

Adversity, social inequalities, and multispecies families

Lessons learned from COVID-19

Jennifer W. Applebaum, MS





For marginalized and disadvantaged pet owners...

- Pets can compete with other priorities
- Extra vulnerability in the face of adversities
- Benefits of pets in tension with risks
- Prioritizing pet welfare can lead to seemingly-irrational behavior
- Adversity can both strengthen AND threaten the human-animal bond

A photograph of a dog sitting on a mossy log in a forest. The dog is light-colored and is looking towards the camera. The forest is dense with tall trees, and sunlight is filtering through the canopy, creating a soft, dappled light effect. The overall mood is peaceful and natural.

Social inequalities are the problem

SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

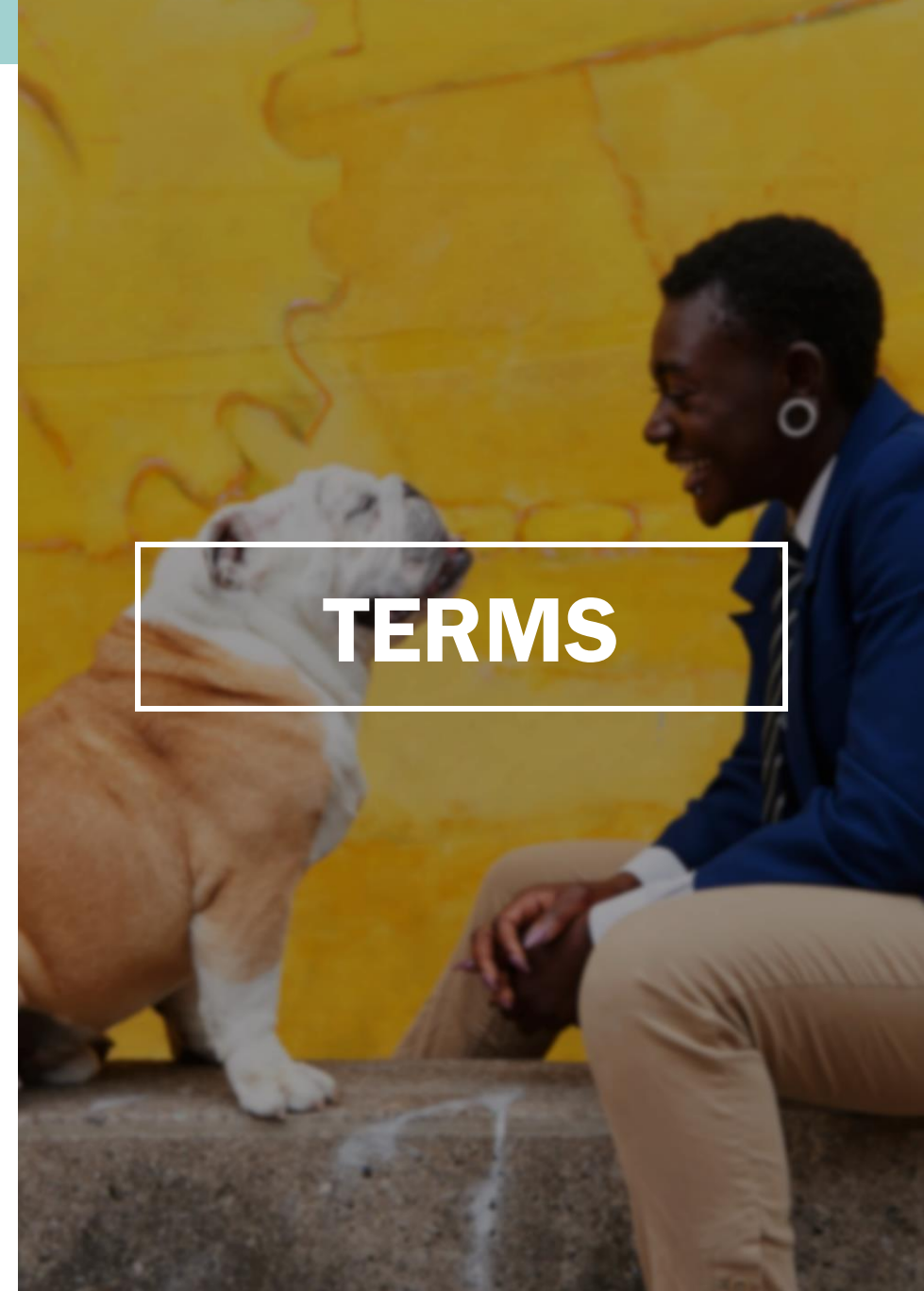
- Systemic privileging or disadvantaging of groups or individuals

MULTISPECIES FAMILIES

- Any relationship between human(s) and pet(s)

PET / COMPANION ANIMAL

- Nonhuman animal that generally lives alongside a human

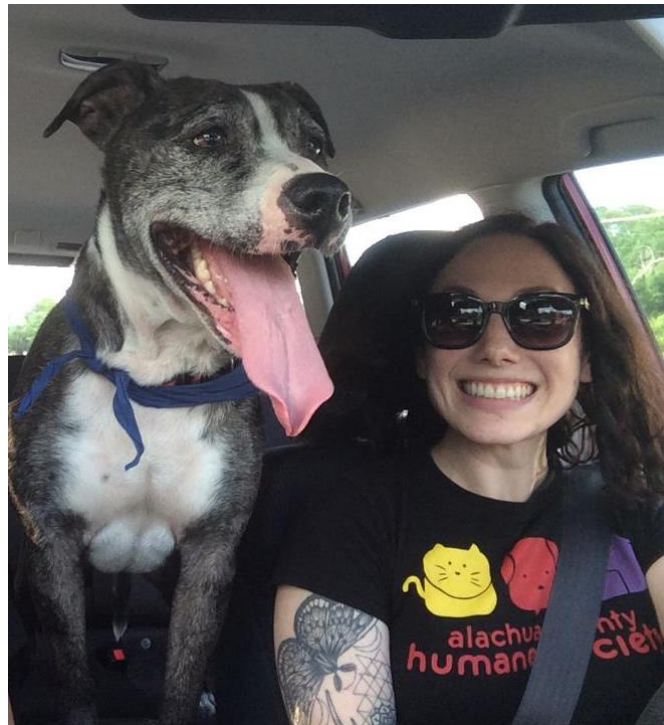


TERMS



SOCIOLOGY: the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior.

