



# A summary report on Dog and Cat Meat Consumption in Vietnam

*Research conducted by  
Market Strategy and Development Co, Ltd.*

January 2021

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Worldwide.





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# 1. Introduction

FOUR PAWS is an international organisation working towards a vision of a world in which humans treat animals with respect, empathy, and understanding.

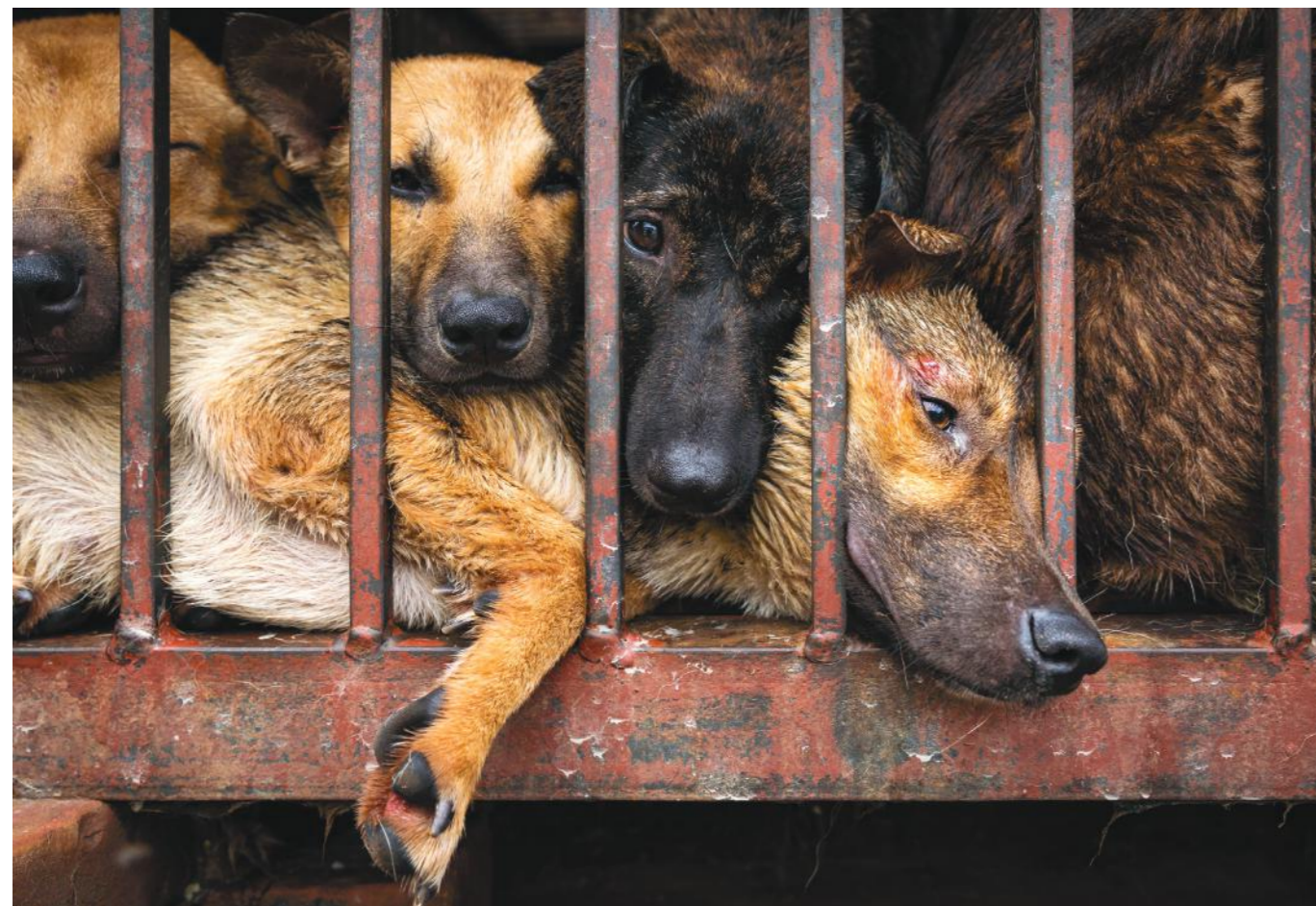
In line with this mission, FOUR PAWS wanted to explore and create a campaign to reduce the consumption of dog and cat meat (DCM) across Vietnam. Whilst much has been reported anecdotally about DCM consumption in Vietnam, there was previously no data on the prevalence of this consumption. The controversial nature of this practice, combined with the often abusive and criminal ways in which these animals are collected, necessitates that the Dog and Cat Meat Trade is very much an informal market, regardless of its popularity in certain communities.

In order to design a campaign with the aim of reducing DCM consumption, FOUR PAWS needed to know what the current levels of consumption are, the breakdown of consumption across various demographics, as well as what drives people to consume this meat. This information allows FOUR PAWS to know who to target,

what messages will be compelling to certain target groups and then, at a later date, to be able to measure the success of any initiatives imposed.

The research was conducted by FOUR PAWS and Market Strategy & Development Co., Ltd. (MSD), a marketing and social research consulting firm in Cambodia headquartered in Phnom Penh that has undertaken a number of market, social science, and socio-economic development research projects. For this study, MSD partnered with The Window, a research company in Vietnam with experience in undertaking similar surveys.

The research was conducted in northern and southern cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) with N=300 respondents from each. The study was presented using Vietnamese Dong (VND) figures. Conversions were made for this report and are provided in US Dollars (\$) using a rate of \$1 = 23,129.10 and Euros (€) using a rate of €1 = 25,659.76, rounded to the nearest Dollar/Euro.



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# 2. Methodology



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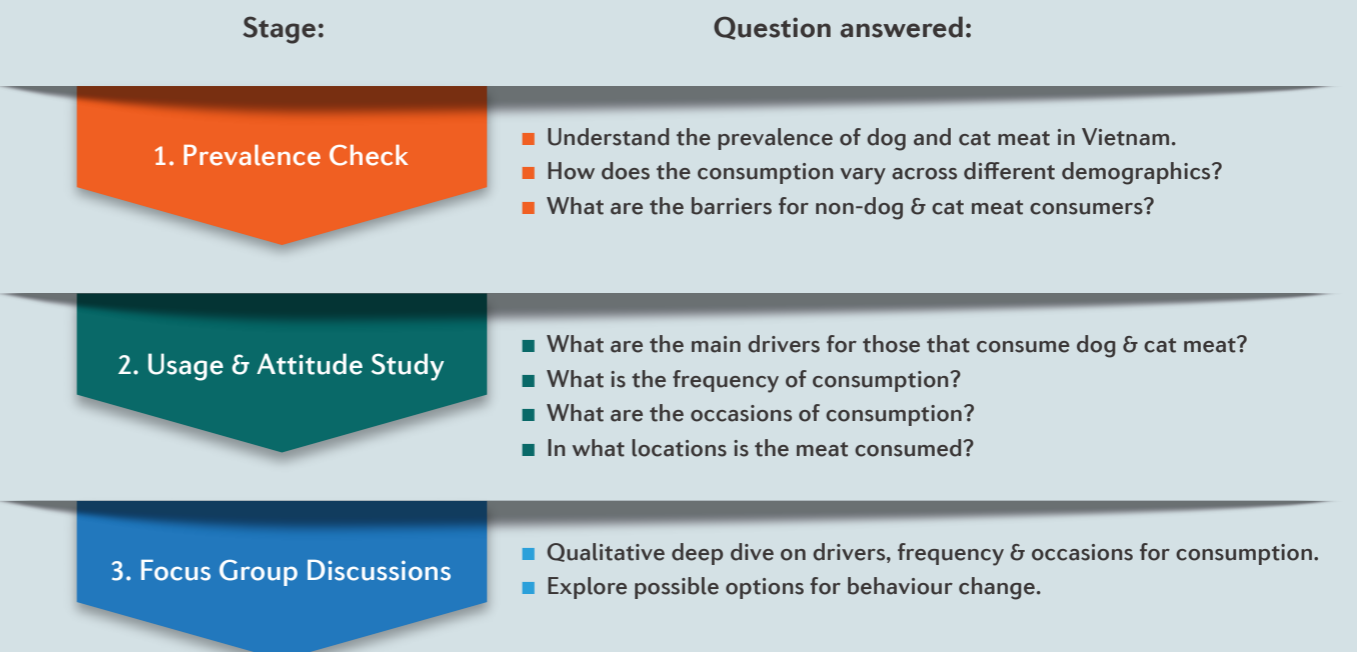
## Study objectives

FOUR PAWS identified the following questions that need to be answered by this report:

- What are the current levels of DCM consumption in Vietnam?
- How does consumption vary across different demographics (wealth, gender, age, education level, household location)?
- What are the main drivers for those who consume dog or cat meat? Occasions of consumption? Individual reasons for consumption?
- What are the barriers to consumption for non-DCM consumers? Why are these barriers not compelling for consumers?
- What can be done to stem the flow of DCM consumption?

