

Community Pet Adoption Partnerships Survey Results



May 2015



**Maddie's
Institute**

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About the Survey

What can animal shelters do to eliminate or reduce the time pets spend in the shelter?

During the summer of 2014, Maddie's Institute® conducted a survey to identify practices that were successful in shortening length of stay, or prevented the pets from entering the shelter entirely. It covered three scenarios, the first of which is discussed in this report.

We sought out respondents who were administrators, staff members and volunteers of U.S. animal shelters, rescue organizations or municipal animal control agencies. Invitations to participate in this survey were distributed via email through the Maddie's Fund® mailing list. We requested that the survey be completed by only one respondent from each organization – the individual most familiar with the organization's policies regarding foster care, adoption and/or community services.

Although our sample may not be statistically representative of the larger population of animal care organizations in the United States, we have collected data from a diverse group of respondents from organizations that varied both structurally and geographically.

About the Scenario

Survey respondents were asked to reply to a series of questions directly related to the scenario outlined below.

The “Stray Kitten” Scenario:

A community member finds a litter of five-week old stray kittens (with or without the mother). No owner can be identified and they are too young to be placed for adoption immediately.



Executive Summary

There are few populations more at-risk in shelters than young kittens. Susceptible to illness and requiring frequent care that some shelters lack the ability to provide, these vulnerable animals' lives may depend on the implementation of non-shelter strategies. One such strategy involves asking community members who bring in kittens to care for them until organizational resources are available or they are old enough to be placed for adoption. We aimed to examine the factors that made such programs more or less common and effective, as well as what types of support were in use for this effort.

Results showed that the majority of organizations participating in this survey, 88%, reported frequent requests from community members to take in litters of underage kittens, with or without their mothers. Frequency of these requests did not vary significantly across organizational size, intake policy or structure.

The more frequent community requests were, the more likely the organization was to ask those community members to care for the kittens until organizational resources were available or the kittens were ready for adoption. Shelters or rescues that do not hold a government contract were significantly more likely to encourage community member care than municipal agencies or shelters or rescues with an animal control contract.

So, how many community members elect to provide care when asked? Only 16% of respondents reported that "most" or "many" community members elected to provide care, with 41% reporting "some" and 43% reporting "few" or "very few." But, could shelters do a better job of working with community members to increase those numbers? Organizations that report being particularly proactive and enthusiastic in asking community members to care for stray kittens also report greater numbers of community members following through and doing so. This suggests that working on language and attitude when discussing the possibility may result in greater success.

Offers of free support – in terms of medical services and supplies – were more common among shelters or rescues with or without government contracts and small organizations than municipal agencies. Again, organizations that offered free support were also those that reported higher numbers of community members agreeing to give care, suggesting this may be important leverage when establishing programs to keep underage kittens out of shelters.

Interestingly, under this scenario, while organizations that offered training or materials related to kitten care reported higher numbers of individuals electing to do so, organizations that required community members to formally enroll in a program reported slightly fewer people agreeing to care for stray kittens. This would suggest that offering help of all kinds is beneficial, but expecting people who are acting as "Good Samaritans" in the case of a single litter of kittens to become formally connected to the shelter may be an ineffective approach.

Although the report does not aim to provide clear protocols to enhance community care initiatives, it does suggest: 1) areas of future research and 2) a few steps for immediate action, listed below.

- Develop stronger and more enthusiastic approaches when asking community members to care for stray kittens brought to the organization.
- Find ways to offer veterinary care and supplies to community members caring for kittens.
- Offer training, but do not require formal program enrollment for community members who are willing to care for a litter of kittens they bring to the organization.

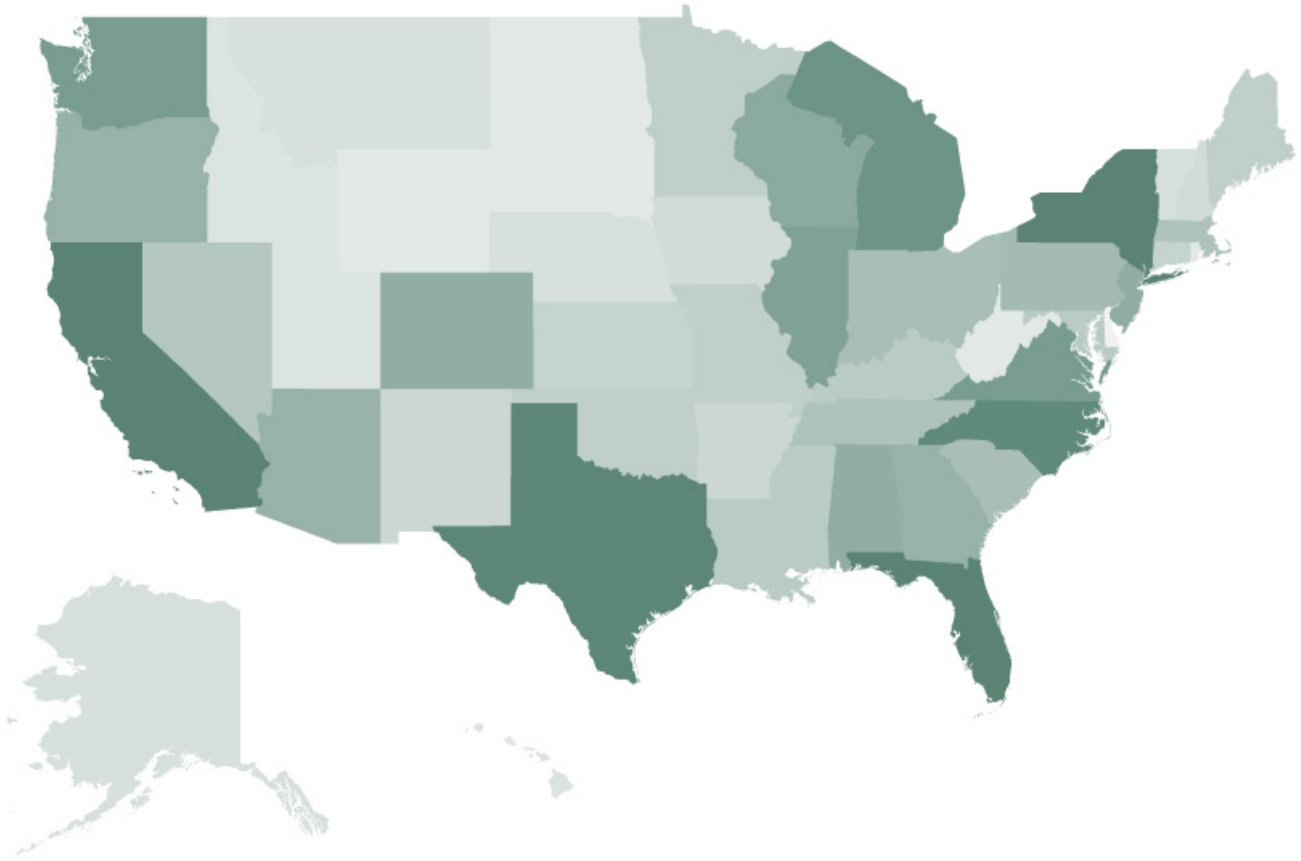


Demographics

Aggregate Respondent Data

- **National Representation:**

- Our data depicts representation from 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico (see map below), totaling 683 individual survey respondents. The darker the color scale, the more participation from a given state.



- **Pay Status:**

- 52% of respondents were paid staff
- 48% were unpaid volunteers

- **Position:**

- 52% of respondents were in an executive or leadership position (to include veterinarian)
- 25% were in a managerial or supervisory position

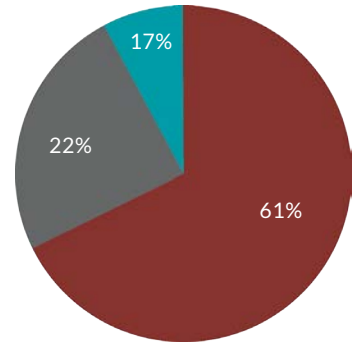


Demographics

Aggregate Respondent Data

• Organizational Type (Graph 1):

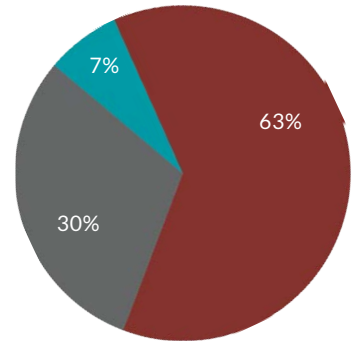
- 61% of organizations were categorized as an animal shelter/rescue without a government contract
- 22% as an animal shelter/rescue with a government contract (i.e., animal control or housing services)
- 17% as a municipal animal control agency



Organizational Type (Graph 1)

• Workforce composition (Graph 2):

- 63% composed of paid staff and unpaid volunteers
- 30% composed of unpaid volunteers only
- 7% composed of paid staff only



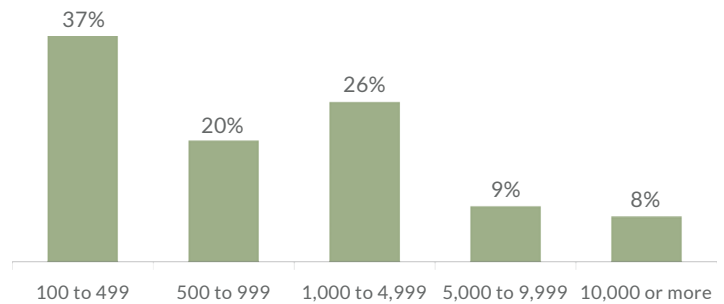
Workforce Composition (Graph 2)

• Animal Intake Type:

- 84% take in both cats and dogs
- 16% take in cats only
- Organizations that take in dogs only were omitted from this specific report

• Annual Intake of Cats and/or Dogs (Graph 3):

- 37% take in 100 - 499
- 20% take in 500 - 999
- 26% take in 1,000 - 4,999
- 9% take in 5,000 - 9,999
- 8% take in 10,000+



Annual Intake of Cats and/or Dogs (Graph 3)

• Housing:

- 67% of organizations represented primarily house animals in a physical facility or shelter
- 19% primarily house animals in foster homes
- 11% house animals equally between a physical facility or shelter and foster homes

• Intake Policy:

- For the animal population the organization serves, 62% of organizations represented in this survey have a policy of accepting all or almost all of animals presented to them.

• Live Outcome:

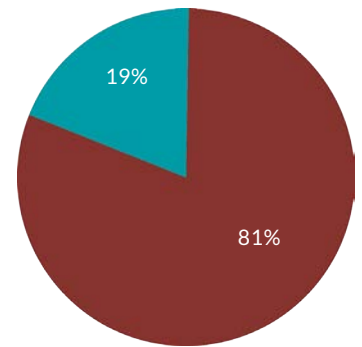
- Of the organizations represented, approximately 84% of cats taken in (including feral/community cats) had a live outcome (i.e., adoptions, outgoing transfers, return to owner/guardian and return to habitat) in 2013. Percentages of live outcome ranged from a reported 2% to 100%, with a mode of 100%.



Data Profiles by Organizational Type

Municipal Animal Control Agency

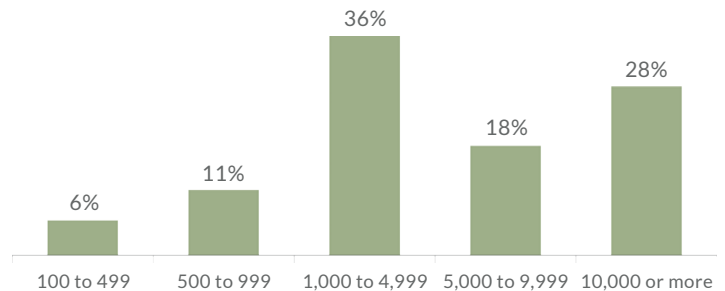
- **Workforce composition** (Graph 1):
 - 81% were composed of a mix of paid staff and unpaid volunteers
 - 19% were composed of paid staff only
- **Animal Intake Type:**
 - 100% of organizations represented in this report take in both cats and dogs
 - Organizations that take in dogs only were omitted from this specific report



Workforce Composition (Graph 1)

- **Animal Intake of Cats and/or Dogs** (Graph 2):

- 6% take in 100 - 499
- 11% take in 500 - 999
- 36% take in 1,000 - 4,999
- 18% take in 5,000 - 9,999
- 28% take in 10,000+



Annual Intake of Cats and/or Dogs (Graph 2)

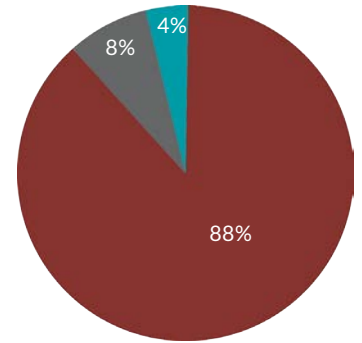
- **Housing:**
 - 97% primarily house animals in a physical facility or shelter
- **Intake Policy:**
 - 97% have a policy of taking in all or almost all animals presented
- **Live Outcome:**
 - Approximately 60% of cats taken in (including feral/community cats) had a live outcome (i.e., adoptions, outgoing transfers, return to owner/guardian and return to habitat) in 2013.