- American Sociological Association

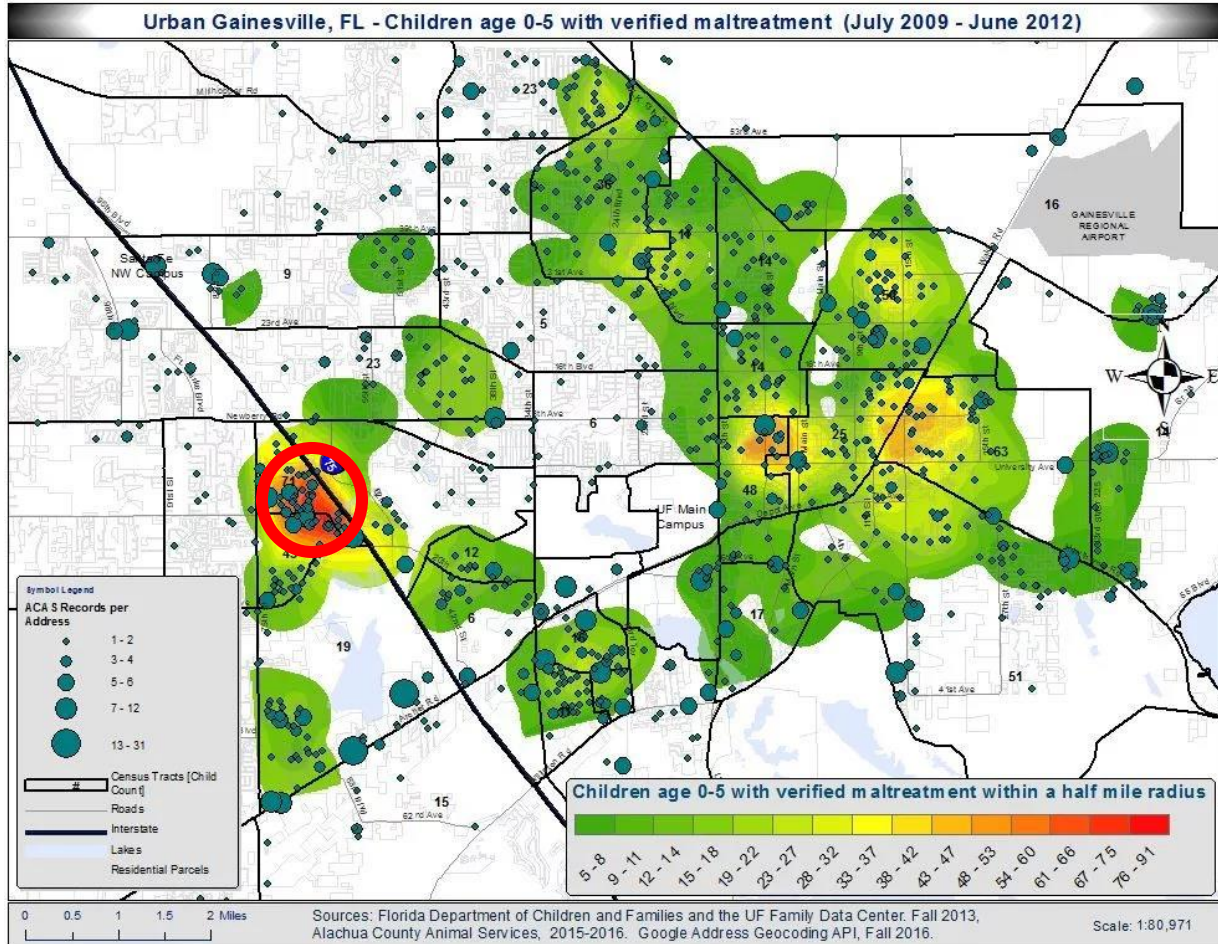


Article

Factors that Influence Intake to One Municipal Animal Control Facility in Florida: A Qualitative Study

Terry Spencer ^{1,*}, Linda Behar-Horenstein ², Joe Aufmuth ³, Nancy Hardt ¹, Jennifer W. Applebaum ⁴, Amber Emanuel ⁵ and Natalie Isaza ⁶

Animals 2017, 7, 48; doi:10.3390/ani7070048



St. Francis pet clinic now offers care at the SWAG Center



▲ HIDE CAPTION

Wilson Badillo, right, holds his dog Rocky, a small chihuahua, as he is weighed by Priscilla Caplan, with St. Francis Pet Care, during the animal clinic sponsored by St. Francis Pet Care at the SWAG Resource Center in Gainesville Saturday. [Brad McClenny/Staff photographer]

<http://www.gainesville.com/news/20170610/st-francis-pet-clinic-now-offers-care-at-swag-center>

WHO OWNS PETS?

60% of overall U.S. population

- Black: 29%
- White: 70%
- Latinx: 60%

Source: U.S. General Social Survey, 2018

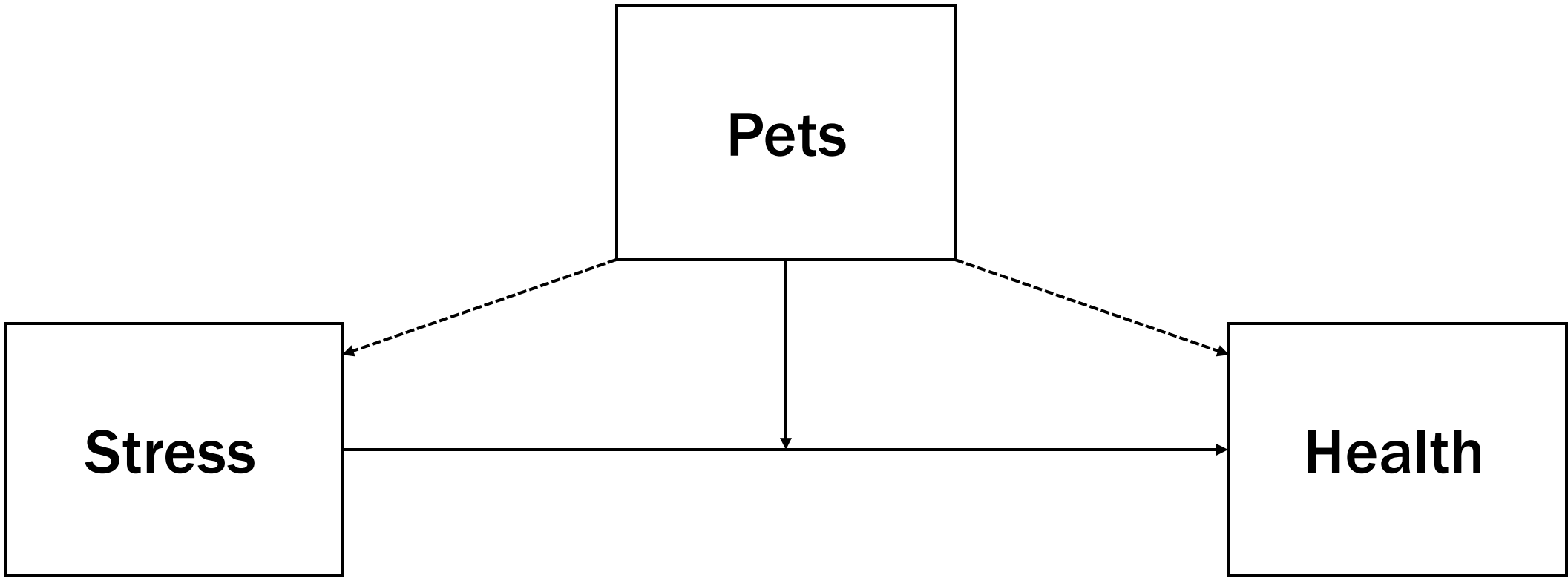
“... objects humans own and consume to actors humans consume *with and around*...”