A three-stage process using multiple methodologies were used within the survey due to the variety of goals and questions to be answered: a) quantitative

prevalence check survey; b) usage and attitude survey and; c) focus group discussions.



### Stage 1: Prevalence check survey

The initial stage of the research was to conduct a prevalence check on consumers of either dog or cat meat in Vietnam. The primary purpose was to define how prevalent DCM consumption is within the northern and southern capitals of Hanoi and HCMC, and by extension, within Vietnam as a whole.

### Stage 2: Usage and attitude (U&A) survey

The second stage involved conducting a usage and attitude survey (U&A) with DCM consumers to understand quantitative data, including the frequency, locations, reasons, and occasions in which they consume DCM. The information gained from this stage of the research was intended to provide FOUR PAWS with the statistics needed to understand the driving forces behind the DCM trade.

### Stage 3: Qualitative understanding utilising focus group discussions

The third stage was a qualitative deep dive on the individual drivers of this consumption employing Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). This was to understand more of the business side of dog meat consumption.



Figure 2: Focus group room in HCMC

### Survey instruments

#### Questionnaire design

Two quantitative questionnaires and FGD guide were used for this study. The study materials were collaboratively developed by MSD and FOUR PAWS. They were all in English and translated into the local language.

#### Computer-assisted surveying

Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) was used to interview respondents and collect data, allowing for quicker interviewing times, enabling logic checks and skip patterns reducing human error, secure data encryption, and audio recording for back-checks.

#### Prevalence survey

A 5-10-minute survey conducted to ascertain basic demographic information such as location, gender, age, income, marital status, educational level, and occupation.

#### U&A survey outline

A survey that lasted for 20-30 minutes, aimed at establishing demographic information then going into greater detail on consumption habits and attitudes.

#### Focus group discussion guideline

A discussion guide composed of nine sections for a discussion lasting two hours. It covers perception of dietary requirements, meat consumptions, triggers and barriers for DCM consumption, attitude towards animals, and media consumption and influencers.

### Fieldwork management, quality control and ethical protocols

Only experienced, trained, full-time staff for key positions were deployed on the project at every stage of the research. The research team followed stringent quality control procedures and considered research quality the highest priority.



Figure 1: Focus group room and adjacent observation room in Hanoi

## Findings

FOUR PAWS and MSD used comprehensive methodologies to research the topic of DCM consumption in Vietnam, with each methodology having its own specific objectives. For the purposes of this study, regular DCM consumers were defined as those who eat the meat at least once a month, whilst high-frequency consumers were defined as those who eat the meat at least once a week. The ultimate goal of the U&A study is to gain a concrete understanding of when and why people eat dog and cat meat.

The research team made sure to distinguish the differences between each group composition, including frequency of consumption, gender, age, and location. The groups were divided into moderate consumers (consume once a month to a few times per month) and high-frequency consumers (consume once a week or more), and based on gender.

## 1. Demographics of Hanoi and HCMC

The respondents for the prevalence study were selected by choosing a random household and then selecting an interviewee within the chosen household via the 'Kish Grid' method. It uses a pre-assigned table of random numbers to find the person to be interviewed.

Vietnam has a young population, and in both locations, over 60% of the sample was under 30 years of age (60.6% in Hanoi and 63.9% in HCMC). Overall, 50% of the sample was male and 50% was female to reflect Vietnam's gender balance.

The incomes of those surveyed in both HCMC and Hanoi are fairly similar, with both locations having a peak number of inhabitants with a personal income of 5,500,000 – 6,499,999 VND (\$238-281; €214-253; 18%

in HCMC and 17% in Hanoi) and household income of 15,000,000 – 19,999,999 VND (\$649-865; €585-779; 28% in HCMC and 27% in Hanoi).

Marginally less than 50% of the respondents had finished high school. Overall, those in Hanoi were more educated than those in HCMC; Hanoi's 42% versus HCMC's 20% had completed some form of higher education (university, college, post-graduate, or vocational degrees). The occupations of the respondents were divided into four broad categories: white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, students, and unemployed. In Hanoi, there were more white-collar workers than blue-collar workers compared to HCMC.



## 2. Vietnamese dietary habits



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DCM consumers in both HCMC and Hanoi agreed that: a) eating a balanced mixture of fish, meat, eggs, vegetables, and fruits; b) eating three meals spaced regularly throughout the day including breakfast, lunch, and dinner; c) eating home-cooked meals made from free-range or chemical-free farms, and; d) limiting alcohol consumption and exercising frequently are all essential to having a healthy and balanced diet.

Meat is widely understood among the respondents to be necessary for a healthy diet. The respondents believed that they need protein's energy-giving nutrients to keep them active throughout the day, but that they don't have to eat protein in every meal. Overall, 16% of the population in both cities eat meat in every meal and 77% eat meat at least once per day.

Those in HCMC were found to be more sympathetic towards vegetarianism, with 4% of respondents not consuming any meat compared to Hanoi where some of the respondents eat meat less than four times per week. But overall, there are more respondents in HCMC who eat meat with every meal (18%) than in Hanoi (13%). A few respondents noted that cancer, increase in cholesterol, excessive protein that may result in a build-up of fat in the liver, and weight gain as cons of eating meat.

The respondents were asked to rate their perception of how healthy their own diets were on a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 being 'not having a healthy diet at all' and 10 being 'perfectly healthy'. The average rating across groups was 7 out of 10. No respondents thought their

diets were perfect. The factors that hindered them from getting a perfect score are:

### a) Meal times and regularity

Several respondents agreed that it's important to eat meals regularly so that their energy levels remain constant, body weight is regulated, and the body clock is undisrupted. They were also in agreement that eating "convenience foods", typically fatty and made from lower quality ingredients, usually results in unhealthy eating habits.

### b) Low quality food and ingredients

Despite the fact that information about low quality foods, the use of chemicals, and animal diseases have been widely disseminated in Vietnam, many consumers remain unaware of many food products' sources. The respondents believed that the best way to stay healthy is to purchase food ingredients from their trusted vendors and to cook meals at home.

### c) Other health-related factors

Exercise and alcohol consumption are amongst the factors that kept them from giving a 10 score. The respondents deemed exercise important to building muscle, using up excessive energy, lowering cholesterol, managing fat in the liver, burning calories and keeping a healthy physique, but admitted being challenged to stick to an exercise routine. Meanwhile, there were also challenges to limiting the consumption of alcohol, which was generally understood to have no health benefits.

## 3. Overall meat consumption

Pork was the most consumed meat in Vietnam among respondents primarily because it is cheap, can be cooked in a wide variety of methods, and can be bought in chunks. Like pork, chicken can also be bought in chunks but it was deemed not too tasty unless buying a whole chicken. And buying a whole chicken was perceived as too much for a single meal.

In Hanoi, 92% of the respondents eat pork; in HCMC, only 52% of the respondents eat pork whilst 29% stated that fish is their most consumed meat. This substantial difference in the two cities' meat-eating habits also manifested in additional findings on their consumption of rat (18% in HCMC have tried eating it vs. 9% in Hanoi) and buffalo (17% in HCMC have tried eating it vs. 52% in Hanoi) meat-eating habits.

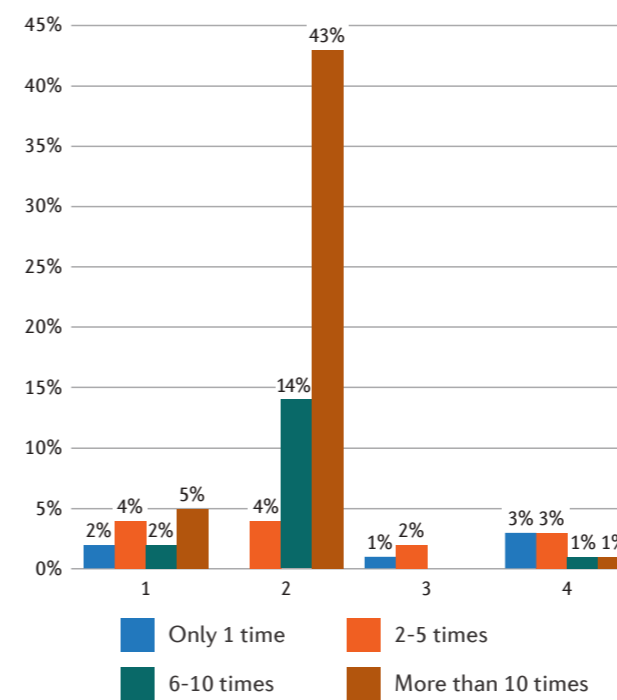


Figure 3: Number of occasions DCM has been eaten by the populations of HCMC and Hanoi

Dog meat consumers in Hanoi were mostly deliberate consumers of it, with 43% of the respondents admitting they've eaten it more than ten times; in HCMC, 5% of the respondents have eaten it more than ten times. In Hanoi, 25% of those who have tried eating cat meat have eaten it on more than five occasions; in HCMC, none had tried eating it more than five times.