Animal Shelter/Rescue with a Government Contract:

- **Workforce composition** (Graph 1):

- 88% were composed of a mix of paid staff and unpaid volunteers
- 8% composed of paid staff only
- 4% composed of unpaid volunteers only



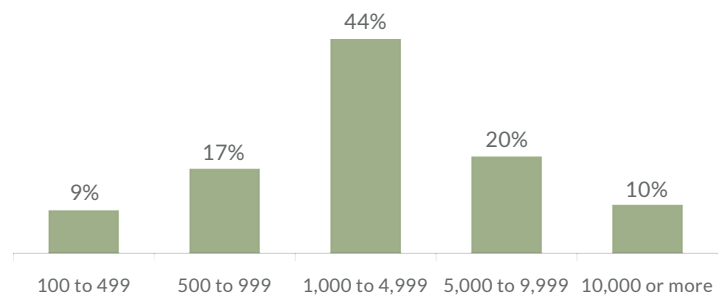
Workforce Composition (Graph 1)

- **Animal Intake Type:**

- 99% of organizations represented in this report take in both cats and dogs
- 1% take in cats only
- Organizations that take in dogs only were omitted from this specific report

- **Animal Intake of Cats and/or Dogs** (Graph 2):

- 9% take in 100-499
- 17% take in 500-999
- 44% take in 1,000-4,999
- 20% take in 5,000-9,999
- 10% take in 10,000+



Annual Intake of Cats and/or Dogs (Graph 2)

- **Housing:**

- 94% primarily house cats and/or dogs in a physical facility or shelter

- **Intake Policy:**

- 92% have a policy of taking in all or almost all animals at intake

- **Live Outcome:**

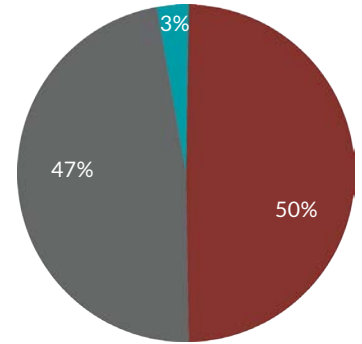
- Approximately 74% of cats taken in (including feral/community cats) had a live outcome (i.e., adoptions, outgoing transfers, return to owner/guardian and return to habitat) in 2013.



Animal Shelter/Rescue without a Government Contract:

- **Workforce composition** (Graph 1):

- 50% were composed of a mix of paid staff and unpaid volunteers
- 47% composed of paid staff only
- 3% composed of unpaid volunteers only



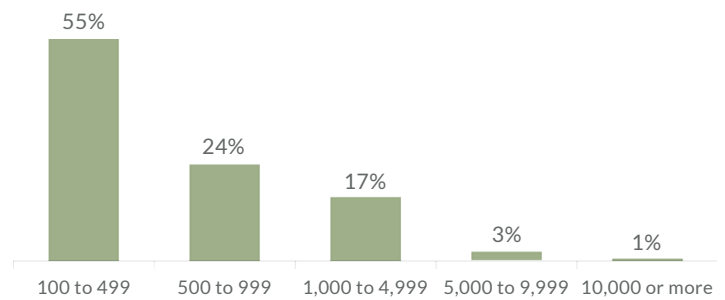
Workforce Composition (Graph 1)

- **Animal Intake Type:**

- 74% of organizations represented in this report take in both cats and dogs
- 26% take in cats only
- Organizations that take in dogs only were omitted from this specific report

- **Animal Intake of Cats and/or Dogs** (Graph 2):

- 55% take in 100-499
- 24% take in 500-999
- 17% take in 1,000-4,999
- 3% take in 5,000-9,999
- 1% take in 10,000+



Annual Intake of Cats and/or Dogs (Graph 2)

- **Housing:**

- 49% of organizations represented primarily house animals in a physical facility or shelter
- 31% primarily house animals in foster homes
- 17% house animals equally between a physical facility or shelter and foster homes

- **Intake Policy:**

- 44% have a policy of taking in all or almost all animals at intake

- **Live Outcome:**

- Approximately 93% of cats taken in (including feral/community cats) had a live outcome (i.e., adoptions, outgoing transfers, return to owner/guardian and return to habitat) in 2013.



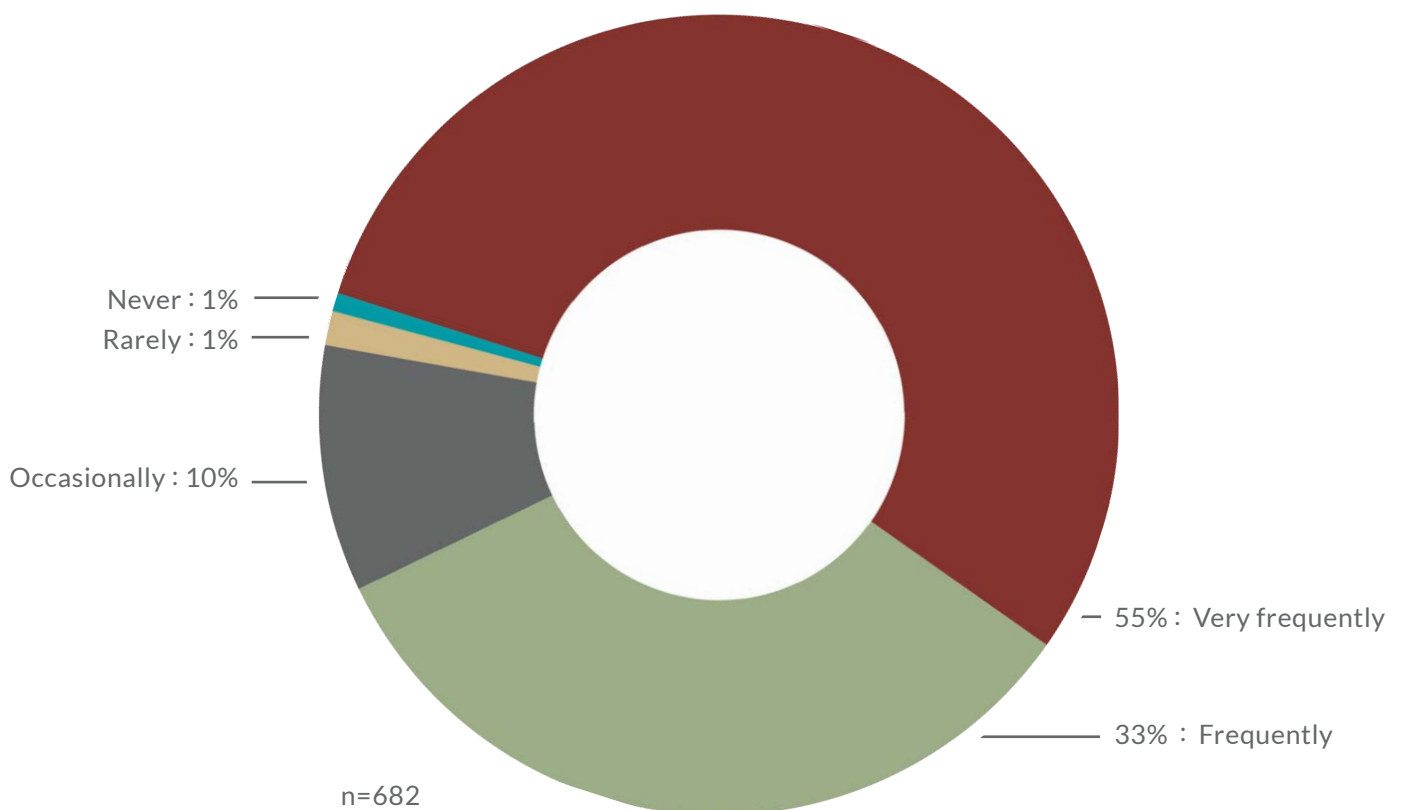
Results

Q1. How often does your organization see a situation similar to the following scenario?

The “Stray Kitten” Scenario:

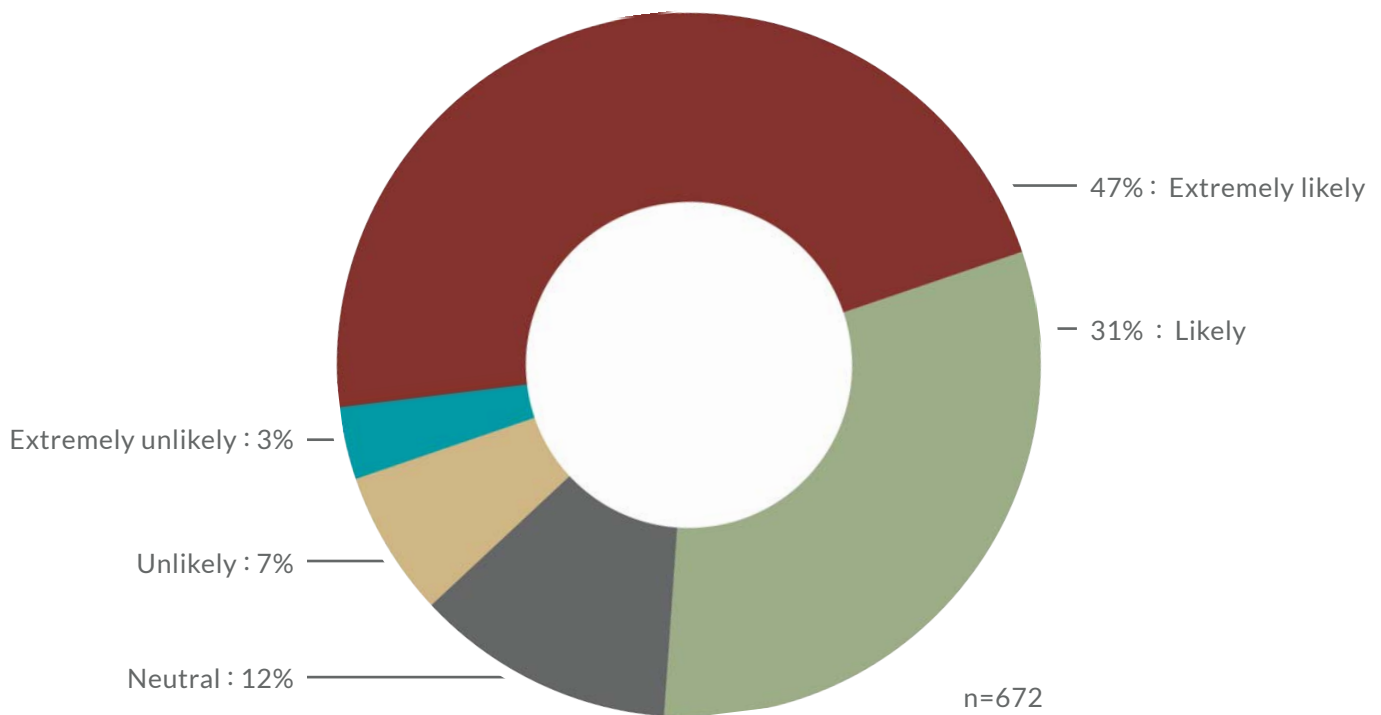
A community member finds a litter of five-week old stray kittens (with or without the mother). No owner can be identified and they are too young to be placed for adoption immediately.

- 88% of respondents reported that the organization they represented either “very frequently” (55%) or “frequently” (33%) see situations similar to the scenario at their organization (see chart below).
- There did not appear to be a significant difference in frequency between organizational types (that is, organizations with or without government contracts; data not depicted).
- Additionally, there was no statistically significant difference in frequency between organizations of varying size (measured in this report by the number of cats and/or dogs taken in annually; data not depicted).
- Finally, there did not appear to be a significant difference in frequency between organizational intake policies (that is, organizations that have a policy of accepting all or almost all of animals presented to them or not; data not depicted).

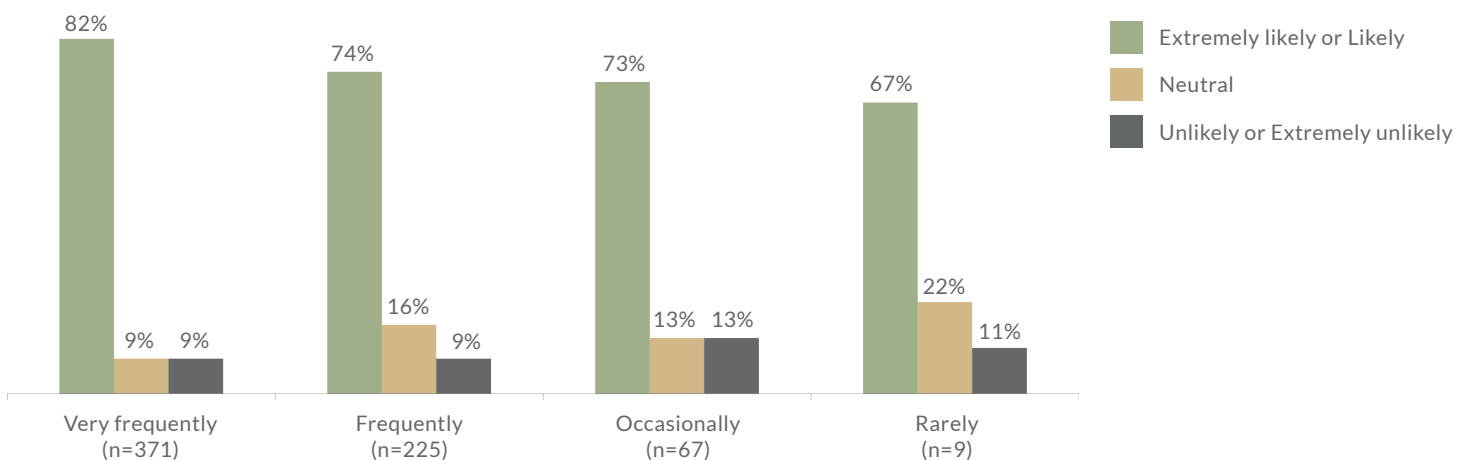


Q2. How likely is your organization to encourage the community member to care for the kittens until organizational resources are available or they are ready to be placed for adoption?