– Stoltz, Van Ness, & Bjerre, 2020

“... subjective beings with interests and reciprocal roles...”

– Irvine & Cilia, 2017

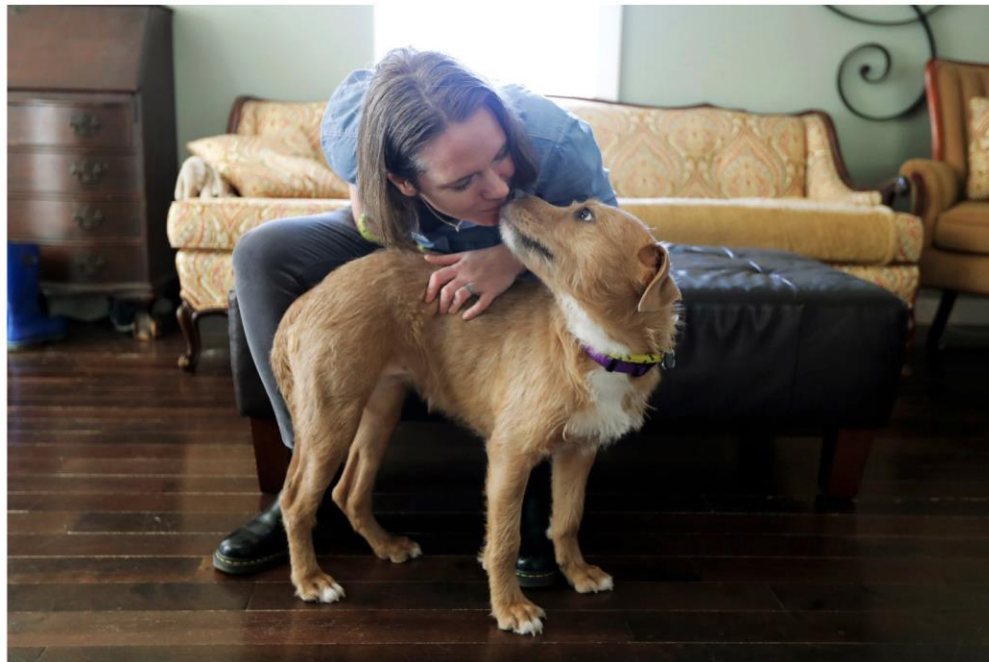




New York Times, March 19, 2020

Foster Pets Are Finding Homes With Quarantined Americans

Shelters across the United States are reporting a rise in foster applications as people seek out a friend to ride out the coronavirus crisis with.

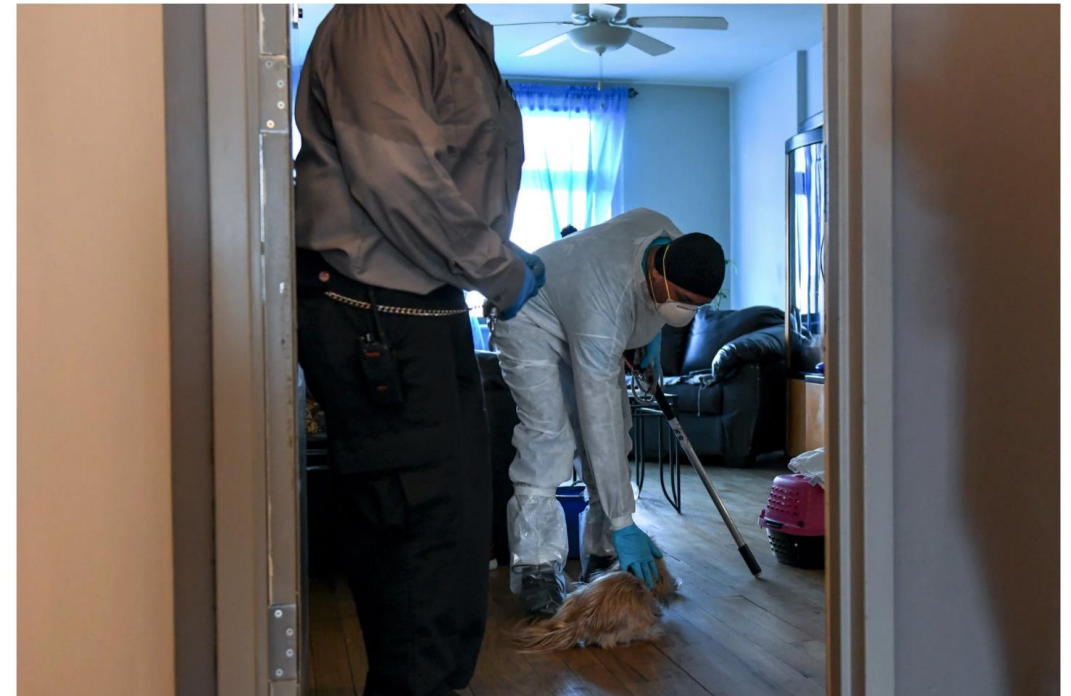


A woman participating in a Covid-19 vaccine trial shared a kiss with her adopted foster dog on Monday in Seattle. Ted S. Warren/Associated Press

New York Times, June 23, 2020

The Pets Left Behind by Covid-19

The pandemic's human toll in New York has been well documented. But what about the dogs and cats of those who become seriously ill?



Feraz Mohammed, right, looks after a dog whose owner was hospitalized with coronavirus symptoms. Desiree Rios for The New York Times

- No universal healthcare in the U.S.
- 2018: ~30 million without health insurance
- 2020: >50% of adults in medical debt, no savings

- April 2020: 14.7% unemployment rate
- March 2021: 10.7 million Americans behind on rent
- Difficulty paying hh expenses
- Food insecurity

Financial pain points during coronavirus outbreak differ widely by race, ethnicity and income

% saying they have ____ since the coronavirus outbreak started in February

	Used money from savings/retirement to pay bills	Had trouble paying bills	Gotten food from a food bank/organization	Had problems paying rent/mortgage
All adults	33	25	17	16
White	29	18	11	11
Black	40	43	33	28
Hispanic	43	37	30	26
Asian*	33	23	14	
Upper income	16	5	1	
Middle income	33	19	12	
Lower income	44	46	35	

*Asian adults were interviewed in English only.

Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race. Hispanics are of any race. Family income tiers are based on earnings.