Overall, respondents in Hanoi are highly unlikely to refuse to eat any meat; in HCMC, only 10% of the

respondents would not refuse to eat any type of meat. Moreover, in Hanoi, the refusal rate for eating DCM was lower compared to HCMC.

The most compelling reason given by respondents not to eat dog meat was dog ownership. Other reasons cited for not eating dog meat include exposure to activities or programmes that advocated against eating the meat (12%), that dogs are loyal (5%), and that dog meat has an excessive amount of protein (4%).

Some of the reasons cited for refusing cat meat were spiritual in nature, such as the belief that eating cats will bring bad luck, that doing so will cause cats to dislike them, and that they will be poor for three generations. Other reasons cited for not eating dog and cat meat were that they love animals and find them cute. HCMC respondents also cited cat meat's lack of "meatiness," undesirable flavour, unpleasant aroma, and the meat's relative scarcity as well as pity for cats and the belief that cats "are like a baby tiger" as reasons for not eating them.

More than half of the respondents in both cities have never had a pet dog or cat. Interestingly, there are more pet owners in Hanoi, even though it has a higher consumption of both dog and cat meat, which indicates that although pet ownership is a significant deterrent, it has a minimal effect on those who are not pet owners.

Some of the reasons cited for refusing cat meat were spiritual in nature, such as the belief that eating cats will bring bad luck

73% of DCM consumers in HCMC claimed they do not refuse any meat, which is much higher in proportion to the city's population. The most refused meats are rat (18%), snake (10%), and cat (6%). But due to the low sample size and the survey's quantitative nature, no insightful information can be gleaned from the refusal to eat these meats yet still be consumers of dog or cat.

## 4. Profile of a DCM consumer

**Profile summary:** Data from the study shows that the profile of the person most likely to eat dog meat are:

- Male
- Lives in/from northern Vietnam
- Adult aged 25 or over
- Has personal income of 5,500,000 – 6,499,000 VND (\$238-281; €214-253) and household income of 9,500,000 – 10,499,999 VND (\$411 – 456; €370 – 409) per month
- Married with children
- Has at least a high school education
- An Unskilled/manual labourer (closely followed by white-collar workers)

Both dog and cat meat consumers are predominantly male, but cat meat consumers even more so. Cat meat consumers also fell into the lower income group, with a modal household income between 6,500,000 – 7,499,999 VND (\$281-324; €253-292) per month, even though cat meat is more expensive than dog meat.

**Frequency of consumption:** Thirty-eight percent of respondents have eaten dog meat (60% in Hanoi and 14% in HCMC) and 6% have eaten cat meat (8% in Hanoi and 3% in HCMC). Regular consumption (at least once per month, on average) in Hanoi is around 11% and 1.5% in HCMC. There were no regular consumers of cat meat; the most frequent consumption in Hanoi was a few times per year (1%), whilst in HCMC it is around once a year (<1%).

**Age and gender:** Dog meat consumption rates were 28% amongst 18-24-year-olds and 78% amongst 45-49-year-olds in males; in females, rates were 2% amongst 18-24-year-olds and 41% amongst 30-34-year-olds. Dog meat consumption was higher amongst males. For cat meat, the peak consumption age group was at 45-49 years old for both males (22%) and females (10%). At the 35-39-year-old age group, 5% of both males and females have eaten cat meat — the only instance in which females' consumption equaled males'. There were no age groups in which females' consumption of either meat was significantly higher than males'. Amongst all age groups, the more frequent consumers tend to be 30-34- and 40-plus-year-olds.

A clear trend emerged that the older the person is, the more likely it is that he or she has tried the meat. The

lower rates of trial amongst younger respondents would indicate that the proportion of the population that are consuming the meat is becoming lower over time. Dog meat consumers who could remember when they first tried the meat said that the average age was 18 for males and 19 for females (70% of consumers in the sample); the remaining 30% of the consumers in the sample could not remember when they first tried likely because it was a long time ago. Overall, dog meat consumption was lowest amongst those who are 24 years old and below. The average age of first trial of cat meat was 16 for males and 21 for females, although this is likely less accurate due to a small sample size.

**Overall, dog meat consumption was lowest amongst those who are 24 years and below. The average age of first trial of cat meat was 16 for males and 21 for females**

**Income:** The average dog meat consumer tends to be a little wealthier than the average cat meat consumer. The average dog meat consumer has a personal income of 5,500,000 – 6,499,000 VND (\$238-281; €214-253) and household income of 9,500,000 – 10,499,999 VND (\$411-456; €370-409) per month compared to personal and household incomes of 4,500,999 – 5,499,999 VND (\$195-238; €175-214) and 7,500,000 – 8,499,999 VND (\$324-368; €292-331), respectively, of the average cat meat consumer.

Eating these meats is therefore primarily a lower-income class habit, with more than 50% of consumers having a personal income of 6,499,999 VND (\$281; €253) and below. There is still a significant proportion of consumers from higher income brackets who eat DCM, but they do not make up the majority of consumers.

**Education level:** Most DCM consumers have attained at least a high school education. There is little difference between the educational attainment of those who consume cat meat and those who consume dog meat.

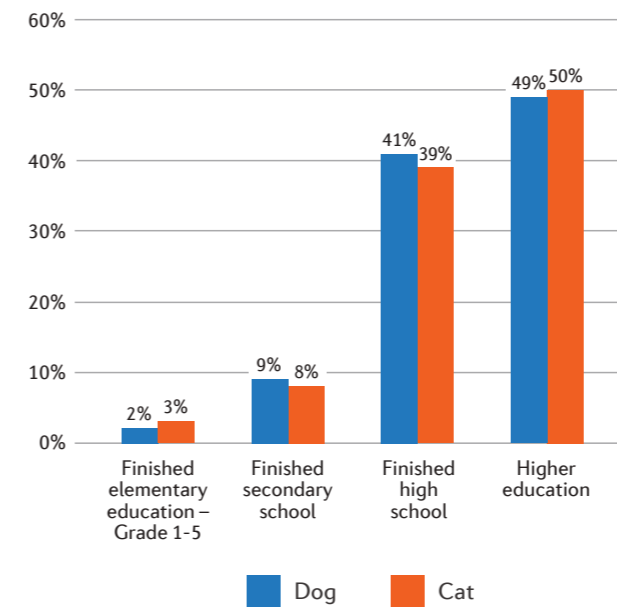


Figure 4: Educational attainment of DCM consumers

**Occupation:** The working profiles of both dog and cat consumers are very similar, but the findings revealed that most of those who consume DCM are unskilled or manual labour workers, with 46% of dog meat consumers and 50% of cat meat consumers, with over one third being office workers.

Students and non-workers are much less of a factor in the consumption of dogs and cats.