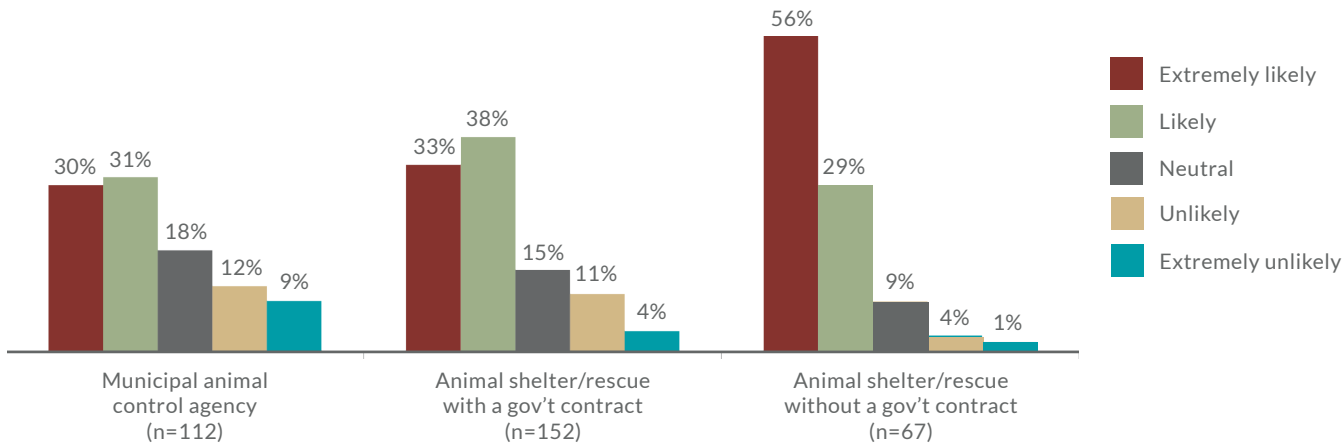
- Data for Question #2 did not include responses from those who reported they “never” encountered situations similar to the scenario.
- Of those who reported seeing situations similar to the scenario, 78% said their organization is “extremely likely” (47%) or “likely” (31%) to encourage community members to care for kittens until organizational resources are available or they are ready to be placed for adoption (see chart below).



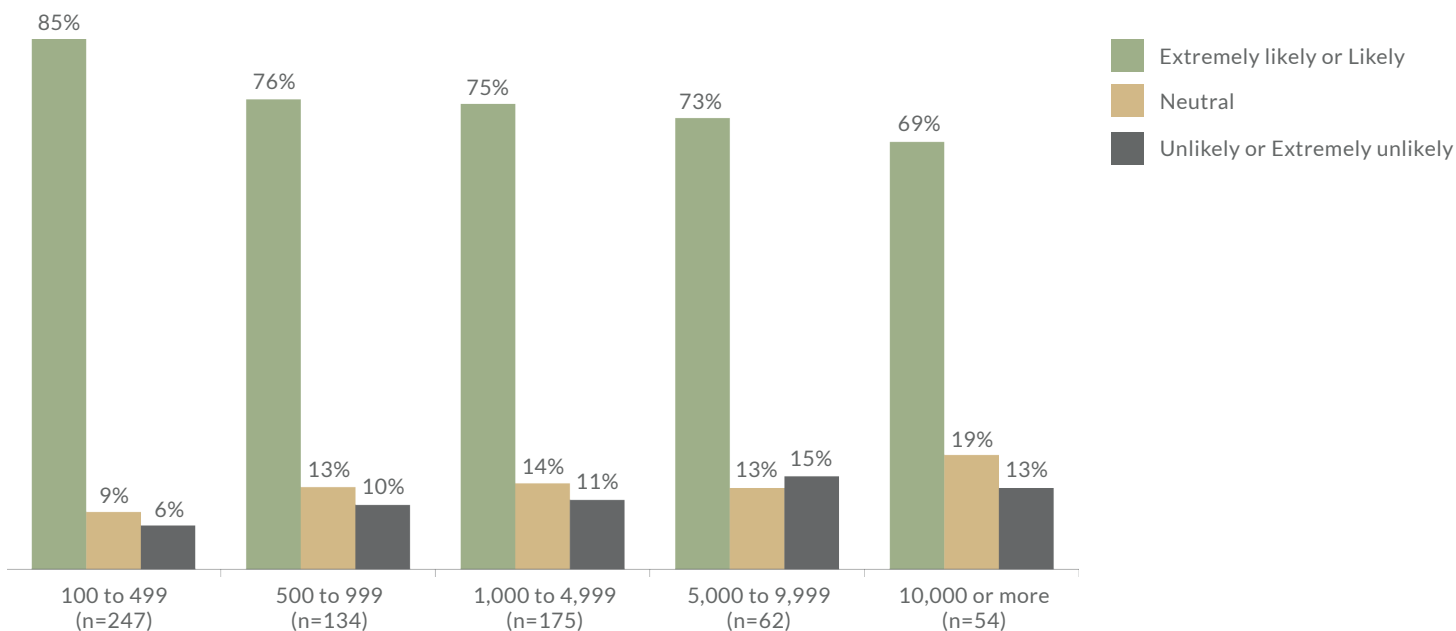
- Organizations that encounter similar scenarios “very frequently” were significantly more likely to encourage community member care than those who see similar scenarios “frequently” ($p=0.005$; see chart below).



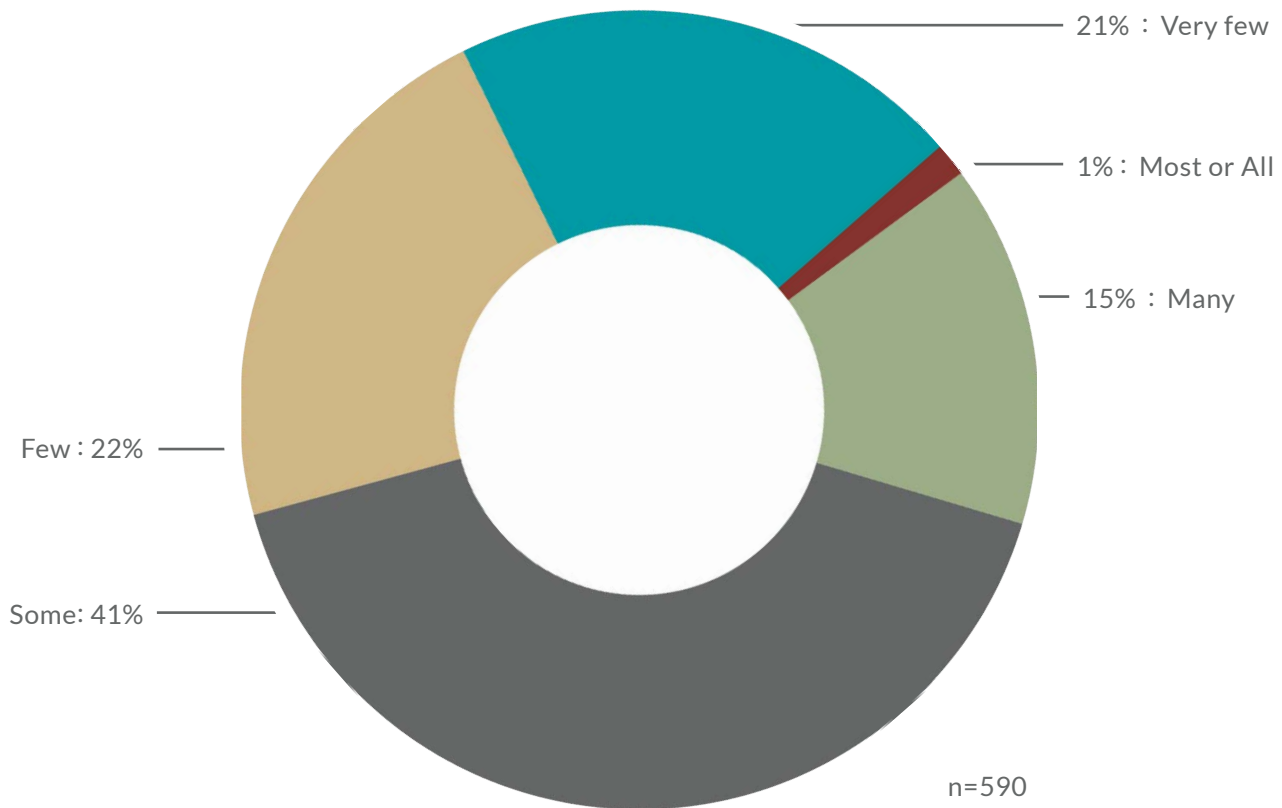
- Animal shelters/rescues without a government contract were significantly more likely to encourage community member care than municipal animal control agencies and shelters/rescues with a government contract ($p=0.000$; see chart below).



- Small organizations - those that reported to take in from 100 to 499 cats and/or dogs annually - were statistically more likely to encourage community member care than organizations that take in from 1,000 to 4,999 ($p=0.014$), from 5,000 to 9,999 ($p=0.027$) or 10,000 or more cats and/or dogs annually ($p=0.003$; see chart below).



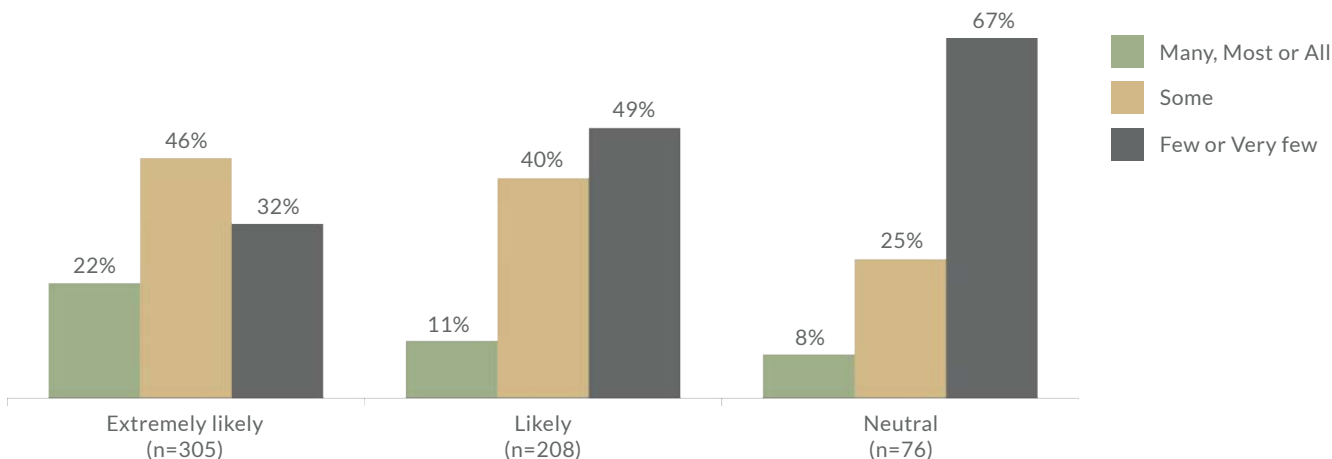
Q3. When asked by your organization, approximately how many community members in similar scenarios elect to foster the animals until resources are available, as an alternative to immediate intake?