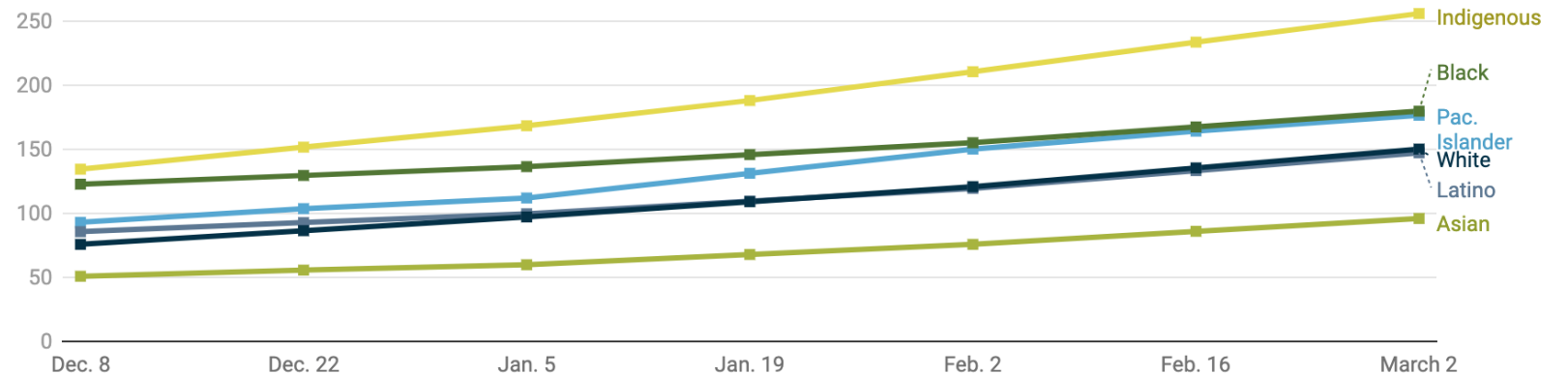
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 3-16, 2020.

"Economic Fallout From COVID-19 Continues To Hit Lower-Income Americans"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Indigenous, Black & Pacific Islander Americans have experienced the highest death tolls from COVID-19

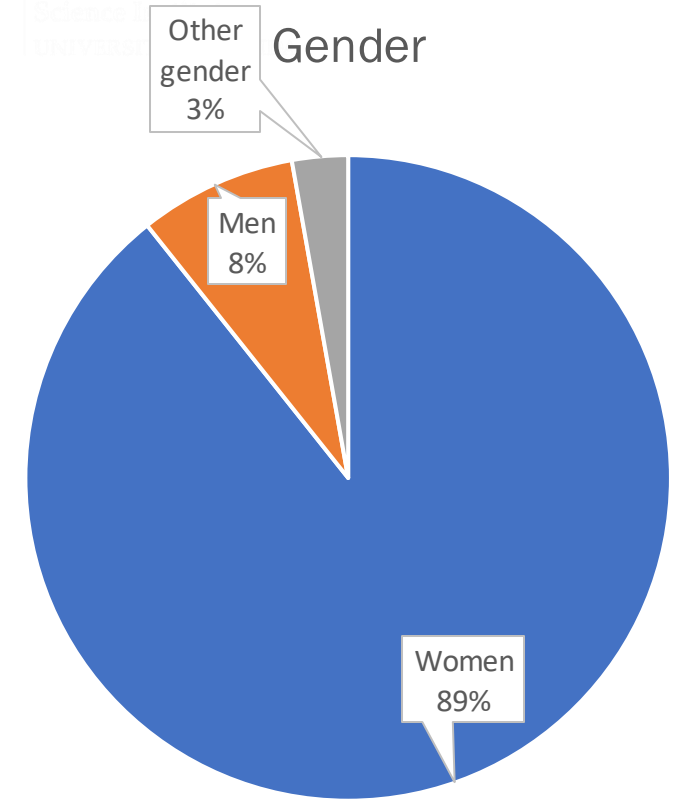
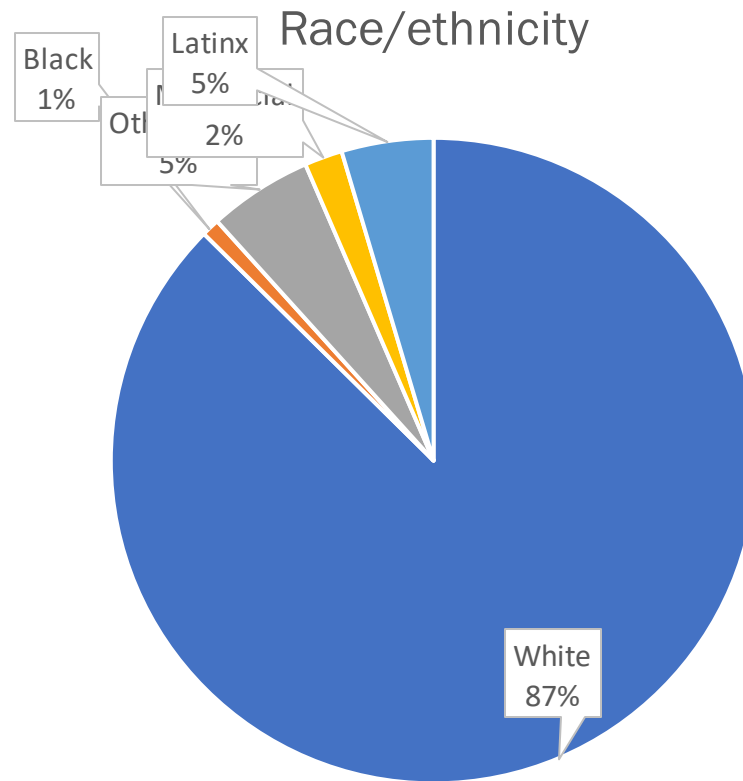
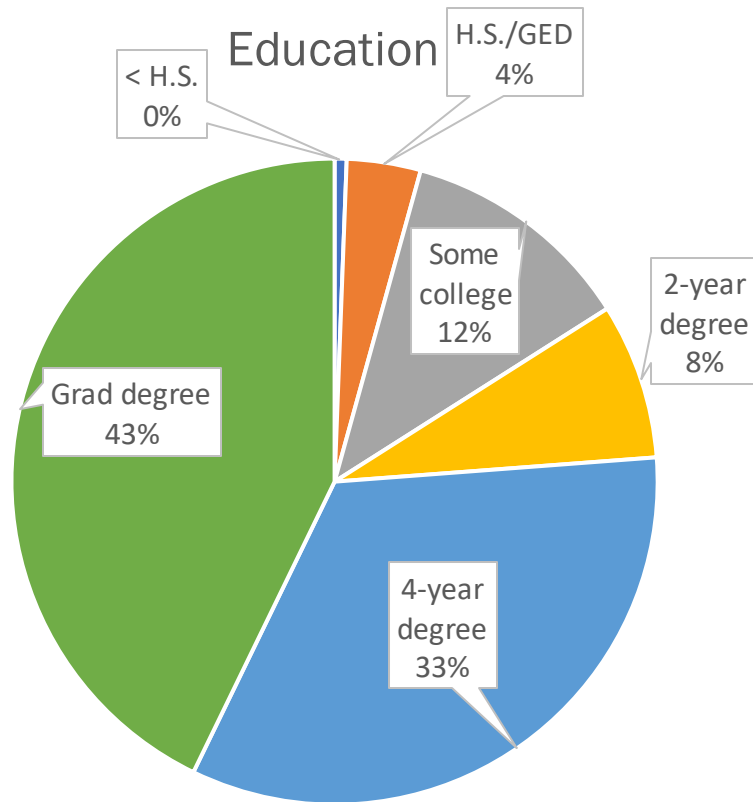
Cumulative actual (crude) COVID-19 mortality rates per 100,000, by race and ethnicity, Dec. 8, 2020-March 2, 2021



Population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, latest American Community Survey. Five-year estimates have been used for Indigenous and Pacific Islander rates, to improve data reliability.