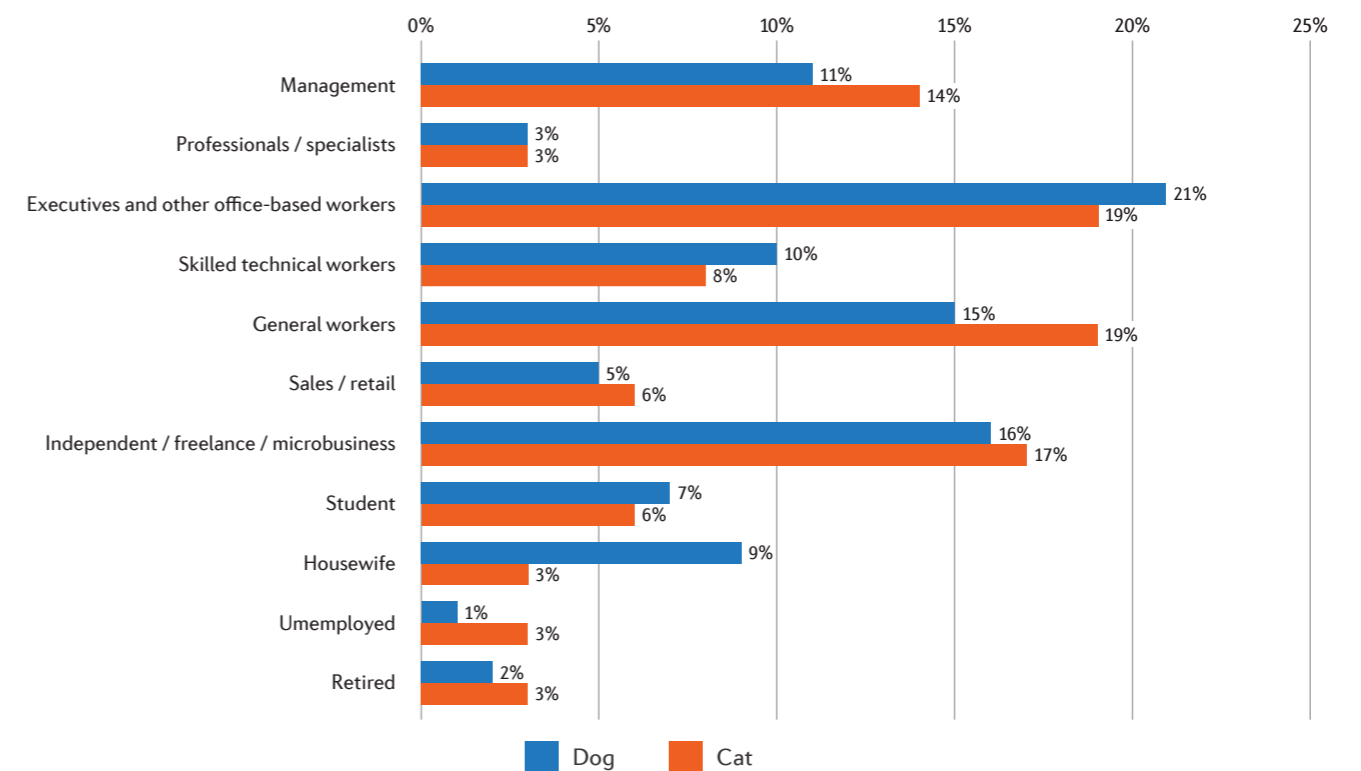


Figure 5: Occupation of DCM consumers

**Effect of religion:** In HCMC, those who eat either dog or cat at least once per month were fairly evenly split across the religions of Buddhism, Christianity, Vietnamese Indigenous/Folk Religion, and those who are non-religious. Regardless of the respondents' faith, it is unclear whether those who are religious in HCMC are simply more likely to believe that they are strongly devoted to the religion than the other religions or if there is a correlation between strong beliefs in Christianity and consumption of these meats. The research team hypothesised that the higher consumption of DCM is caused by rural-associated or traditional behaviours rather than as a result of the religion itself. There was no study of this factor in Hanoi.

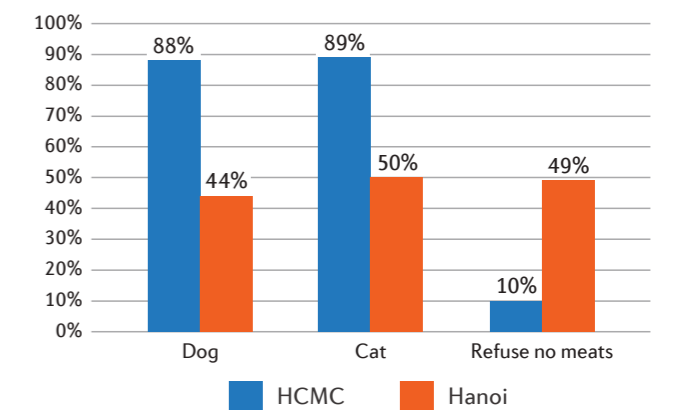


Figure 6: Refusal of meats

**Refusal of meats:** Evidently, those in Hanoi (northern Vietnam) are much more open to eating meat and were much less likely to refuse to eat it. In fact, 49% of the respondents in Hanoi said that there was no meat they would refuse to eat, while in HCMC only 10% would not refuse any meat. Furthermore, 89% of the respondents

in HCMC said that they would refuse cat meat while 88% would refuse dog meat. These were largely the same respondents, with only a few who would refuse only either cat or dog. In Hanoi, the refusal rates for both meats are much lower: 44% said they would refuse dog meat while 50% would refuse cat meat.

## 5. Frequency of eating dog meat

Out of all the regular (once a month, on average) dog or cat consumers in the study, a relatively small percentage ate once a week or more (7% of regular dog consumers and 9% of regular cat consumers). Therefore, in HCMC,

there is a fairly small group of consumers who would be considered high frequency or strongly loyal consumers of the meats. A detailed focus group study was not conducted in Hanoi due to time and cost constraints.

## 6. Timing of eating dog meat

There isn't any particular day when DCM is consumed (for 54% of dog meat and 56% of cat meat consumers). However, those who consume it on a particular day are more likely to eat it on a weekend than weekday (38% on a weekend vs. 5% on a weekday for dog and 32% vs. 9% for cat meat), likely because they frequently consume it with alcohol.

For the few who eat DCM on weekdays, after work hours is the primary time to eat DCM (88% of dog meat and 78% of cat meat consumers eat between 5.00pm-7.59pm), largely due to the workplace-based culture of eating it together. However, a boost in consumption around lunchtime (21% of dog meat and 28% of cat meat consumers) shows that it is not exclusively an evening activity.

The general peak season for eating dog meat is during cold and rainy days because it is perceived as having a warming effect on the body. Most cat meat consumers do not believe that cat meat has a warming effect on the body, which is likely the reason why it is not consumed more during these seasons.

The lunar calendar also has an effect upon the frequency with which consumers choose to eat these meats. FGDs revealed that cat meat is eaten in the north more at the start of the lunar month to usher in good luck for the coming month. Dog meat, on the other hand, is eaten more at the end of the month as it is believed to remove the bad luck obtained throughout the month.



## 7. Locations to eat dog meat

DCM is consumed the most at home, at dog/cat meat restaurants, or at a regular shop. Dog meat is most frequently eaten at a restaurant specially serving dog meat, followed by consumers' homes or the home of a friend or a relative. For cat meat, eating the meat at home is most common. The meats are often bought already cooked from the store.

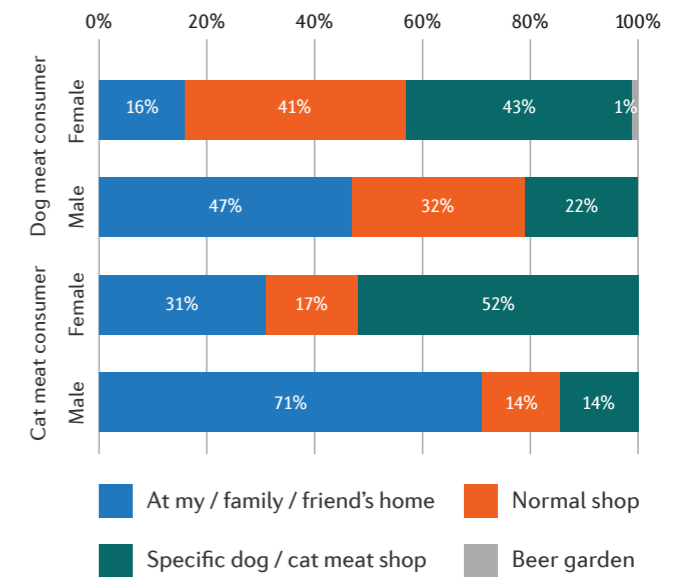


Figure 7: Most frequent places to eat DCM by gender

It was found that women most frequently eat DCM whilst at home (47% for dog and 71% for cat); whereas men eat the meats in a greater variety of places. This is in part due to who the meat is consumed with and social stigma surrounding the consumption of the meat.

Breaking down the most frequent places to eat these meats by gender, another difference becomes clear.

## 8. Preparation of dog meat

Grilling is the most popular way to cook DCM, followed by stewing, steaming, and boiling. As DCM dishes are most often shared in a group, there is no particular dish that is ordered and consumed. That means someone could eat dog or cat meat-based dishes prepared

through different methods in a single meal. Many in Vietnam consider dog meat to be quite similar in taste to pork. This explains the popularity of fake dog meat, or dog meat mixed with pork meat, which is cheaper and therefore profitable for sellers.

## 9. Serving of dog meat

Approximately a third of regular dog meat consumers in HCMC eat dog meat as a main meal, compared to approximately 15% of regular cat meat consumers who eat cat meat as a main meal.

Eating the meats as a snack (i.e., not as the main meal and without alcohol) was quite rare with only 6% of regular dog meat consumers and 7% of cat meat consumers consuming the meats this way.