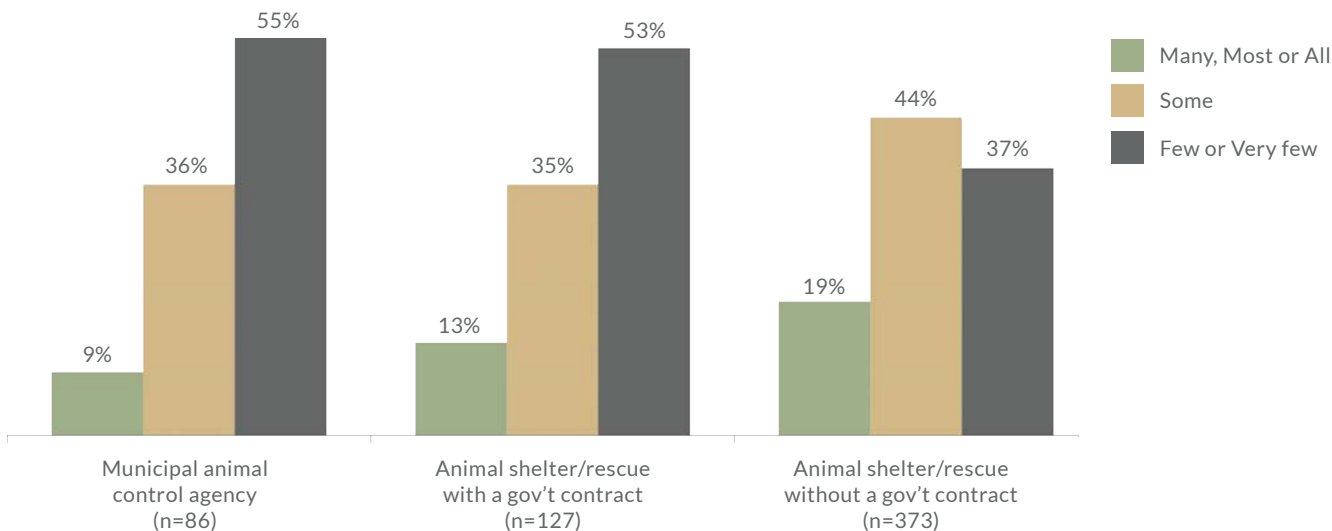
- Data for Question #3 only included responses from those who represented organizations that were “extremely likely,” “likely” or “neutral” in their encouragement of community member care.
- Only 16% of respondents reported that “most” (1%) or “many” (15%) community members in similar scenarios elect to foster the animals until resources are available, as an alternative to immediate intake by the organization; Forty one percent reported that “some” community members elect to provide care, while 43% reported “few” (22%) or “very few” (21%; see chart above).
- According to our results, there was not a significant difference in elective care by organizational size. Thus, the perceived quantity of community members who elect to provide care until organizational resources are available does not differ by the number of cats and/or dogs an organization takes in annually (data not depicted).



- Organizations that were “extremely likely” to encourage community members to provide care were significantly more likely to see higher numbers of community members who actually elect to provide care than organizations that reported “likely” ($p=0.000$) or “neutral” ($p=0.000$) in levels of encouragement; furthermore, organizations that were “likely” to encourage community care were significantly more likely to see higher number of community members who elect to provide care than organizations with a “neutral” level of encouragement ($p=0.010$; see chart below).

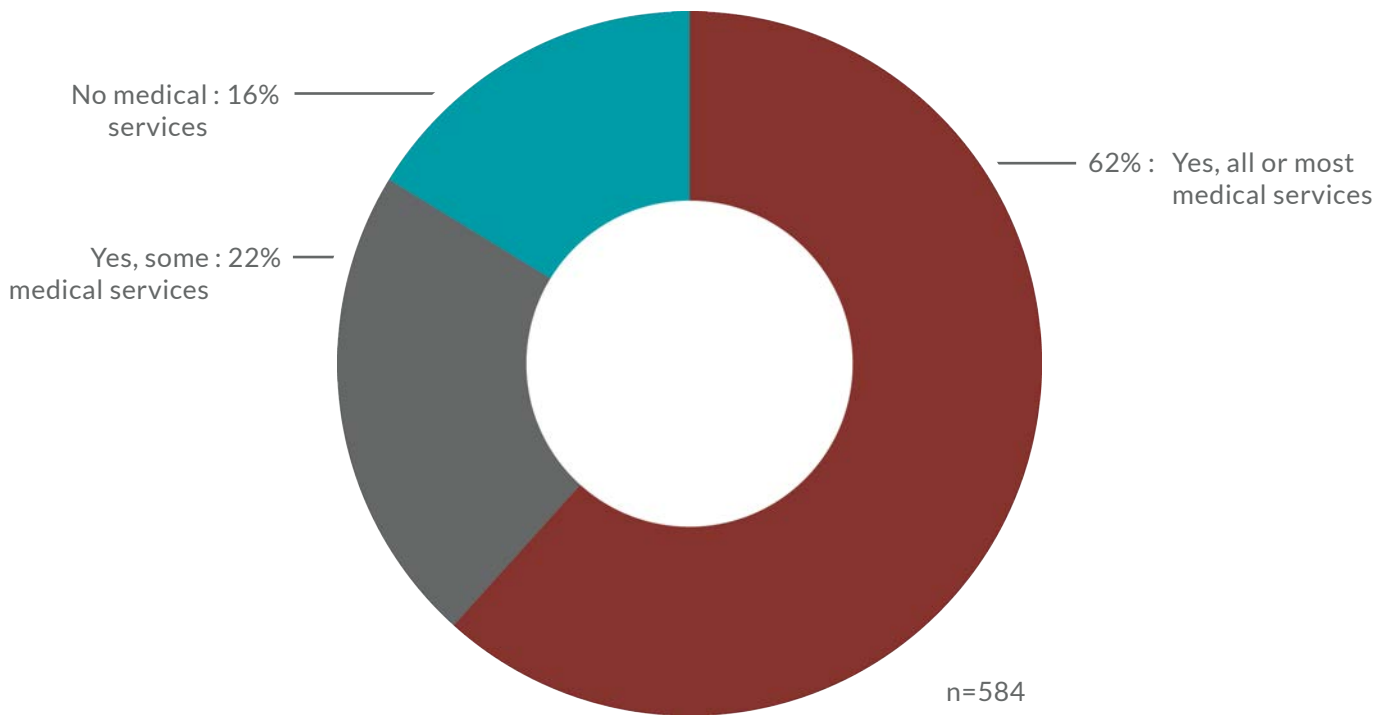


- Animal shelters/rescues without a government contract were significantly more likely to report having more community members elect to foster than municipal animal control agencies ($p=0.002$) and shelters/rescues with a government contract ($p=0.005$; see chart below).

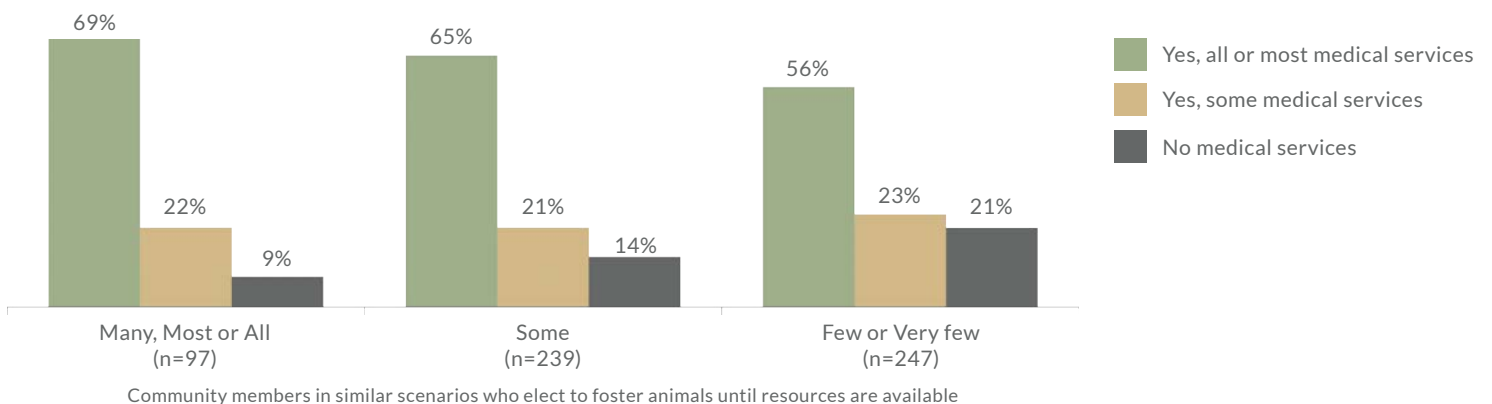


Q4. Does your organization offer the community member free medical services while the kittens are in their care (i.e., examination, vaccinations, spay/neuter surgery or medications) as needed?

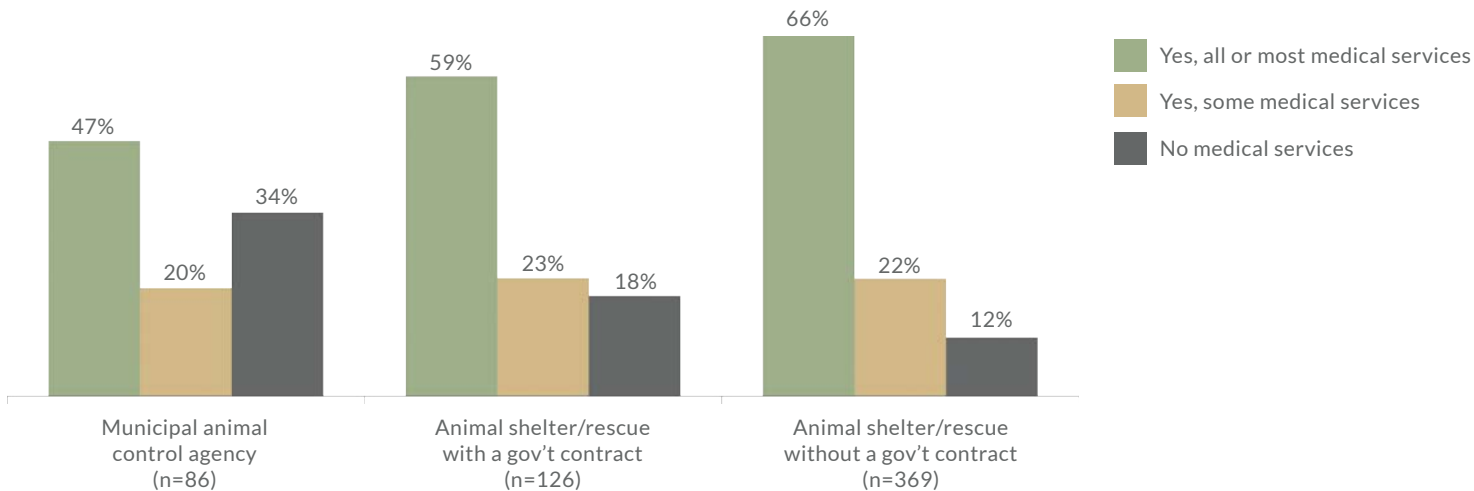
- Data for Question #4 only included responses from those who represent organizations that are “extremely likely,” “likely” or “neutral” in their encouragement of community member care.
- 62% of respondents reported that their organization offers “all or most” medical services to community members caring for kittens free of charge. An additional 22% report offering some free medical services (see chart below).



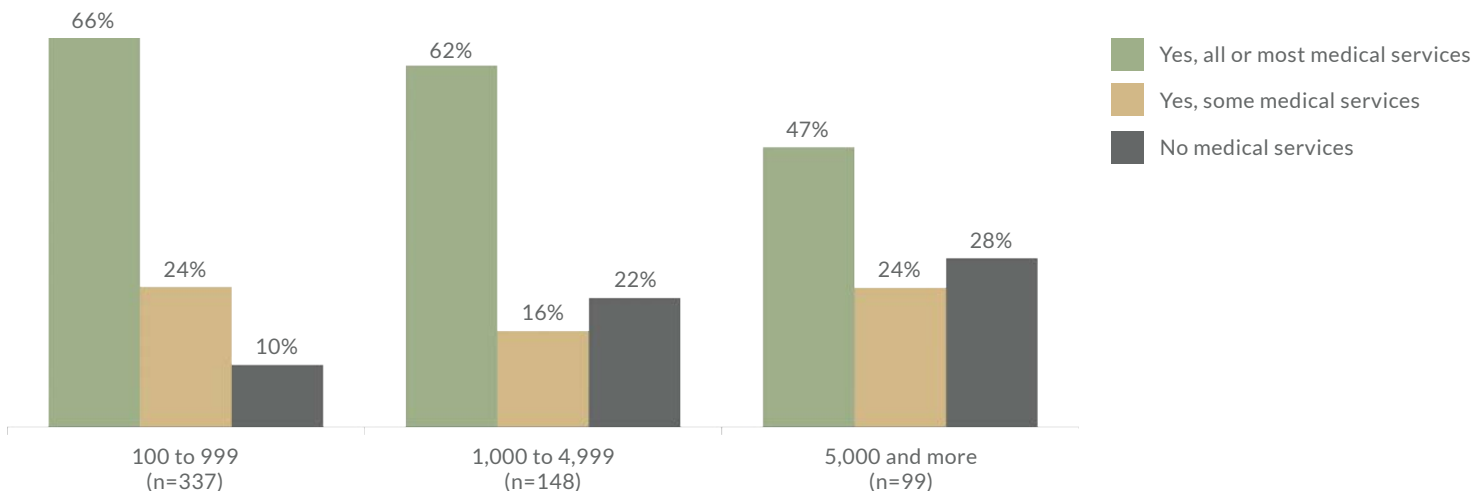
- Organizations that reported to provide “all or most medical services” may be more likely to report higher numbers of community members electing to foster the animals until resources are available as an alternative to immediate intake (no statistical analysis performed; see chart below).