Source: APM Research Lab • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

Relationships with Pets During the Coronavirus Crisis



How pets factor into healthcare decisions for COVID-19: A One Health perspective

Jennifer W. Applebaum ^a, Britni L. Adams ^a, Michelle N. Eliasson ^a, Barbara A. Zsembik ^a, Shelby E. McDonald ^b



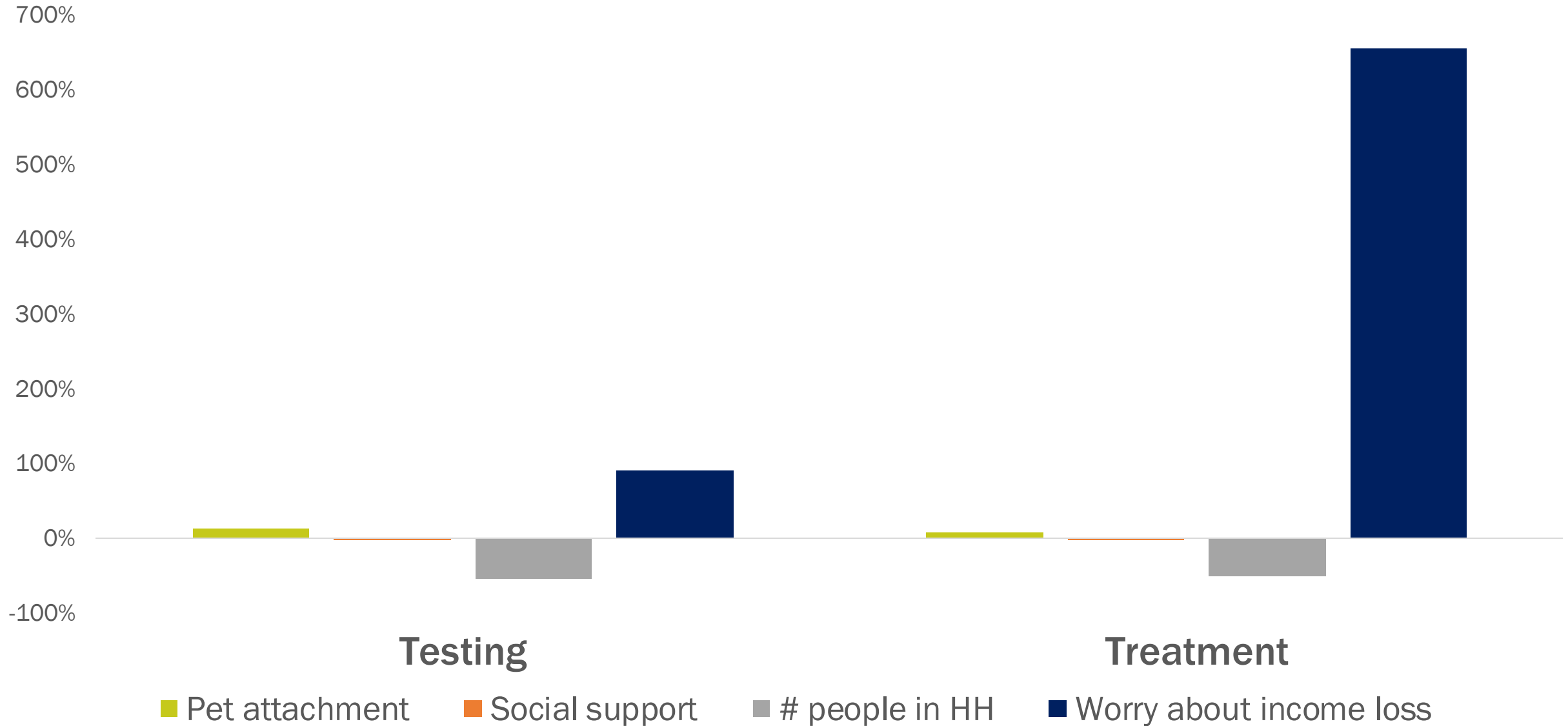
“If you thought you had COVID-19 would you delay or avoid **testing** because you were worried about your pet’s welfare?”

Yes or maybe: 10%

“If you thought you had COVID-19 would you delay or avoid **treatment** because you were worried about your pet’s welfare?”

Yes or maybe: 12%

Probability of delay/avoid COVID healthcare due to pet





How pets factor into healthcare decisions for COVID-19: A One Health perspective

Jennifer W. Applebaum ^a ✉, Britni L. Adams ^a, Michelle N. Eliasson ^a, Barbara A. Zsembik ^a, Shelby E. McDonald ^b

Low resourced owners who were highly attached to their pets were most at risk of sacrificing their own health in order to protect the welfare of their pets

How pets factor into healthcare decisions for COVID-19: A One Health perspective

Jennifer W. Applebaum ^a✉, Britni L. Adams ^a, Michelle N. Eliasson ^a, Barbara A. Zsembik ^a, Shelby E. McDonald ^b