In both cases, the primary reason and occasion to eat the meat is as food paired with alcohol (60% of regular dog meat consumers and 79% of cat meat consumers).

Dog meat dishes cost around 200,000 – 300,000 VND (\$9-13; €8-12), whilst cat meat is markedly more expensive.



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Males eat both dog and cat meat primarily as food paired with alcohol, with more than 78% of regular male consumers saying it is the main occasion to eat dog and 86% to eat cat. Meanwhile, 60% of women eat dog meat as their main meal whenever they find occasion to eat it. This does not mean that they do not consume it with alcohol, but that their primary focus is on the meal rather than the alcohol. It is clear from these results that the consumption of alcohol is intrinsically linked to the consumption of dog meat.

## 10. Triggers to start eating DCM

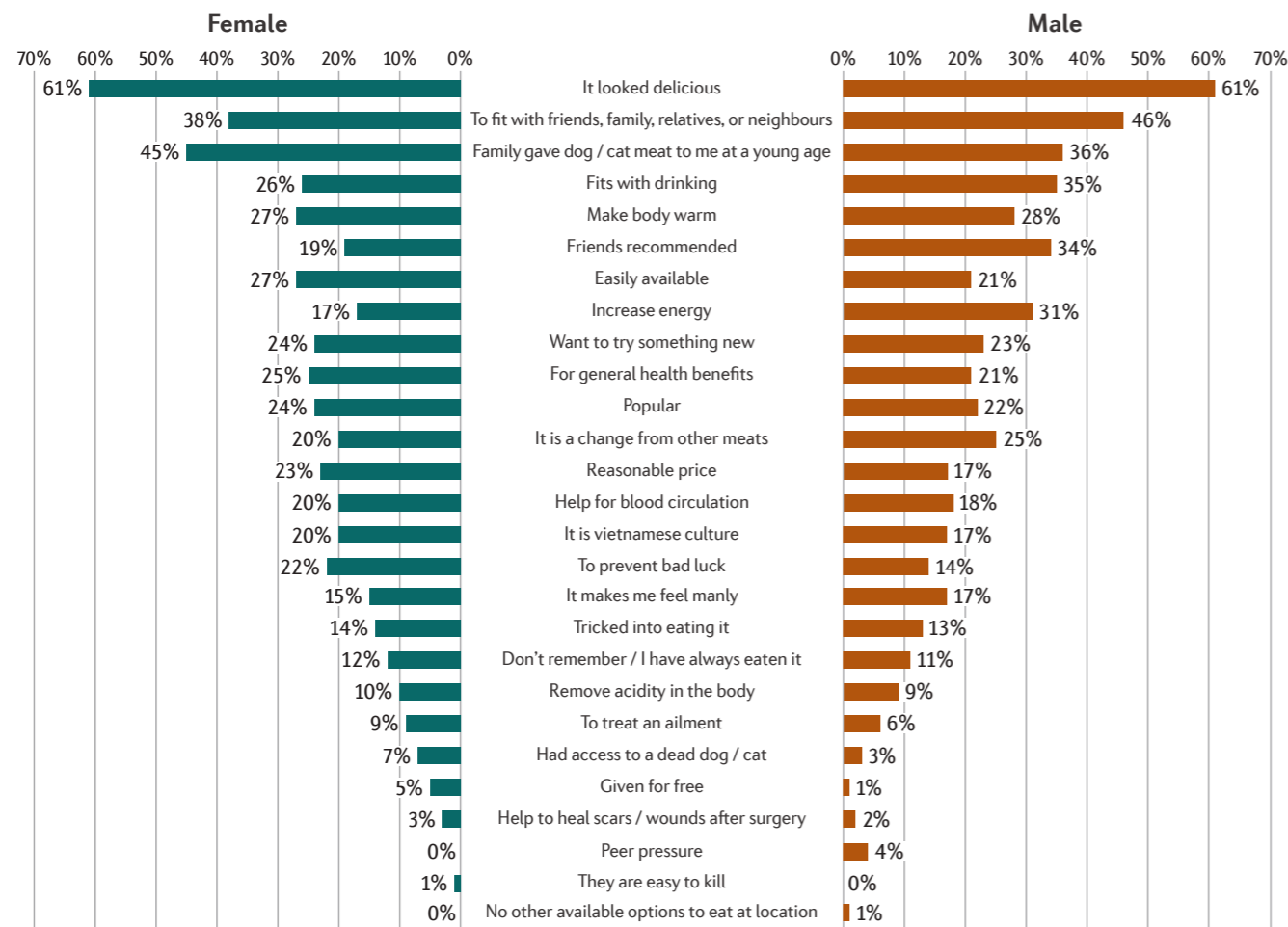


Figure 8: How dog meat consumption begins

The mean age of the initial consumption of dog meat was 18 for men and 19 for women. It is a habit that they pick up as they grow older, most commonly upon a friend or a family member introducing the habit to them. It's interesting to note, however, that many of the respondents who are parents have already introduced their children to the habit of eating the meats, often by tricking or deceiving them.

In general, FGD respondents would be okay with their children eating anything that they themselves eat, i.e., if they eat dog meat, they were okay to have their kids consume dog meat, which also applies to the cat meat consumers. Those who did not eat cat meat would not allow their children to eat it.

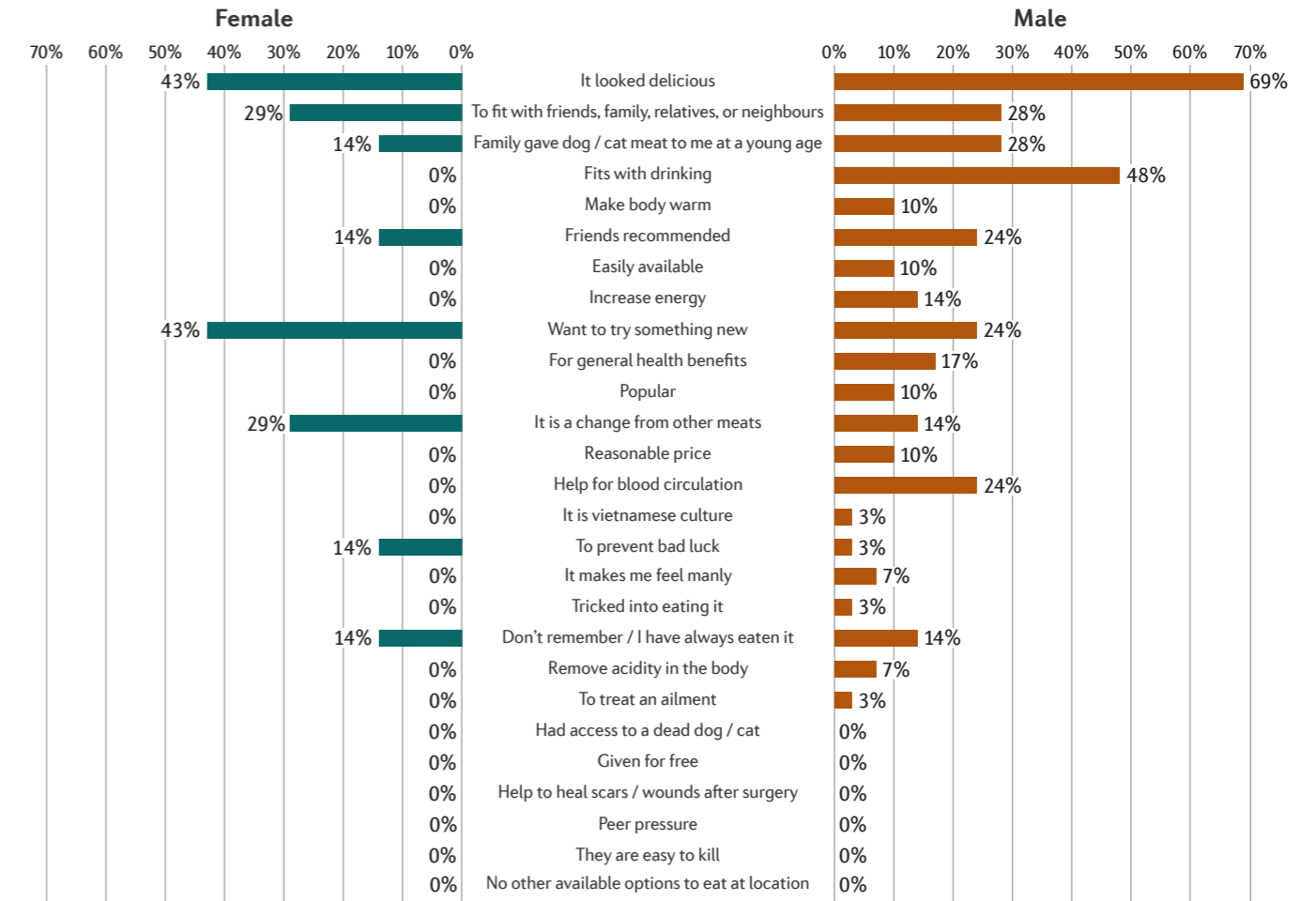


Figure 9: How cat meat consumption begins

Many of those respondents who are parents, have already introduced their children to the meats, often by tricking or deceiving them. There is some concern regarding children being too young to eat the meats as the meats are linked to alcohol consumption, whilst some believe in the effects of the meat (warming, medicinal, and otherwise), which are deemed inappropriate for children.