- Animal shelters/rescues without a government contract were significantly more likely than municipal animal control agencies to report offering community members “all or most” medical services for free ($p=0.000$; see chart below).

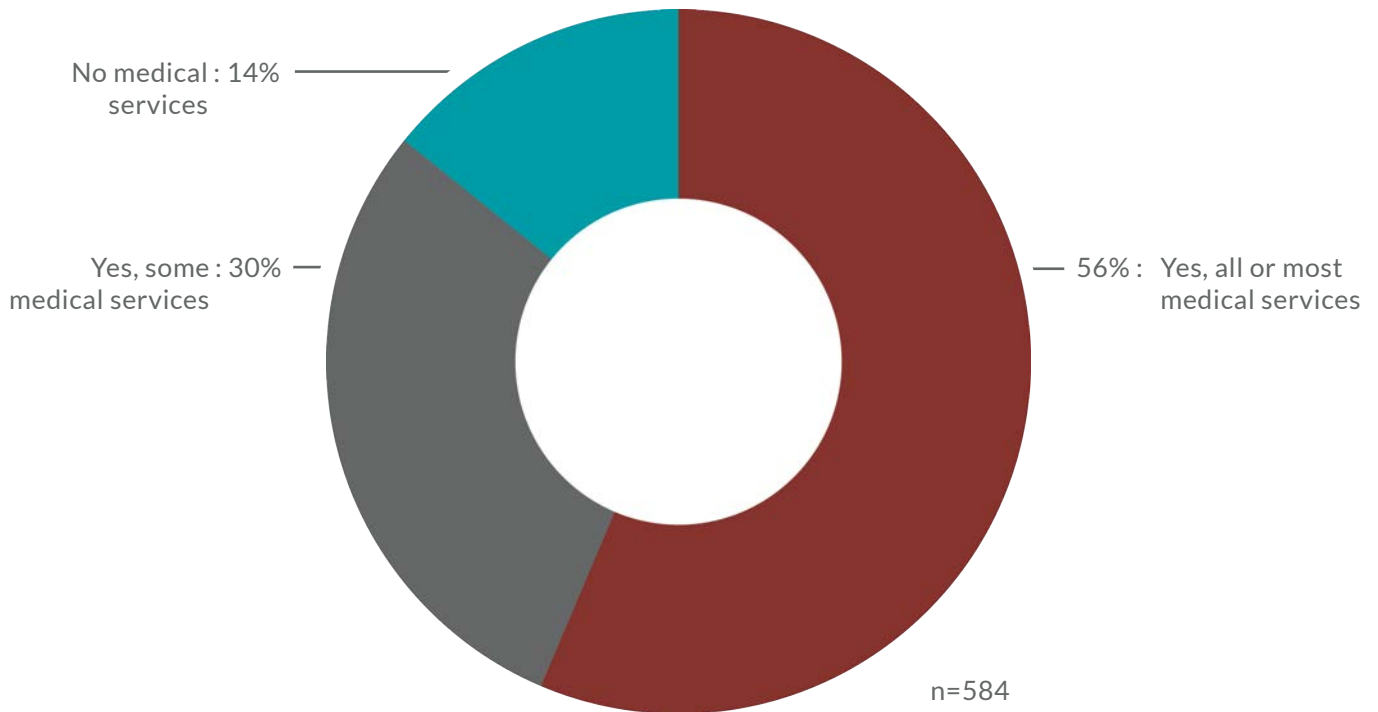


- Smaller organizations (100 to 999 cats and/or dogs taken in annually) may be more likely than larger organizations (5,000 or more cats and/or dogs taken in annually) to report offering community members “all or most” medical services for free (no statistical analysis performed; see chart below).

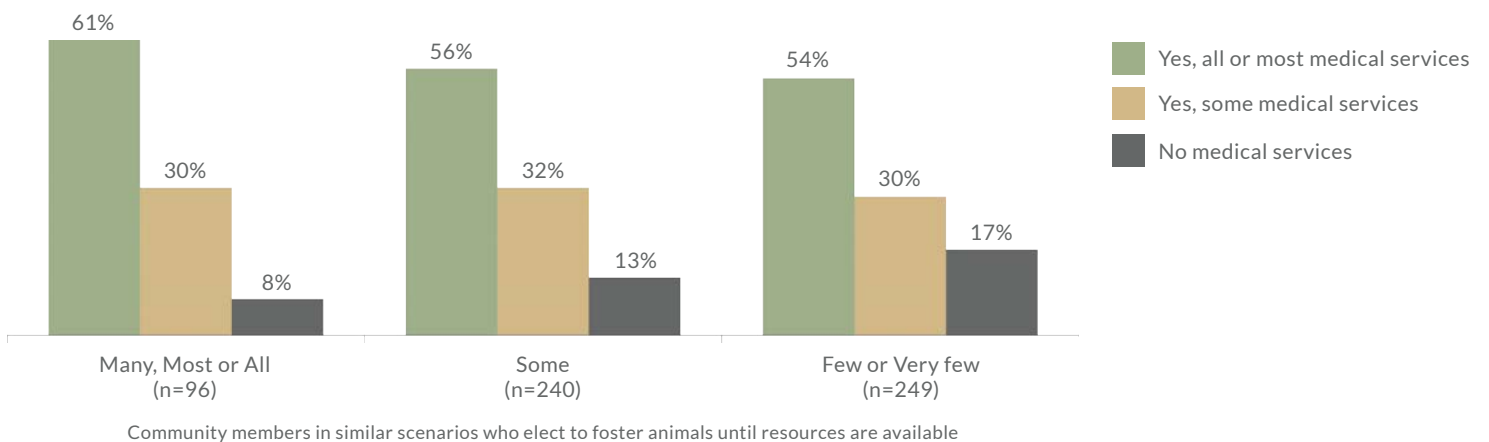


Q5. Does your organization offer the community member free supplies while the kittens are in their care (i.e., food, formula for bottle-fed kittens, litter, litterboxes, bowls or crates)?

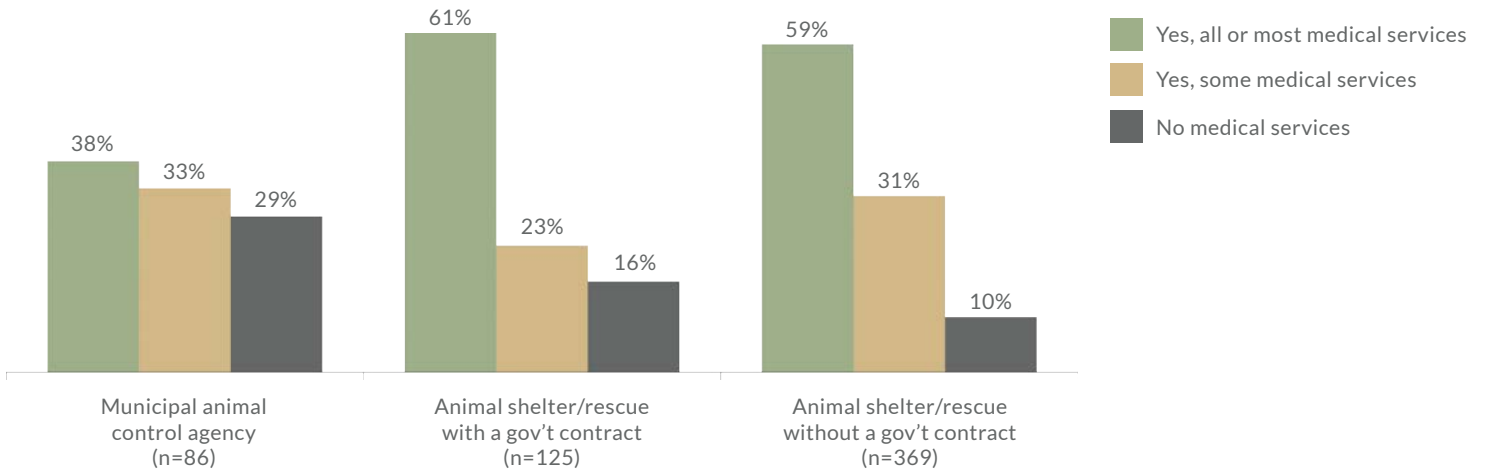
- Data for Question #5 only included responses from those who represent organizations that are “extremely likely,” “likely” or “neutral” in their encouragement of community member care.
- 56% of respondents reported that their organization offers “all or most” supplies to community members caring for kittens free of charge. An additional 30% reported offering some free supplies (see chart below).



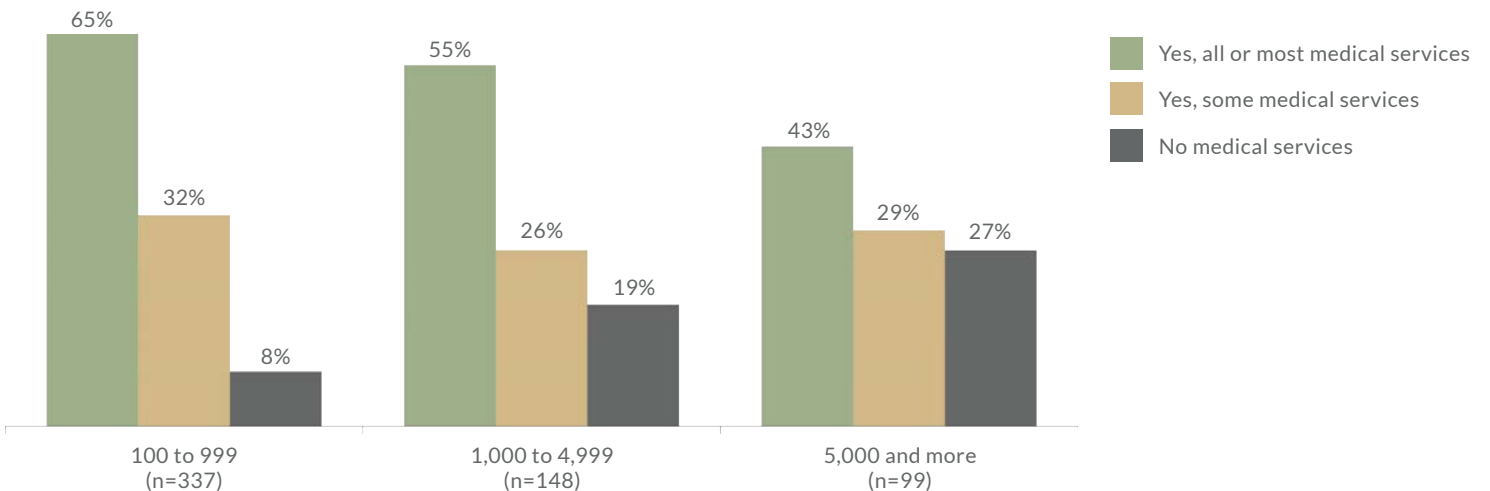
- Organizations that reported to provide “all or most supplies” for free may be slightly more likely to report higher numbers of community members who elect to foster until resources are available as an alternative to immediate intake (no statistical analysis performed; see chart below).



- Animal shelters/rescues without a government contract and animal shelters/rescues with a government contract were significantly more likely to report offering “all or most” supplies for free than municipal animal control agencies (p=0.000 and p=0.002, respectively; see chart below).

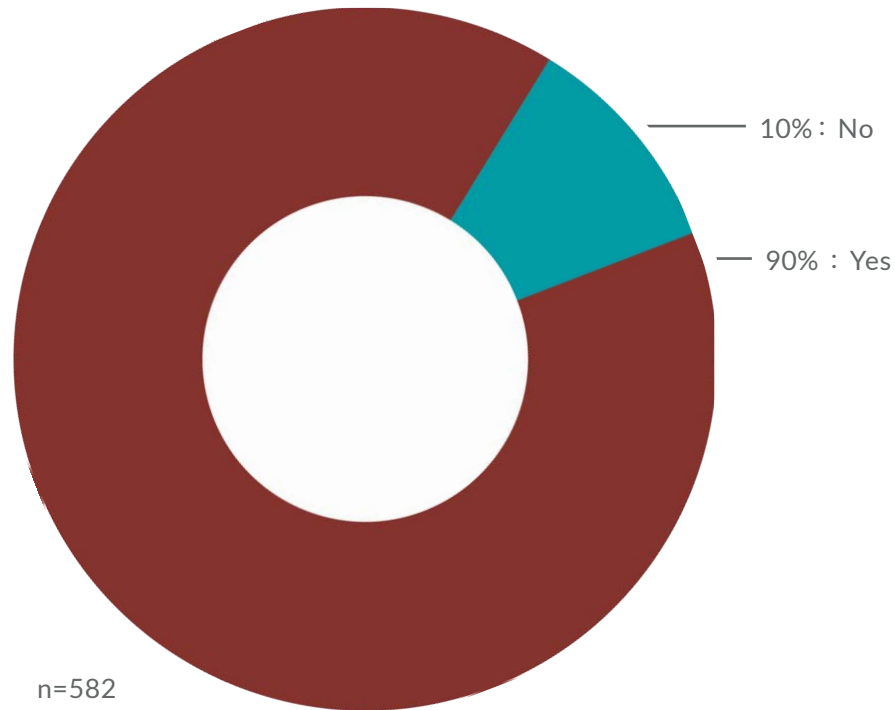


- Organizations that take in 100 to 999 cats and/or dogs annually were significantly more likely than organizations that take in 5,000 or more cats and/or dogs annually to report offering community members “all or most” supplies for free (p=0.000; see chart below).