Accommodate pets first

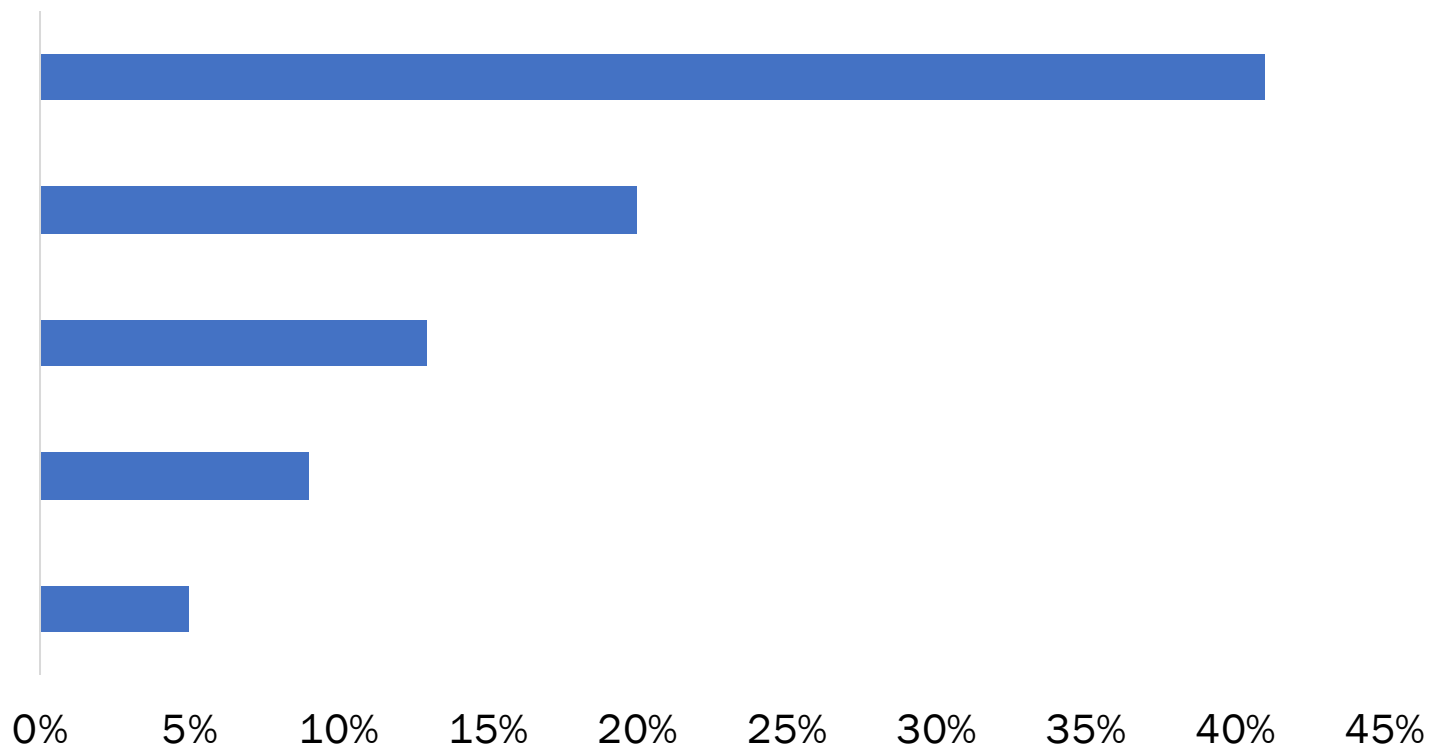
No plan, but would need one first

No plan, but if situation worsens

Vague plan, indefinite delay

Concern about contingencies

Short delay to execute plan

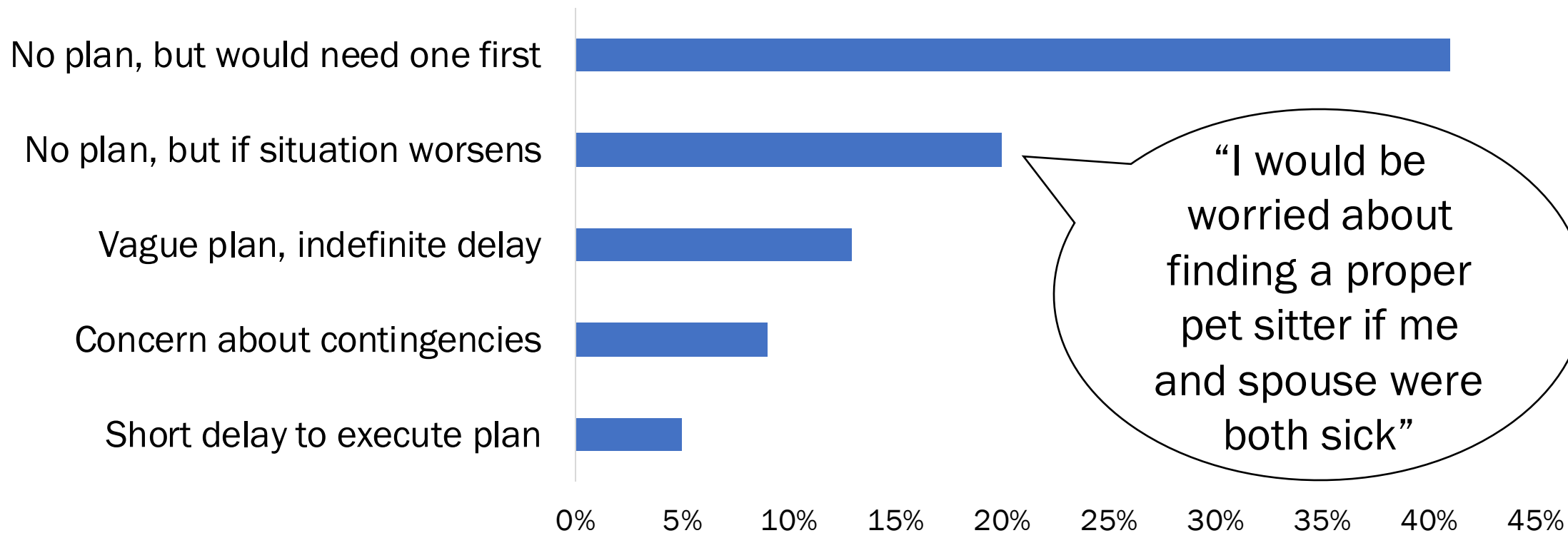




How pets factor into healthcare decisions for COVID-19: A One Health perspective

Jennifer W. Applebaum^a, Britni L. Adams^a, Michelle N. Eliasson^a, Barbara A. Zsembik^a, Shelby E. McDonald^b

Accommodate pets first

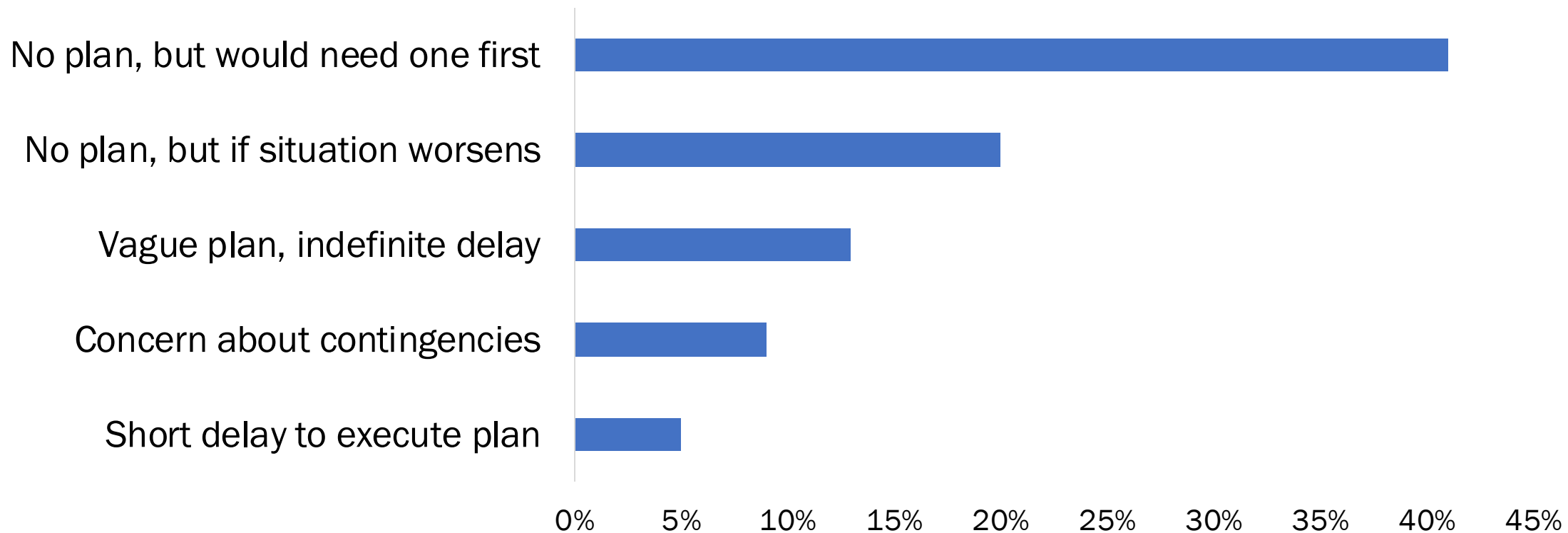




How pets factor into healthcare decisions for COVID-19: A One Health perspective

Jennifer W. Applebaum ^a, Britni L. Adams ^a, Michelle N. Eliasson ^a, Barbara A. Zsembik ^a, Shelby E. McDonald ^b

