

PETS IN ITALY:

79% OF OWNERS CONSIDER THEM TO BE MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY, 63% BELIEVE THEY DO NOT REPLACE CHILDREN, AND 75% BELIEVE THEY ARE NOT A REASON BEHIND FALLING BIRTH RATES

This is what emerged from recent research by [Changes Unipol](#), processed by Ipsos, on the relationship between Italians and their pets; the results also show that:

- **Most Italians (56%)** have at least one pet, with **dogs (36%)** and **cats (33%)**, almost at the same level, and **20%** would like to have one.
- Among generations, it is **Millennials** in particular who consider their pet to be a member of the family (**85%**) followed by a high percentage of **Boomers (67%)**.
- For Italians, the **advantages** of having a pet (**48%** believe they **provide company** and **46%** that they **bring joy**) outweigh the **disadvantages (26%** indicate **the cost of healthcare and keeping them**) while **92%** of owners claim that they have never caused **damage to things or people**.
- **More than half** of pet owners dedicate from **1 to 3 hours per day** to taking care of their pets.
- Only **4 owners in 10 (38%)** **often travel** with their animals, but this is more common in metropolitan areas (**46%**). Millennials are the ones who travel most with their pets (46%).
- It is quite common to encounter **difficulties when travelling** with animals (**71%** of owners indicate at least one problem), mainly relating to **transport (31%)**, their acceptance in **accommodation facilities** and managing their **needs (both 28%)**.
- **Monthly costs for maintenance** (excluding veterinary expenses) of a pet is about **65 euros**, rising to **69 euros** for those who have dogs and/or cats.
- **Annual medical expenses** amount to about **180 euros**, rising to **185 euros** for those who own dogs and/or cats.

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The role of pets, mainly dogs and cats, in our families, and more generally, in our society, is often a topic for debate and the exchange of different opinions.

Now, recent research by [Changes Unipol](#), processed by Ipsos, outlines and measures the existing relationship between Italians and pets, revealing that **79%** of owners consider them to be **members of the family** to all effects, while **63%** of interviewees believe that they do not replace children, and **75%** that they are not a reason behind the **falling birth rates** in Italy.

The relationship between Italians and their pets

Most Italians - more than one in two (**56%**) - **own at least one pet**, and among these, mostly dogs and cats: **36%** state that they have at least one **dog**, while **33%** state that they have at least one **cat**. The remaining 44% comprise those who do not have an animal, but would like one (20%) and those who have definitely chosen not to have one (24%).

Generation X (41 to 56 years old) has the highest percentage ownership of pets (60%), mostly cats (in 41% of cases), while **Generation Z** (16 to 26 years old) prefer dogs (41%). The presence of animals is lowest among **Millennials** (27 to 40 years old), amounting to 52%, but they are also the ones who would most like to have one (24% compared to a national average of 20%); the **Boomers** (57 to 74 years old) are those who are most uninterested in having animals (32% do not have them and do not want them compared to a national average of 24%).

For owners, **pets are family members to all effects in 79% of cases**, rising to 85% among Millennials, while the Boomers are the most detached since only 67% consider pets to be a member of the family. Additionally, in most cases (92%), the owners confirmed that their pets have never caused **damage to persons or things**.

When making a comparison, for Italians, the advantages of owning an animal outweigh the disadvantages: **88%** of those interviewed identified the **positive aspects**, while 77% found that there was **at least one disadvantage**.

Delving further into this aspect, the main advantages are that animals provide **company (48%** of cases, rising to 56% in the most mature generation of Boomers), bring **happiness (46%)** and improve **mental health (33%)**. On the other hand, only 9% call being to defend themselves against aggression an advantage.

However, the disadvantages include the **expenses to keep them healthy (26%)**, the need to find **someone to take care of them** while the owners are away (**26%**) and their **maintenance costs (17%)**. In particular, a considerable disadvantage for Boomers is the need to take them out regardless of the weather, and at different times (25% compared to a national average of 16%), while Gen Z complain a bit more than the national average about the need to give them attention and play with them (12% compared to 9%).

Pets and falling birth rates in Italy

63% of Italians believe that a pet can **never replace a child**; however, **28%** are convinced that they could since “a pet is **treated like a child to all effects**” (**12%** of cases), “fills an **emotional void**” (**10%**) or since “managing a pet is **easier** than managing a child” (**9%**).

From this standpoint, there is a difference between the younger generations, who are more amenable to the idea of an animal replacing a child (**36%** for Gen Z and **37%** for Millennials), and the more mature generations, who agree less, especially Boomers (**13%**).

Finally, 3 Italians in 4 (**75%**) are convinced that the **reasons behind the falling birthrates** in Italy are not linked to the presence of dogs, cats, or other pets in houses and families, compared to **12%** who identify it as a contributing factor to the fact that less and less children are being born.

Travelling with pets

Only 4 owners in 10 (**38%**) **often travel with their pets**, but it is more common in metropolitan areas where the percentage rises to **46%**. Among generations, it is Millennials who move most with their animals (in **46%** of cases) while only **34%** of Boomers do so.

It is quite common to encounter **difficulties when travelling** with animals, to the extent that **71%** of owners indicate at least one difficulty (in the case of Millennials, **73%**). In particular, the main obstacles noted include the **transport** in itself of the animal during trips (in **31%** of cases), the availability of **accommodation that accepts animals** (**28%**) and managing the **needs of the animal** when travelling (**28%**).

Time and economic resources for pets

Owning a pet can also mean commitments in terms of time and resources to dedicate to its care: over half (**54%**) of owners spend **1 to 3 hours per day** doing this, while **11%** spend up to 5 hours and **6%** exceed 5 hours. Only **27%** spend **less than one hour a day** in caring for their pet.

Monthly costs for maintenance of pets come to an average of **65 euros** (excluding the money spent on healthcare and vets), rising to 69 euros for those who have dogs and/or cats. With regard to **healthcare expenses** (vaccinations, medical visits, exams, operations), the annual average is **180 euros**, rising to 185 euros for people owning dogs and/or cats, but down to 164 euros for residents of metropolitan areas. **Younger generations tend to spend more** on the healthcare of their animals (Gen Z 186 euros/year compared to Boomers at 170 euros/year).

Unipol Gruppo

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