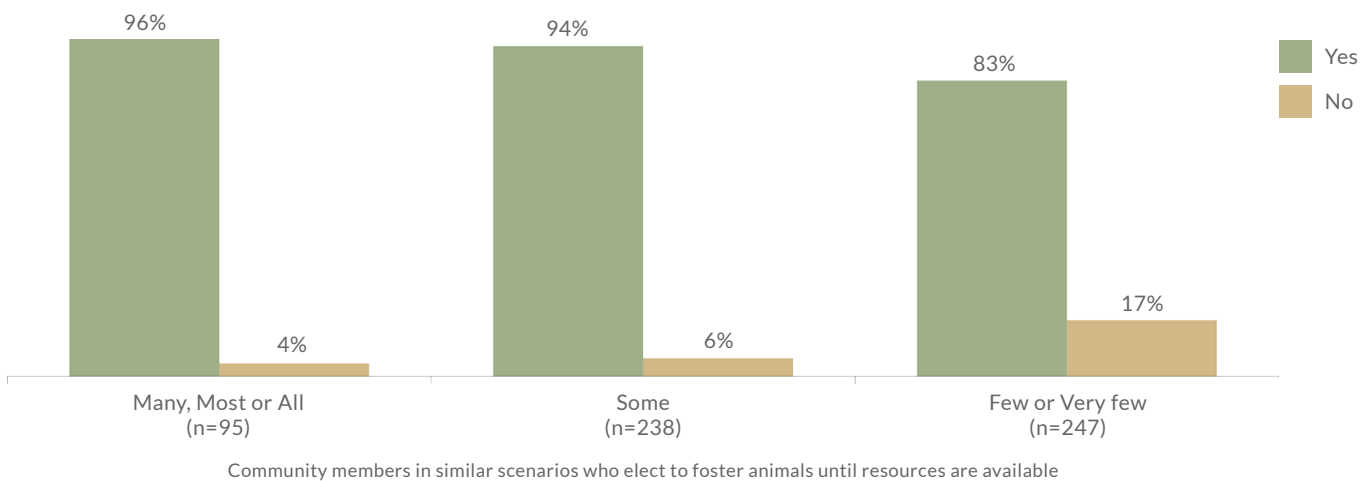


Q6. Does your organization offer the community member training or materials on proper care and feeding?

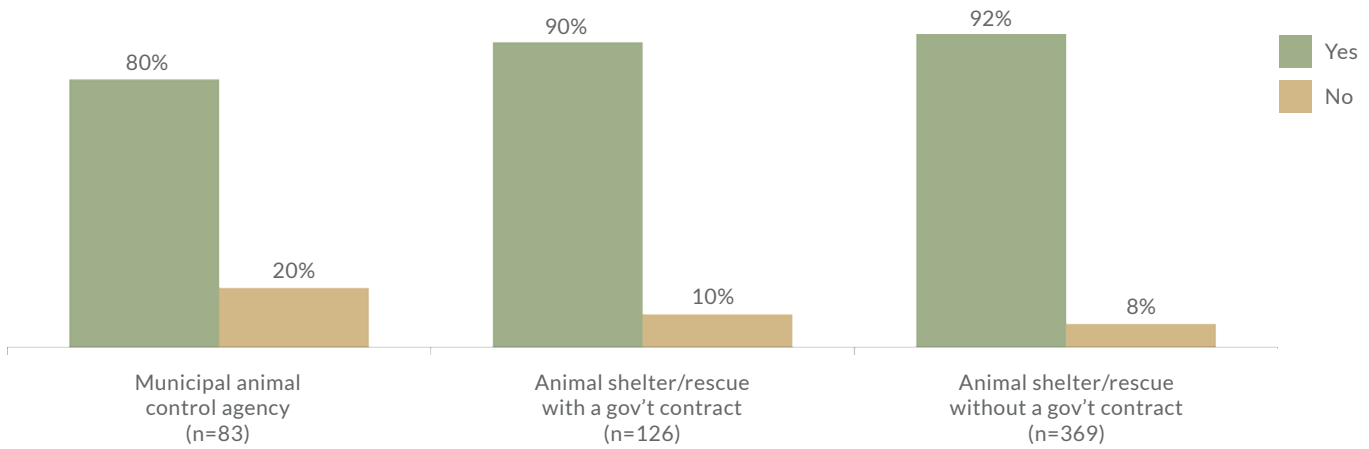
- Data for Question #6 only included responses from those who represent organizations that are “extremely likely,” “likely” or “neutral” in their encouragement of community member care.
- 90% of respondents reported that their organization offers training or materials on proper care to community members caring for kittens (see chart below).



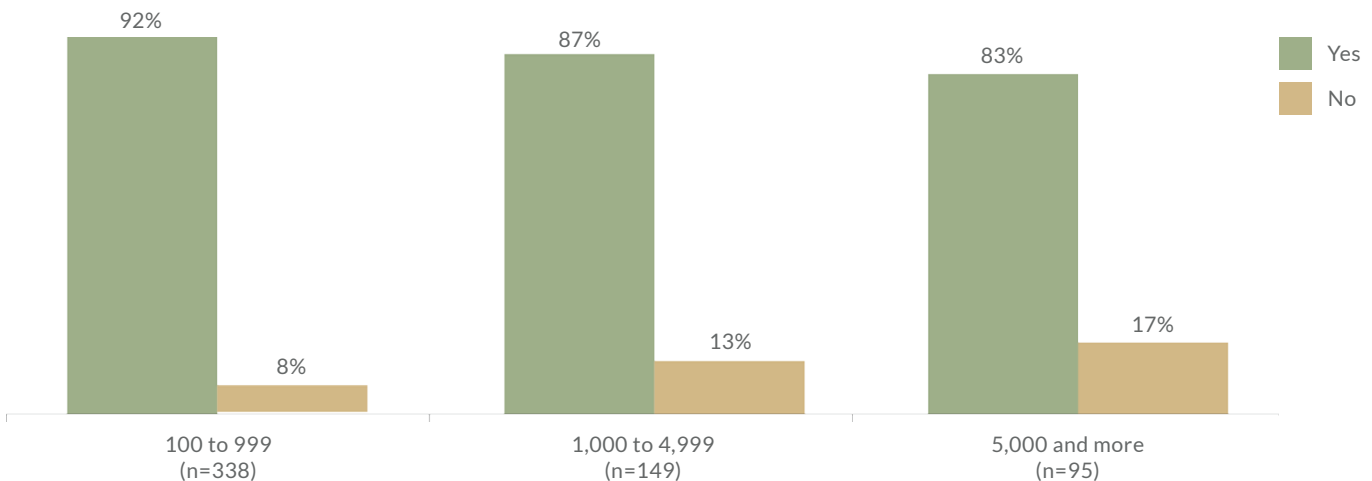
- Organizations that reported offering training or materials to community members may be more likely to report higher numbers of community members who elect to foster the animals until resources are available as an alternative to immediate intake than organizations that do not provide training or materials (no statistical analysis performed; see chart below).



- Animal shelters/rescues without a government contract (92%) were significantly more likely to report offering training or materials on proper care and feeding to community members than municipal animal control agencies (80%; $p=0.004$; see chart below).



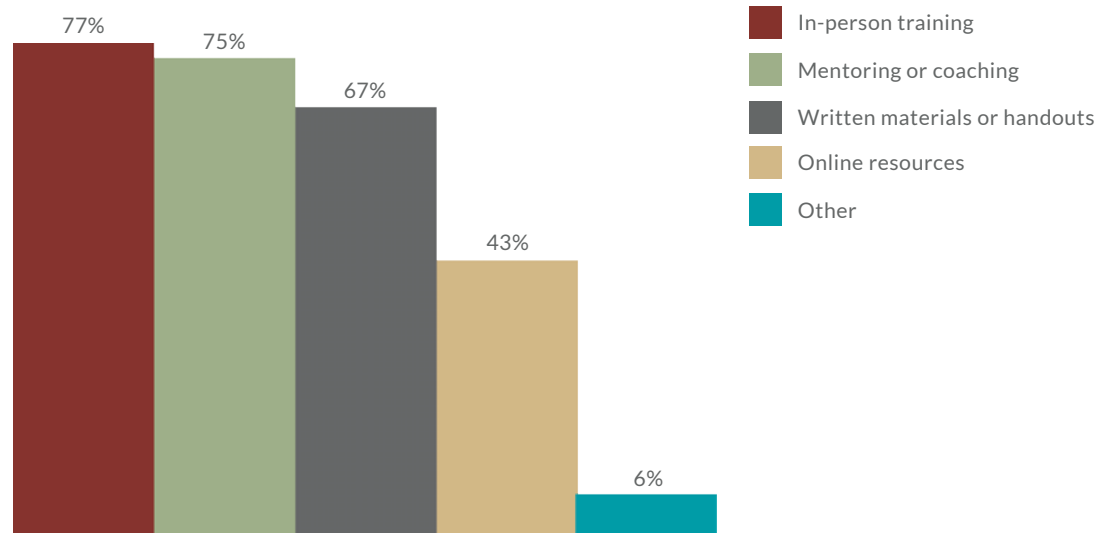
- Organizations that take in from 100 to 999 cats and/or dogs annually (92%) were significantly more likely to report offering training or materials on proper care and feeding to community members than organizations that take in 5,000 or more cats and/or dogs annually (83%; $p=0.021$; see chart below).



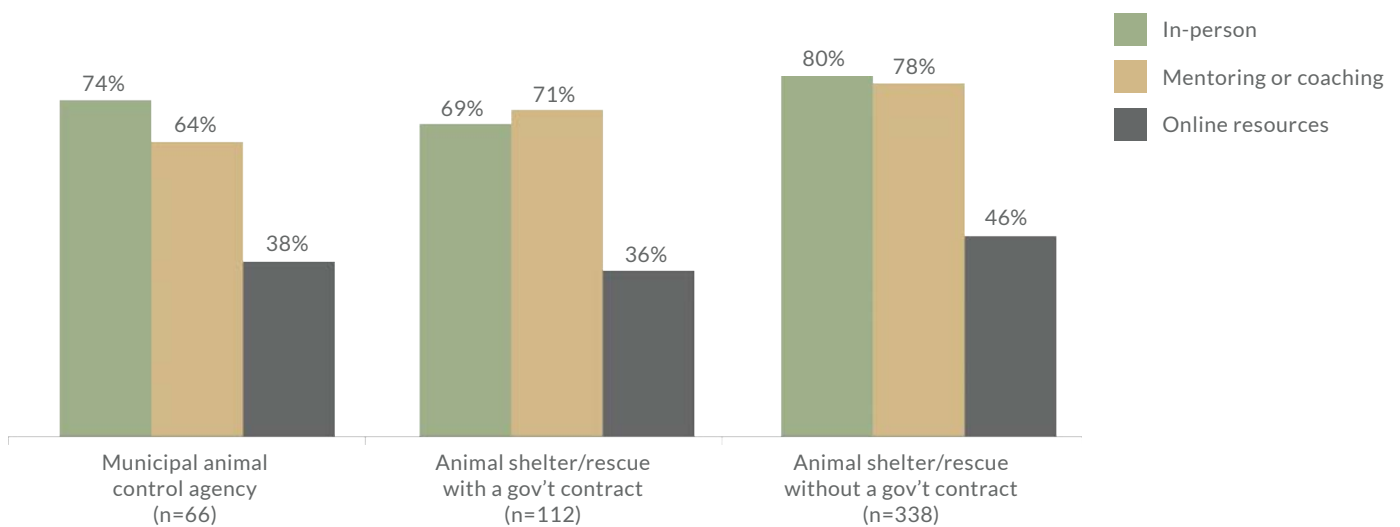
Q7. Which of the following are provided for training purposes? Check all that apply.

- Data for Question #7 only included responses from those who represented organizations that provided training or materials on proper care and feeding to community members.