Accommodate pets first



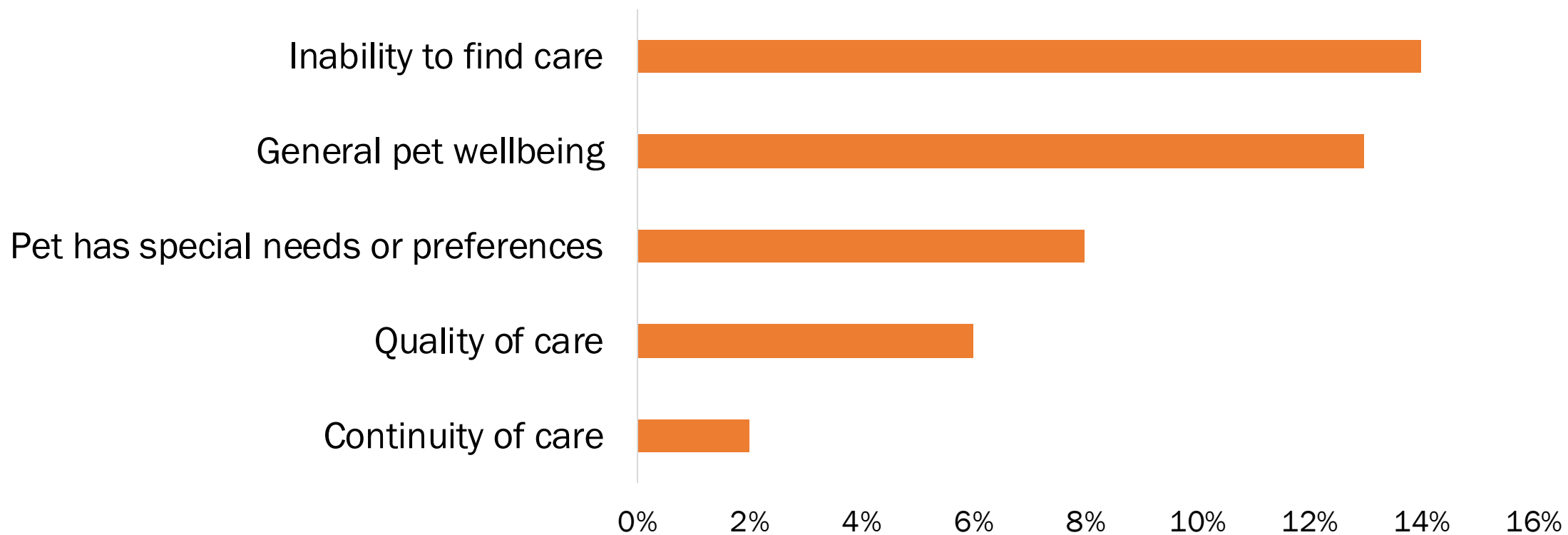


How pets factor into healthcare decisions for COVID-19: A One Health perspective

Jennifer W. Applebaum ^a, Britni L. Adams ^a, Michelle N. Eliasson ^a, Barbara A. Zsembik ^a, Shelby E. McDonald ^b



Pet concerns

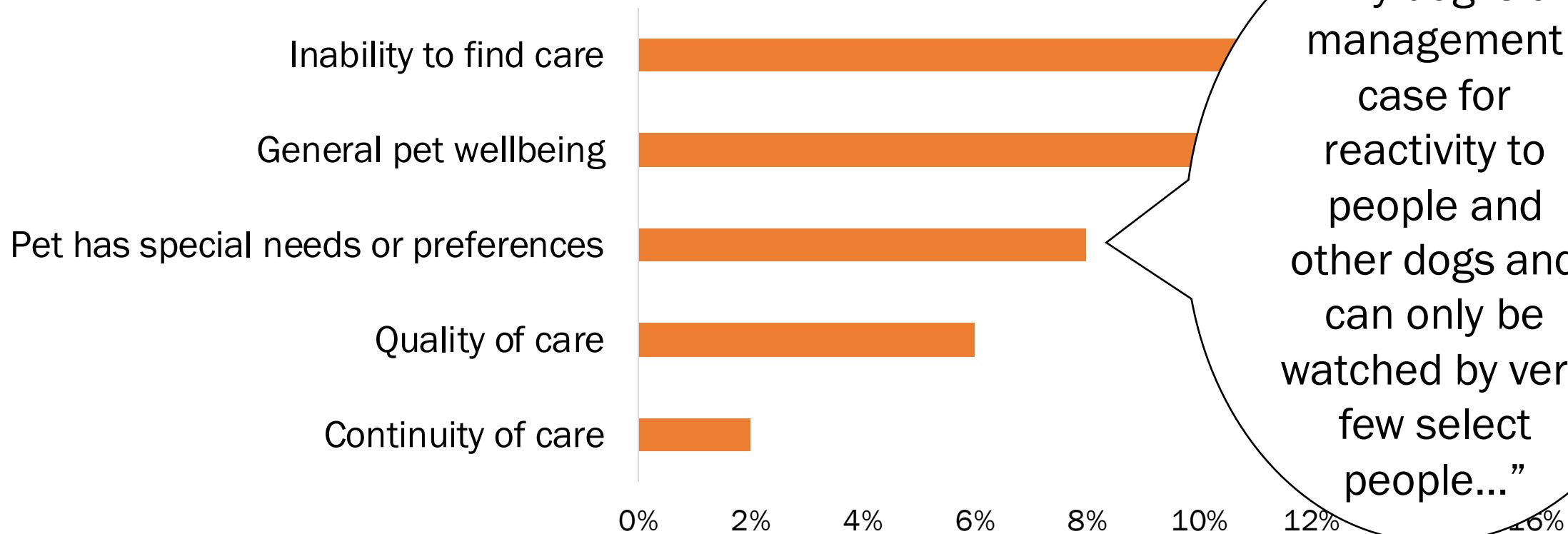


How pets factor into healthcare decisions for COVID-19: A One Health perspective

Jennifer W. Applebaum^a, Britni L. Adams^a, Michelle N. Eliasson^a, Barbara A. Zsembik^a, Shelby E. McDonald^b