Reasons for starting consumption of dog meat are fairly similar between males and females. However, in males, a disparity was seen in the effects of peer pressure and wanting to fit in with friends; whilst for women, it was more likely that their family will feed it to them at a young age rather than be pressured to start eating it themselves.

The number of cat meat consumers in this study was much lower than that of the dog meat consumers. As such, the accuracy of the results above, especially for the women (of whom there were only seven respondents), should be acknowledged with this in mind. Given that, the reasons for first trying cat meat were relatively similar to the reasons for first trying dog meat. 'To make the body feel warm' as a reason was particularly low for cat meat compared to dog meat, as was the reason that it was easily available.



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# 11. Occasions for eating DCM

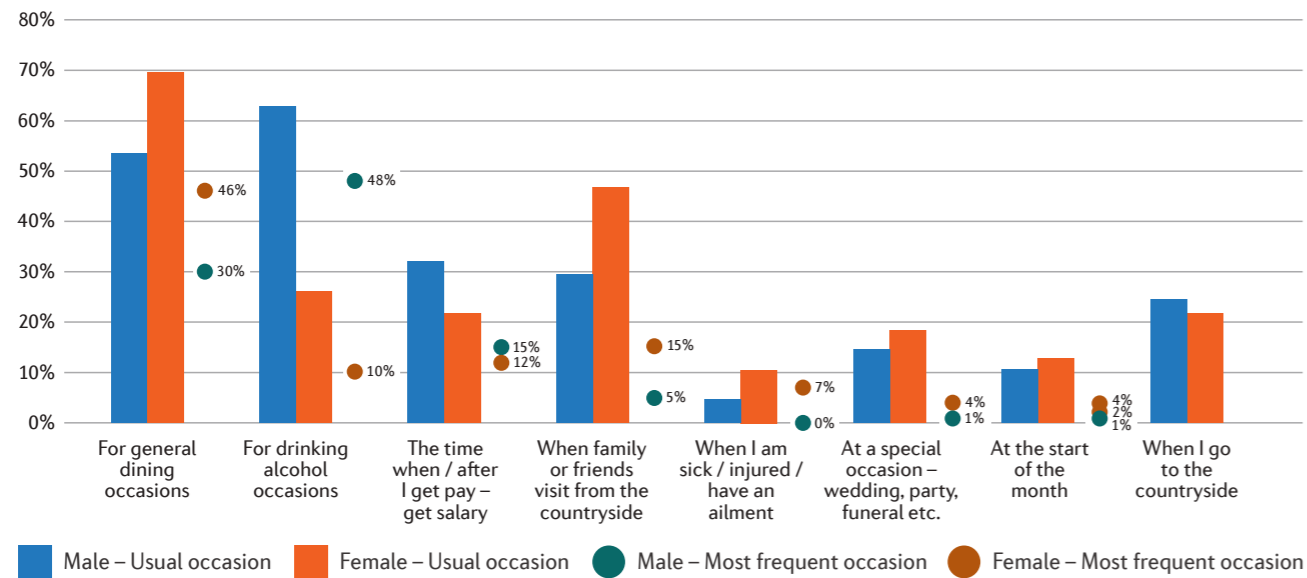


Figure 10: Occasions for eating dog meat consumption

For many regular dog meat consumers in Vietnam, the meat is not considered special and is used primarily to vary meats being served.

Eating dog meat ‘for general dining occasions’ is the most frequent occasion to eat the meat (35% of the respondents), closely followed by consuming the meat ‘for alcohol drinking occasions’ (34% of the respondents). For women, eating dog meat as a full meal is the ‘most often occasion’ (46%). Women’s second most frequent occasion to eat dog meat is when family or friends come to visit from the countryside (15%). For men, the main occasion is when drinking alcohol (48% of the respondents), followed by ‘for general dining occasions’ (30%).

dog meat-purchasing habits. Dog meat is eaten more often on rainy and cold days because it supposedly warms the body.



© FOUR PAWS

**Dog meat is eaten more often on rainy and cold days because it supposedly warms the body**

It is most frequently consumed during weekends especially since the occasion for eating dog meat is intrinsically linked to drinking alcohol and at party-like events. However, the time of year can also affect people’s

A lot of consumption is still driven indirectly by rural-associated demand — consumption often happens with visiting friends and family coming to the city (47% of female and 30% of male respondents) or when the respondents visit the countryside (24% of males and 22% of females). This is a larger factor for women as they eat dog meat with relatives more than anyone else (80% with family, relatives, or siblings vs. 74% with friends and less than 30% with either colleagues or neighbours), whereas men eat dog meat more often with friends (90%) and colleagues (55%) than with family, relatives, or siblings (52%). It should be noted that in answering the question as to who participants would eat dog meat with that more than one answer could be selected.