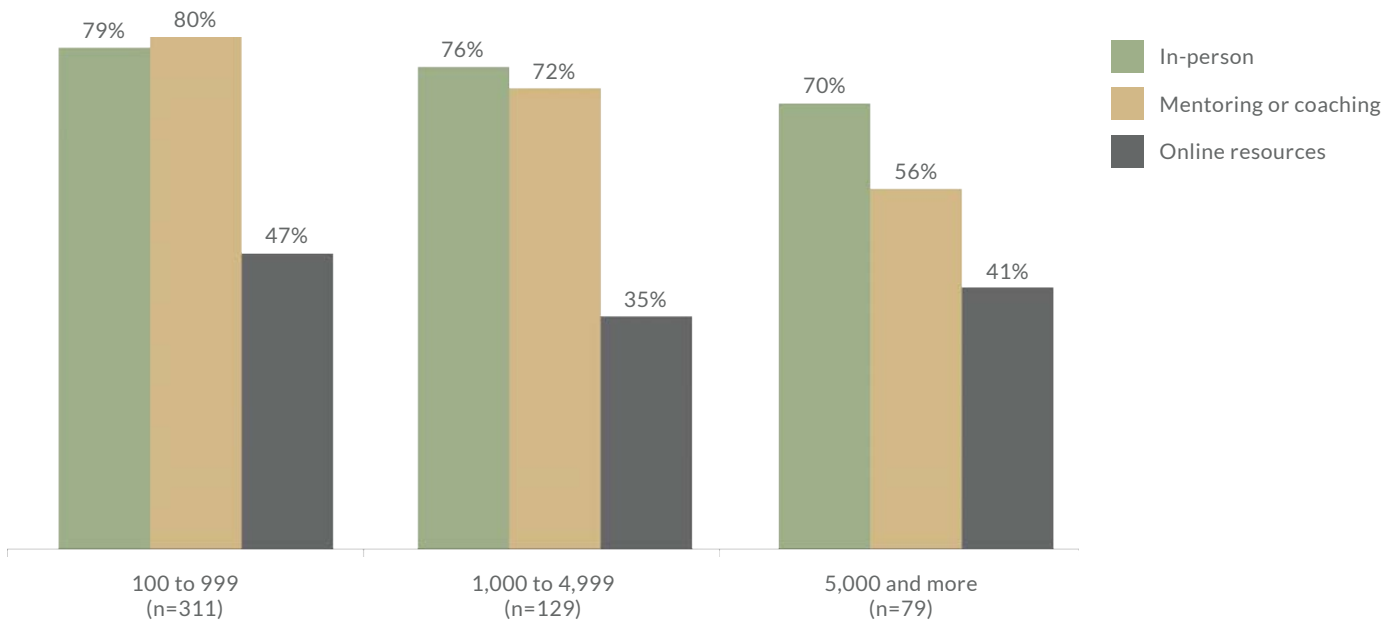
- 77% of respondents reported their organization provided in-person training
- 75% provided mentoring or coaching
- 67% provided written materials or handouts
- 43% provided online resources (see chart to right)



- Animal shelters/rescues without a government contract and animal shelters/rescues with a government contract were significantly more likely to report offering in-person training, mentoring or coaching, or online resources than municipal animal control agencies ($p=0.000$, $p=0.000$ and $p=0.001$, respectively; see chart below).



- Organizations that reported to take in 100 to 999 cats and/or dogs annually were significantly more likely to report offering in-person training than organizations that take in 5,000 or more cats and/or dogs annually ($p=0.006$; see chart below).

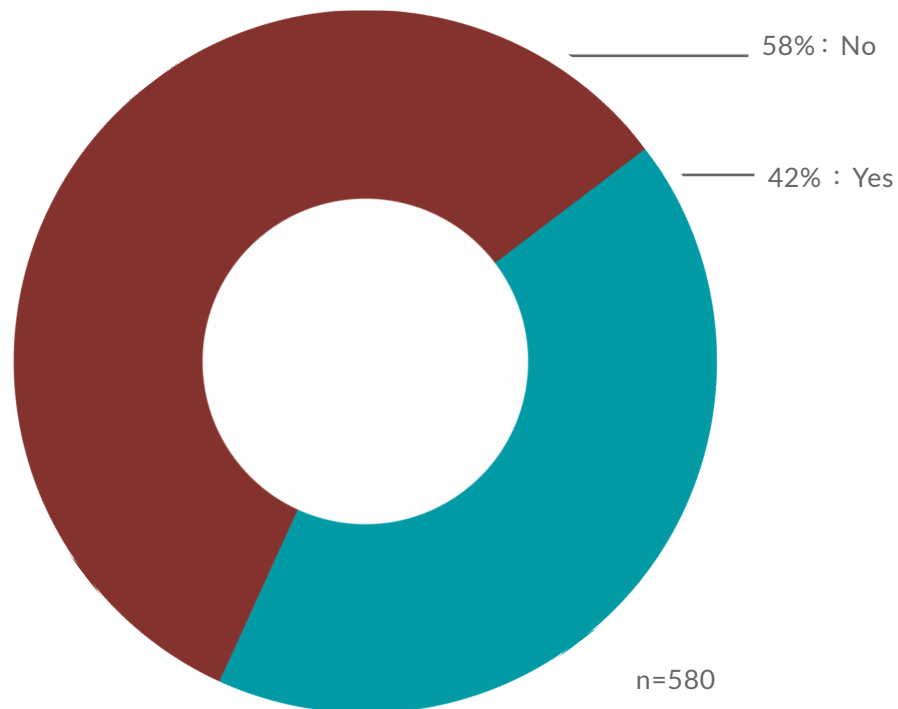


- Organizations that reported to take in 100 to 999 cats and/or dogs annually were significantly more likely to report offering mentoring or coaching than those that take in 1,000 to 4,999 ($p=0.000$) and 5,000 or more ($p=0.000$). Furthermore, organizations that reported to take in between 1,000 to 4,999 were significantly more likely to report offering mentoring or coaching than those that take in 5,000 or more ($p=0.000$; see chart above).
- The provision of written materials or handouts did not differ significantly by organizational size or organizational type (data not depicted).

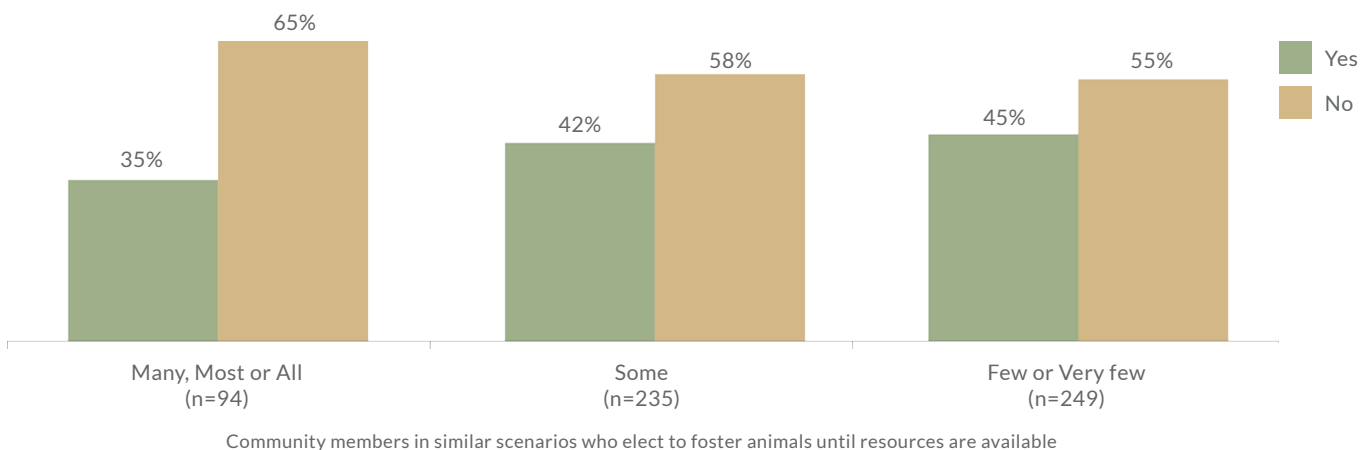


Q8. Does your organization require the community member to formally enroll in a program to receive services and/or supplies?

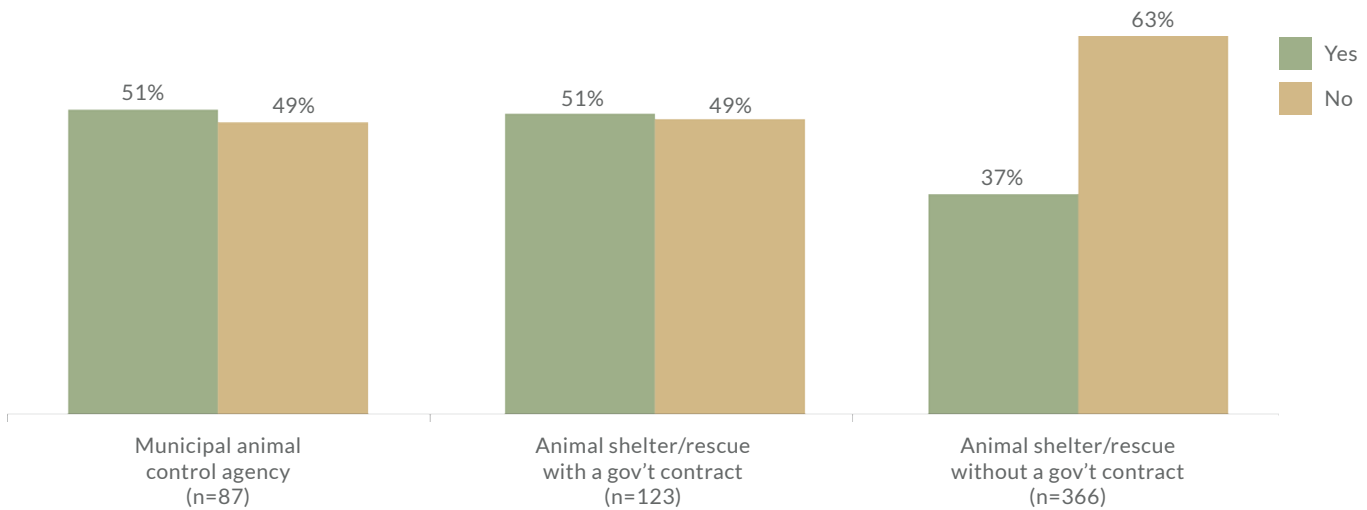
- Data for Question #8 only included responses from those who represented organizations that were “extremely likely,” “likely” or “neutral” to encourage community member care.
- 58% of respondents reported “no” - their organization does not require community members to formally enroll in a program to receive services and/or supplies in the care of found kittens (see chart below).
- 42% reported “yes” - their organization does require formal enrollment (see chart below).



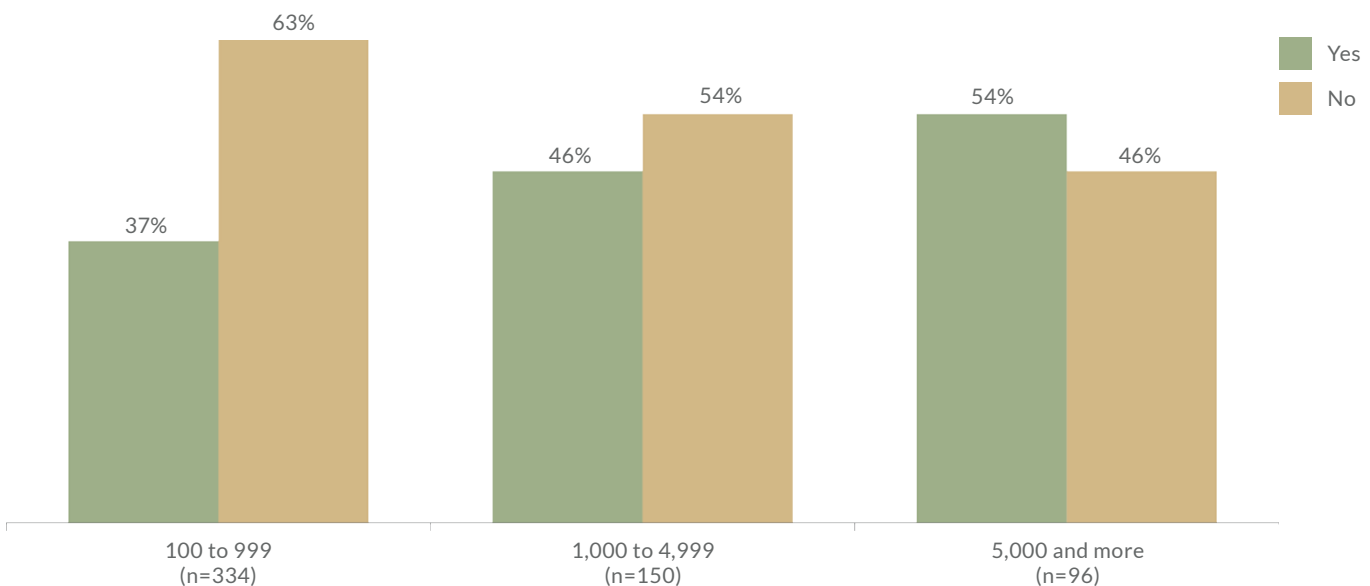
- Organizations that do not require community members to formally enroll in a program to receive services and/or supplies may be slightly more likely to report higher numbers of community members who elect to foster the animals until resources are available as an alternative to immediate intake (no statistical analysis performed; see chart below).



- Animal shelter/rescues with a government contract (51%) were significantly more likely to require community members to formally enroll in a program to receive services and/or supplies in the care of kittens than animal shelters/rescues without a government contract (63%; $p=0.005$; see chart below).



- Larger organizations - those that reported to take in 5,000 or more cats and/or dogs annually - were significantly more likely to require community members to formally enroll in a program to receive services and/or supplies than smaller organizations that reported to take in 100 to 999 cats and/or dogs annually. ($p=0.005$; see chart below).

