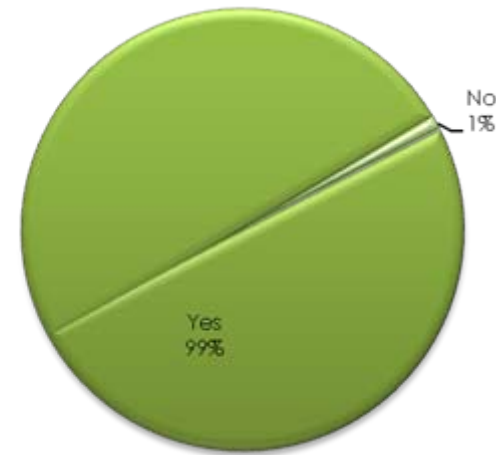
Awareness Of Endangered Woods And Grasslands

Q. Are you aware that many reserves within Canberra Nature Park contain endangered woodlands and grasslands?

Overall – excluding Forde and Bonner



Forde and Bonner



Not surprisingly, those living in Forde and Bonner had significantly higher levels of awareness



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