

New Study Finds Affordability and Distance Keep Many Canadian Pets From the Veterinarian

National survey details the state of pet care in Canada

BURLINGTON, ON — June 11, 2025 — Half (50%) of Canadian pet parents have either skipped or declined necessary veterinary care for their pets, according to the new [*PetSmart Charities of Canada-Gallup State of Pet Care Study: Pet Parents' Assessment of Canadian Veterinary Care*](#). The majority of those who skipped or declined care cite financial reasons as the primary barrier, but distance to veterinary clinics also plays a critical role — the farther pet parents must travel, the more likely they are to forgo care.

The research is a first-of-its-kind look at how Canadian pet parents experience the veterinary care system and how the cost of care is impacting pets and people. The study is part of a multi-phase research effort, which will incorporate the perspectives of veterinarians early next year. Key findings from the study include:

Financial Factors Are the Greatest Obstacles to Care

Among Canadian pet parents who say they have declined care or forgone veterinary visits, 67% say they did so either because it was not affordable, they did not believe the services were worth the cost or a combination of both. Younger pet parents were the most likely group to skip or decline care (59%), and the rate of forgoing care does not differ significantly by income level. In fact, financial considerations affect pet parents across the income spectrum with 27% of those earning more than \$90,000 saying they have declined care because they could not afford it.

Even when care was deemed necessary, fewer than one in three (28%) pet parents who declined care due to cost were offered a more affordable option. Additionally, only 21% of pet parents say their veterinarian has offered them a payment plan, although 66% say an interest-free plan could double what they are able to spend on life-saving care.

"This study serves as the voice of the Canadian pet parent, sounding an alarm," said Aimee Gilbreath, president of PetSmart Charities of Canada. "We were surprised to discover veterinary care is slipping out of reach for people across a broad spectrum of income levels and the consequences of skipping care can be dire. We encourage all pet-serving businesses, nonprofits, veterinary practices and pet parents to join the conversation and advance solutions — because no single group can tackle this problem alone."

Distance Is a Key Barrier to Care

Geography plays a key role in whether pet parents forgo care for their pets. Just under half (46%) of those who travel under 10 kilometres to the veterinarian report skipping or declining care, but that proportion rises to 54% for those who travel more than 10 kilometres. In rural areas, where veterinary shortages are more common, just 32% of pet parents travel less than 10 kilometres to reach a veterinarian — compared to 61% of urban pet parents.

Pet Parents Are Open to Non-Traditional Care

While most pet parents (79%) say they consult a veterinarian when their pet is sick, nearly one in five pet parents (18%) report relying exclusively on non-veterinary sources such as the internet, friends or pet professionals, such as trainers and groomers, when their pet is sick. This reliance increases with travel distance as 28% of those travelling more than 50 kilometres to a veterinarian turn to alternative sources rather than a veterinary provider.

While few in Canada say they have used services such as telemedicine or home veterinary visits, about four in 10 say they would if these options were available. This openness suggests a growing opportunity to expand non-traditional models of care, particularly in rural or underserved regions where access is limited, or regulations prevent it altogether.

“These data suggest that services like community clinics and telemedicine — where permitted and available — could help make care more accessible, and many pet parents would use them if they could,” said Julie Ray, Gallup’s managing editor for world news. “But awareness and regulation of these services still vary across regions, pointing to opportunities for expanded infrastructure and support.”

For more information on how PetSmart Charities of Canada is working to expand access to veterinary care nationwide or to help support initiatives for pets and their families, visit PetSmartCharities.ca.

Methodology

Results for the PetSmart Charities of Canada-Gallup State of Pet Care study are based on a combined web- and phone-based survey conducted with 2,033 dog and cat owners from the 10 provinces in Canada. Gallup surveyed 1,804 Canadian adults who indicated they currently owned at least one dog or cat via a web-based survey Nov. 28-Dec. 31, 2024. Gallup also surveyed an additional 229 dog and cat owners via a telephone survey Dec. 5-23, 2024, to reach pet owners who may not have access to the internet. For results based on the total sample of 2,033 Canadian dog and cat owners, the margin of sampling error is ± 2.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are larger.

About PetSmart Charities of Canada

[PetSmart Charities of Canada](https://PetSmartCharities.ca) is committed to making the world a better place for pets and all who love them. Through its in-store adoption program in all PetSmart stores across the country, PetSmart Charities of Canada [has helped over 400,000 pets find loving homes](#). PetSmart Charities of Canada also provides grant funding to support organizations that advocate and care for the well-being of all pets and their families. Our grants and efforts connect pets with loving homes through adoption, improve access to affordable veterinary care and support families in times of crisis with access to food, shelter, and emergency relief. Each year, thousands of generous supporters help pets in need by donating to PetSmart Charities of Canada directly at PetSmartCharities.ca, while shopping at PetSmart.ca, and by using the PIN pads at checkout registers inside PetSmart stores. In turn, PetSmart Charities of Canada efficiently uses more than 90 cents of every dollar donated to fulfill its role as the leading funder of animal welfare in Canada, granting more than \$40 million since its inception in 1999. PetSmart Charities of Canada is a registered Canadian charity. To learn more, visit www.PetSmartCharities.ca.

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