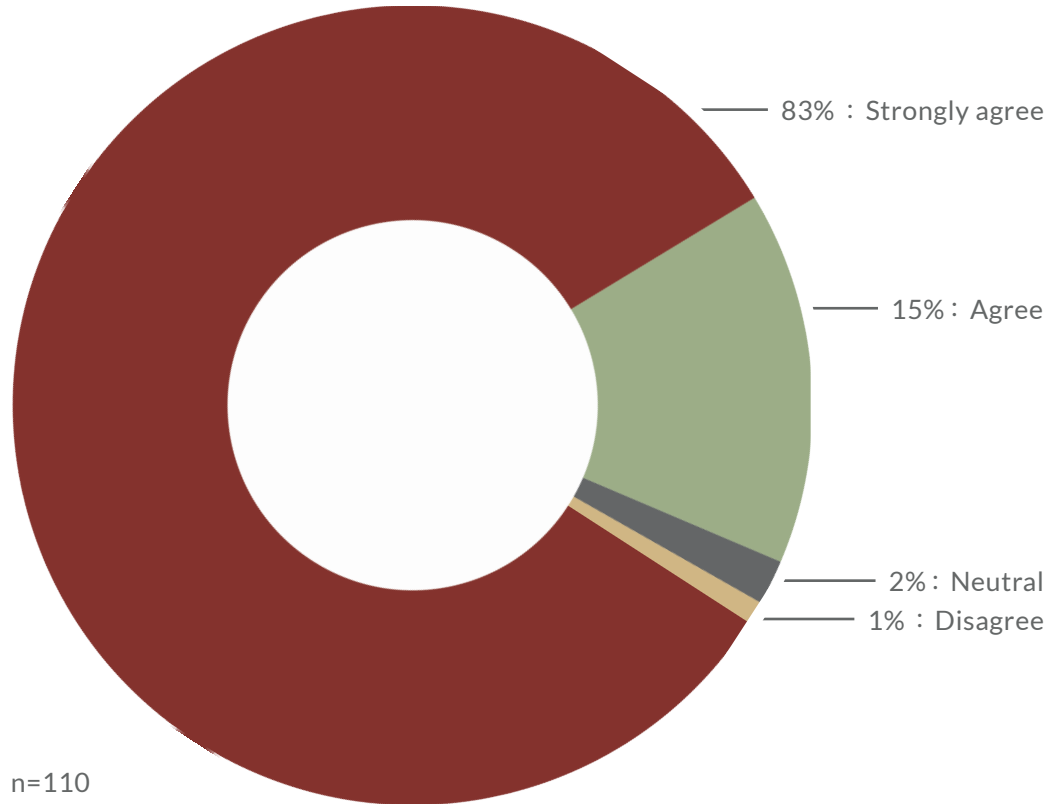


Q9. Please rate the following statements.

The following data only includes results from organizations who reported to take in cats only. Organizations who take in both cats and dogs have been omitted from this section.

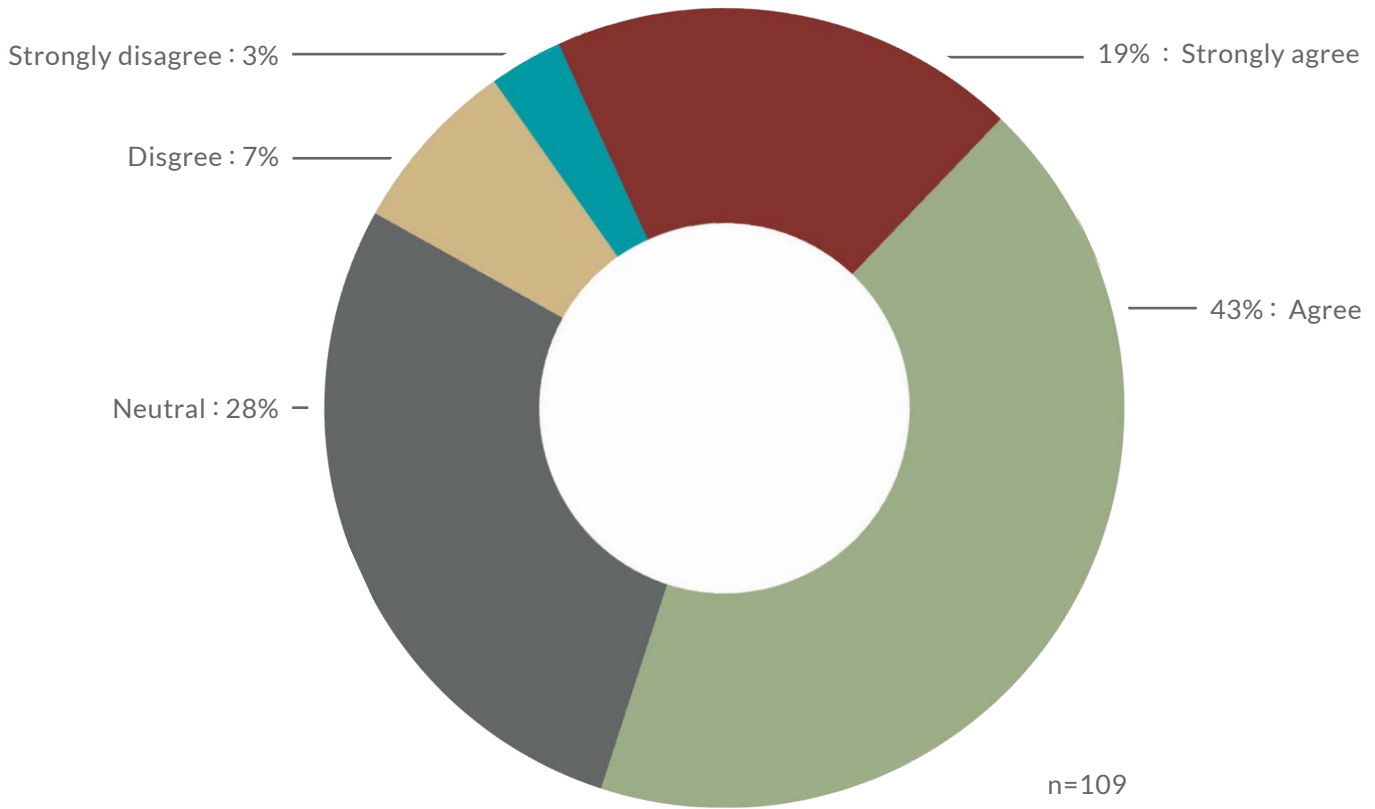
Statement #1: The influx of kittens during peak seasons is a problem.

- 83% of organizations that only take in cats “strongly agree” that the influx of kittens during peak season is a problem; and additional 15% “agree” (see chart below).

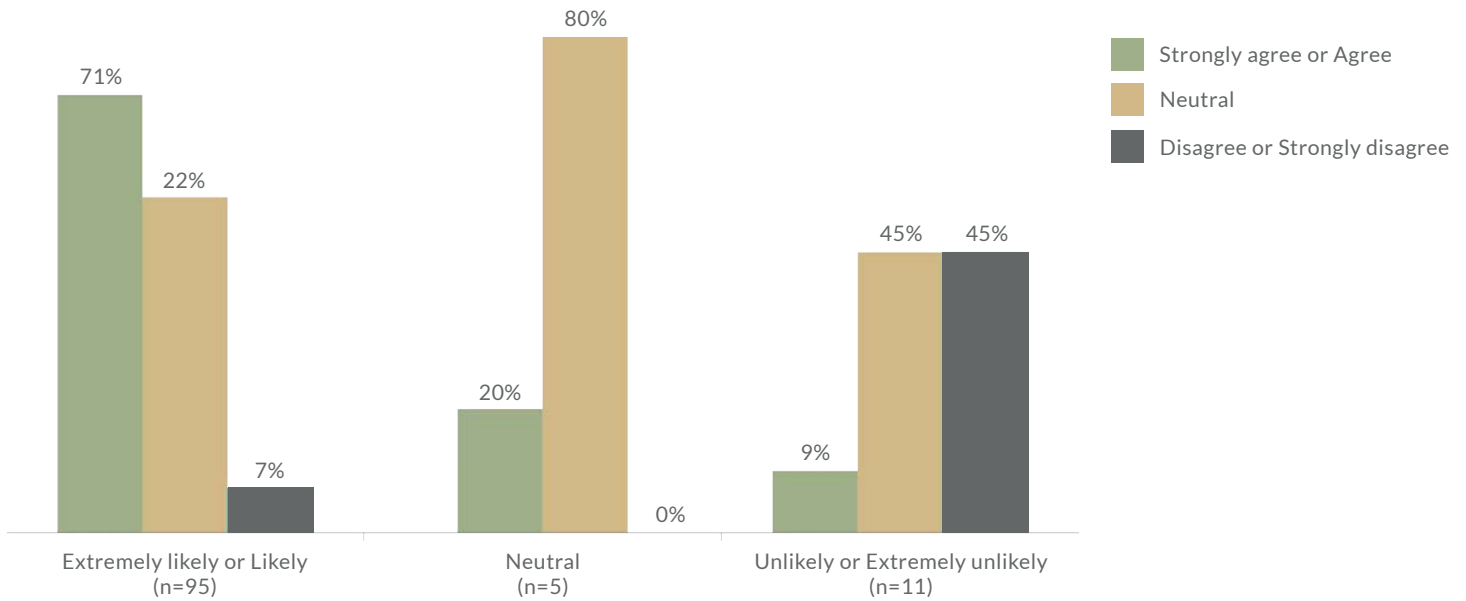


Statement #2: My organization is effective in encouraging community members to care for kittens until they are ready for adoption.

- 19% of organizations that only take in cats “strongly agree” and 43% “agree” that their organization is effective in encouraging community members to care for kittens until they are ready for adoption (see chart below).
- Thus, approximately 38% of organizations that only take in cats are “neutral,” “disagree” or “strongly disagree” that their organization is effective in this action (see chart below).

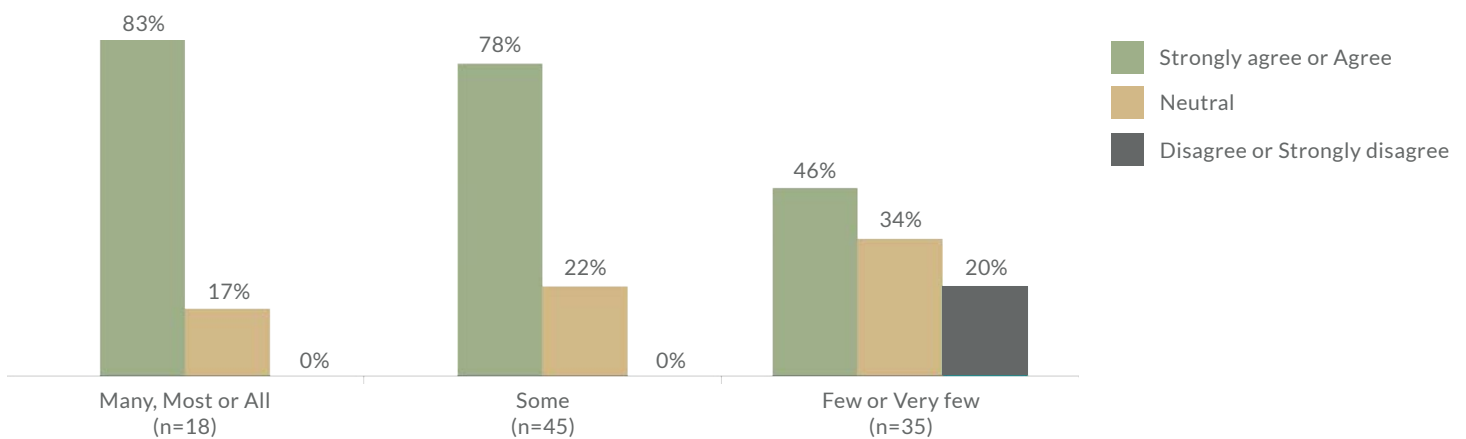


- 71% of respondents who “strongly agree” or “agree” that their organization is effective in encouraging community members to care for kittens until they are ready for adoption also noted that their organization is “extremely likely” or “likely” to encourage community member care of kittens (see chart below).



Likelihood of the organization to encourage the community member to care for the kittens until organizational resources are available or they are ready to be placed for adoptions

- Respondents who “strongly agree” or “agree” that their organization is effective in encouraging community members to care for kittens until they are ready for adoption are more likely to report higher numbers of community members who elect to foster the animals until resources are available as an alternative to immediate intake (see chart below).



Community members in similar scenarios who elect to foster animals until resources are available



Statement #3: Programs that encourage community members to care for kittens (until they are old enough and healthy enough to be placed for adoption) are effective in increasing housing capacity.

- Despite perceived organizational effectiveness in encouragement of community member care, the majority (85%) of those surveyed either “strongly agree” or “agree” that programs that encourage community members to care for kittens until they are old enough and healthy enough to be placed for adoption are effective in increasing housing capacity (see chart below).