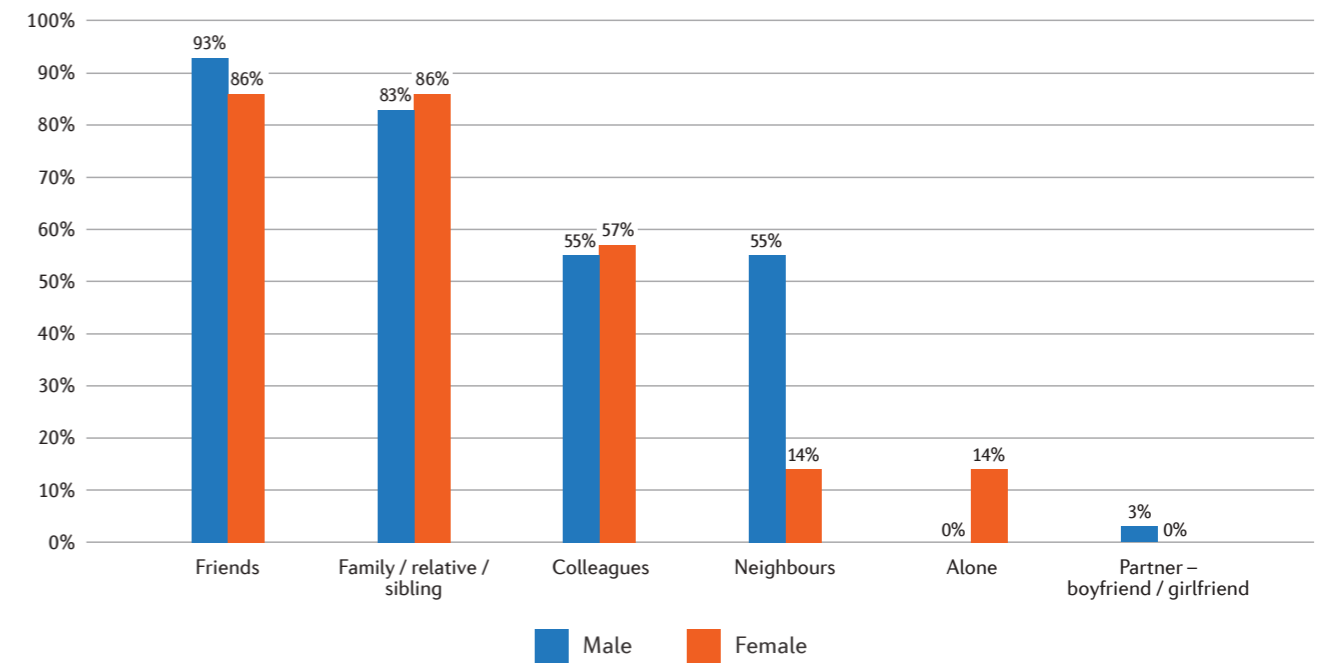
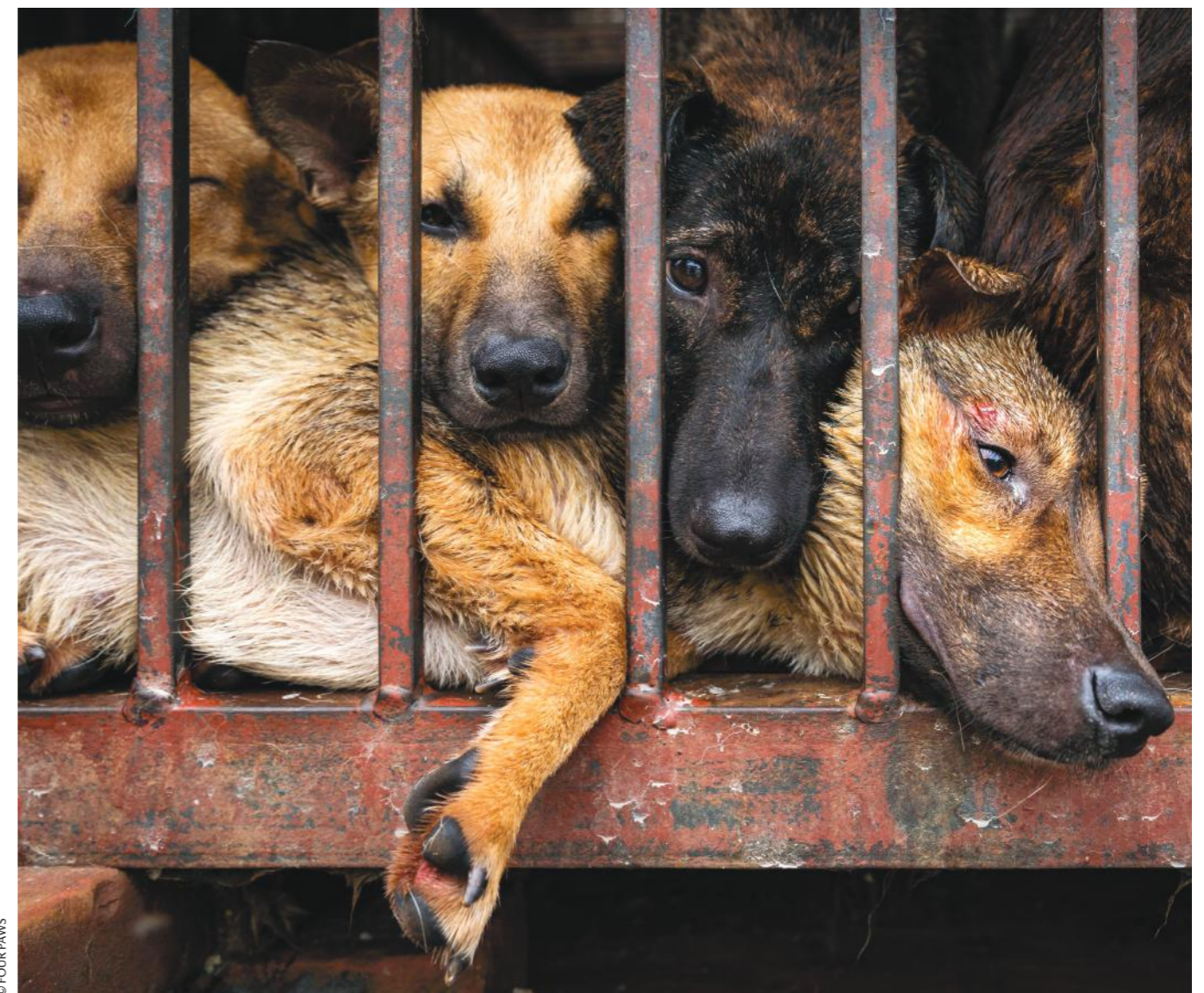


Figure 11: Companions when eating cat meat



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## 12. Reasons for continuing to eat DCM

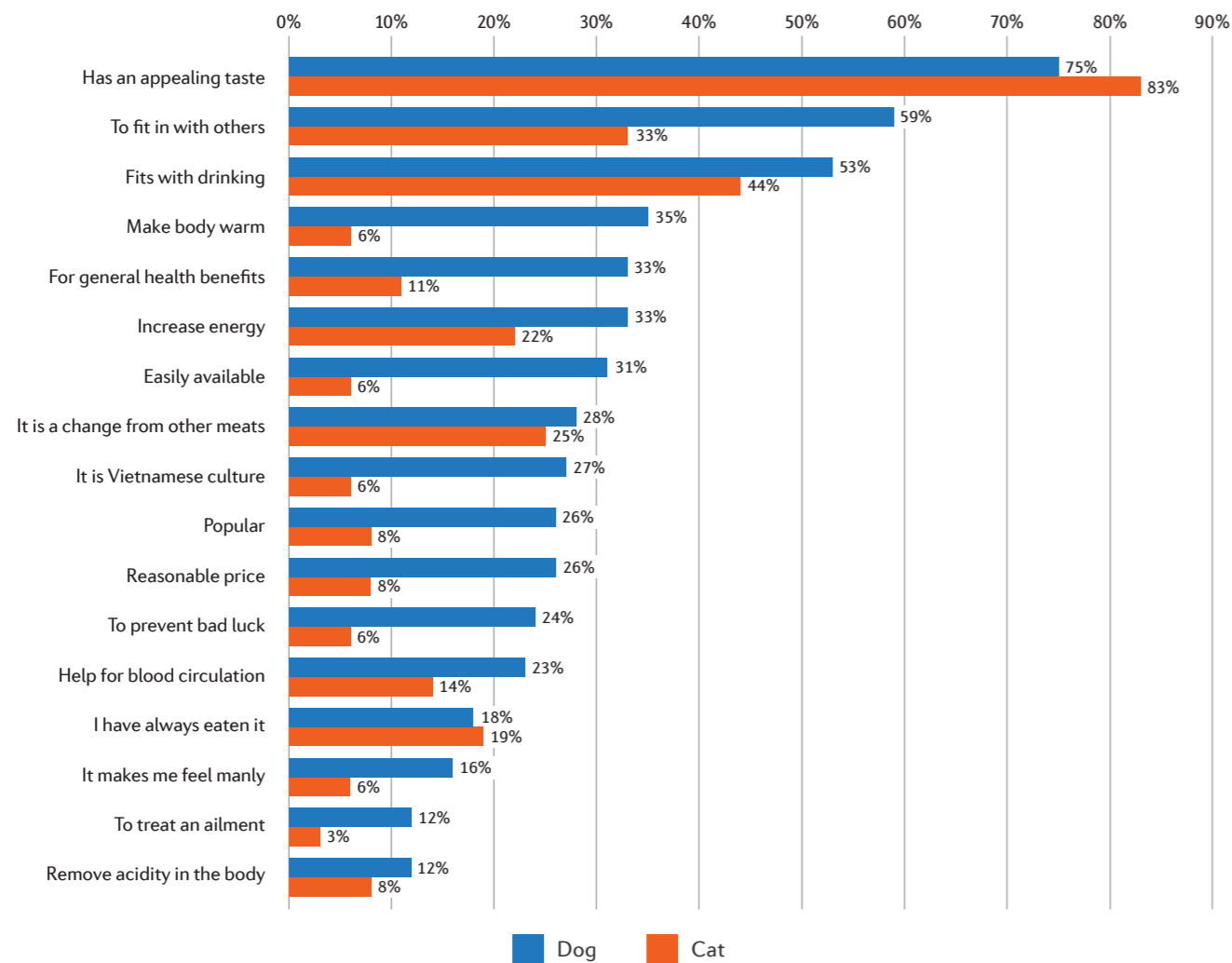


Figure 12: Reasons for continued eating of DCM

The consumers eat dog meat simply because it is perceived to have an appealing taste (75%), ‘to fit in with others’ (59%), and because ‘it fits well when drinking alcohol’ (53%). The perceived positive effects of the meat were to ‘make the body warm’ (35%), ‘for general health benefits’ (35%), ‘to increase energy’ (33%), ‘to prevent bad luck’ (24%), ‘to help blood circulation’ (23%), and ‘to treat an ailment’ or ‘to remove acidity in the body’ (12% each).



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## 13. Evaluation of statements

In order to change behaviour, efforts will have to be made to shift perceptions of the meat from positive to negative. Using feedback from the U&A survey, a list of concepts or ‘trigger statements’ were developed to explore the reasons for eating dog meat - which might help shape efforts to shift perceptions towards the negative.

The trigger statements and the focus groups’ responses were as follows:

### a) Eating dog and cat meat warms the body

There was a mixed understanding of DCM’s warming effect on the body. Eighty-nine percent of respondents clearly believed that dog meat makes their body warm. Meanwhilst, respondents did not perceive that cat meat had the ability to either warm or cool the body.

### b) Dog meat is nutritious

All dog meat consumers within the FGD agreed that dog meat is nutritious and makes them healthier. Many believed that DCM are superior to more traditional meats when it comes to nutrition.

### c) Dog meat gives energy

The statement “*eating dog meat gives me energy*” ranked third most agreed amongst all trigger statements. Of those surveyed, 93% of dog meat consumers and 72% of cat meat consumers agreed that the meat provides consumers with energy.

There is also a claim that dog and cat meat can boost a person’s sexual performance, 45% of respondents claimed that dog meat gives them additional sexual prowess; whilst 3% of those who consume cat meat said the same.

### d) Dog meat has medicinal purposes

The concept of possible medicinal benefits of dog meat received a mixed response. Most consider medicinal benefits to be limited to warming the body or increasing energy. Few believe that the meat has healing powers.

### e) Dog meat makes me feel like a man/makes me feel strong

There was a significant gap between the percentage of respondents regarding the statement “*eating dog meat makes me feel like a man/makes me feel strong*” — 46% agreed whilst 24% disagreed. There was a clear gender divide on this. Women largely disagreed with the statement and could not relate to it, whereas men more readily agreed.

### f) Dog meat is part of Vietnamese culture

Only 20% agreed that dog meat consumption is part of Vietnamese culture. It was notable that the majority of respondents (39%) disagreed with the final statement. Some conceded that the culture might change with future generations due to access to more food choices.

## 14. Perceived benefits and deep dive into statements about DCM

Some respondents noted additional benefits often in cases where said benefits were endorsed by their doctors, e.g., a woman in Hanoi recounted her difficulty getting pregnant for which her doctor recommended to include dog meat in her diet.

Cat meat had less perceived benefits; outside of taste and nutrition, only luck was accounted for as a benefit of eating the meat. Aside from the meat, a byproduct of cat slaughter was its bones. The bones of black cats are sometimes used to make a plaster that supposedly helps heal certain ailments.

Most interviewees stated that the main reason they did so was simply because they find the taste of DCM appealing. Consumers are therefore inclined to eat it on occasion as an alternative to other meats.

## 15. Concerns about DCM

Across all consumer groups, consuming DCM was largely perceived as positive. FGD respondents had few concerns about eating dog meat as they had been doing so for a long time and had never perceived any ill consequence because of it. These respondents felt as though the meat has become more normalised and can be consumed by many types of people.

There were only a few respondents who had concerns about consuming either dog or cat meat — only 4% of dog meat consumers and 6% of cat meat consumers.

### a) Scientists have found new diseases embedded in dog meat

Concerns regarding eating dog and cat meat only revolved around its potential to cause a disease. Fifty-seven percent of the participants believed that they could not contract a disease from eating dog meat, whilst 36% of the participants believed the same if they were to eat cat meat.

## 16. Barriers to consumption

A significant proportion of consumers had not ever considered stopping to eat DCM as they don't consider their consumption a cause of concern. The other most common reasons for not stopping to consume dog meat include: that it is not illegal to consume it; it does not make them ill; it does not hurt their social environment, and; they believe that they don't consume it too often anyway.

Although there is potential to reduce consumption, breaking the habit completely poses a challenge. To evaluate the likelihood of respondents quitting the consumption of dog meat, the researchers introduced eight different concepts. The concepts, in order of effectiveness, were:

### a) Scientists have found new diseases in dog meat

This was the concept which had the most impact on consumers. Respondents are concerned about the prevalence of diseases in dogs. Some noted that if other animals such as pigs and birds can pass the flu to people, then dogs can pass diseases too. Nonetheless, many participants believed that this “new” and other diseases could not be contracted by eating certain foods, particularly if the meat was cooked well.

### b) Dog meat consumption is a sin

Although there were those who thought that eating dog meat was a sin, a majority of those surveyed (22% agreed vs. 57% disagreed) believed that there was nothing inherently wrong with eating it. Although dog meat consumption may not be considered a sin, it may be perceived by some as a cause of bad luck. The participants in the discussion groups consistently expressed this sentiment with regard to when and when not to eat dog meat in order to retain their good luck.

### c) Women eating dog meat

The pressure to refrain from eating dog meat is certainly stronger for the female respondents than males. Although there is a misconception amongst the Vietnamese that only men eat dog meat, our study found that a not-insignificant proportion of women also consume.

### b) Eating dog meat is against Vietnam law

The second most influential concept would be if eating dog meat was made illegal. Many respondents would have second thoughts about consuming as they want to be law abiding citizens.

However, respondents claimed that if a ban were to be enforced, the Vietnamese government's weak legal framework would undermine it.

### c) Dogs are loyal and trustworthy pets and should not be eaten

This was a consideration for a few respondents to stop eating dog meat, particularly if it were their personal pet. They argued that if a dog was considered a family member, then it should not be eaten but that it was permissible to eat it if it was not.

Some respondents see no difference between dogs and any other animals. They see no concerns in eating any animal as long as it was prepared well. There is clearly a cognitive dissonance between owning a pet dog and eating one. It is worth noting that pet ownership was not highly common amongst respondents.

### d) Your family and friends have stopped eating dog meat

This impact of this concept was mixed. It was, however, particularly effective amongst the less frequent consumers. There are those who said that if others stopped going to dog meat restaurants, they would continue to eat it alone or else bring it home to eat as long as it is still easily available. During the group discussions, individuals tend to become defensive if they feel that their choice to consume dog meat isn't being respected. It also appeared that if the respondents feel that they're being forced to take a particular stance, they'll only become defensive and difficult to convince to take alternatives.

### e) Society considers eating dog meat to be a sin

Several respondents opined that eating dog meat was not sinful. However, stealing or killing a dog was. As end consumers, their conscience is clear they are not involved in killing or stealing. Only a few noted that by continuing to eat the meat, they are driving demand for more to be killed.

### f) It has been proven that dog meat has no healing qualities

As most respondents consume the meat primarily due to taste preferences, they were relatively unmoved by this concept. Those who believed in its supposed healing qualities considered it a secondary benefit to its taste and its being a source of sustenance.

### g) International people look down upon those who consume dog meat

The opinions of other countries have very little significance for the consumers. They don't feel as though they should have to listen to what other countries do as they have different cultures and backgrounds.

### h) Your religion bans you from eating dog meat

This concept generally had little bearing on the consumers as it pertained to any of the respondents' religions. They feel as though, were it to be changed now, it would not be correct as they felt their religion had not said anything against eating dog meat before, and hence could be ignored.

The opinions of other countries have very little significance for the consumers. They don't feel as though they should have to listen to what other countries do as they have different cultures and backgrounds

## 17. Attitudes towards animals

This discussion took place at the end of each session to avoid introducing bias.

Despite being aware of the usual methods of killing the animals and disapproving of them, the respondents weren't compelled to reconsider eating the meat. There was greater concern over the method of slaughtering the dog or cat or whether it was stolen, and not that it was killed. Consumers apparently do not enjoy the process of killing animals for meat nor do they think that stealing was ethical. They would favour eliminating the cruel methods of killing animals but as they are unaware of where the dogs come from, they see no feasible method to stop it.



## 18. Conclusion

This study shows that it will be difficult to change the behaviours of high-frequency dog meat consumers. As the consumers primarily eat out of habit, taste preference, and social conditioning, there is not one particular method with which to combat their eating preferences.

Changes in the law, proving that the meat is unhealthy and changing the practices of those around them, all present opportunities as well as challenges.

Many who've become regular consumers noted that at one point they were hesitant to try the meat, but after eating it, their opinion of the meat changed. Focusing efforts on promoting methods to stop potential consumers from trying the meat in the first place could be one way to reach impact.

Furthermore, there are those who merely eat it out of convenience and habit, but are not particularly indignant about consuming the meat. And there are those who would no longer eat the meat if their friends did not invite them to social gatherings where it is eaten.

If younger generations view it as an old person's habit or something that is not "cool" for younger people to do, they will stop taking up the habit and others will have no one to join with. The key feature of dog meat is that it is a social food, one that — except for amongst the most frequent consumers — must be eaten in a group with others. This could also be an avenue to reduce consumption.



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## About FOUR PAWS

FOUR PAWS is the global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. Founded in 1988 in Vienna by Heli Dugler, the organisation advocates for a world where humans treat animals with respect, empathy and understanding. FOUR PAWS' sustainable campaigns and projects focus on companion animals including stray dogs and cats, farm animals and wild animals – such as bears, big cats,

orangutans and elephants – kept in inappropriate conditions as well as in disaster and conflict zones. With offices in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Kosovo, the Netherlands, Switzerland, South Africa, Thailand, Ukraine, Hungary, the UK, the USA and Vietnam as well as sanctuaries for rescued animals in twelve countries, FOUR PAWS provides rapid help and long-term solutions.

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