Pet concerns

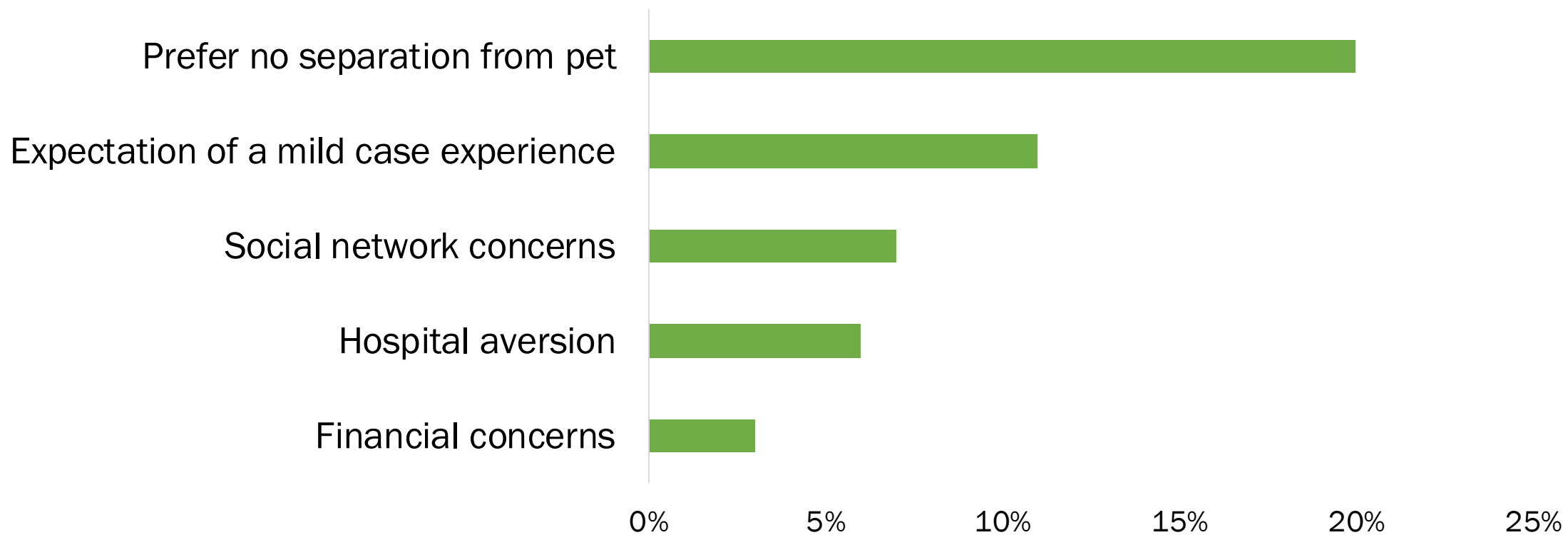


How pets factor into healthcare decisions for COVID-19: A One Health perspective

Jennifer W. Applebaum ^a, Britni L. Adams ^a, Michelle N. Eliasson ^a, Barbara A. Zsembik ^a, Shelby E. McDonald ^b



Human concerns



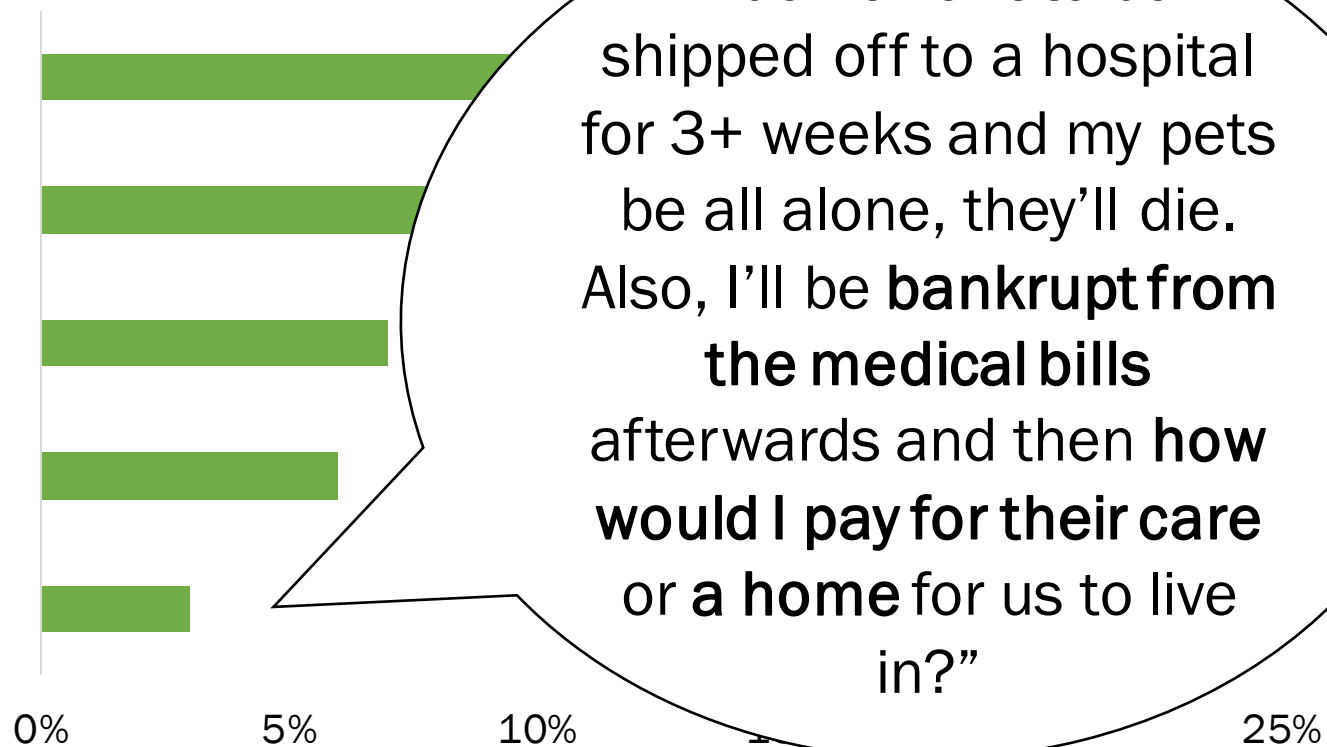
How pets factor into healthcare decisions for COVID-19: A One Health perspective

Jennifer W. Applebaum^a, Britni L. Adams^a, Michelle N. Eliasson^a, Barbara A. Zsembik^a, Shelby E. McDonald^b



Human concerns

- Prefer no separation from pet
- Expectation of a mild case experience
- Social network concerns
- Hospital aversion
- Financial concerns





Open Access Article

The Concerns, Difficulties, and Stressors of Caring for Pets during COVID-19: Results from a Large Survey of U.S. Pet Owners

by Jennifer W. Applebaum ^{1,*}, Camie A. Tomlinson ², Angela Matijczak ²,
Shelby E. McDonald ² and Barbara A. Zsembik ¹

¹ Department of Sociology and Criminology & Law, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611, USA

² School of Social Work, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA 23284, USA

* Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

Animals **2020**, *10*(10), 1882; <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani10101882>

“Does a pet add stress to the current COVID-19 situation?”

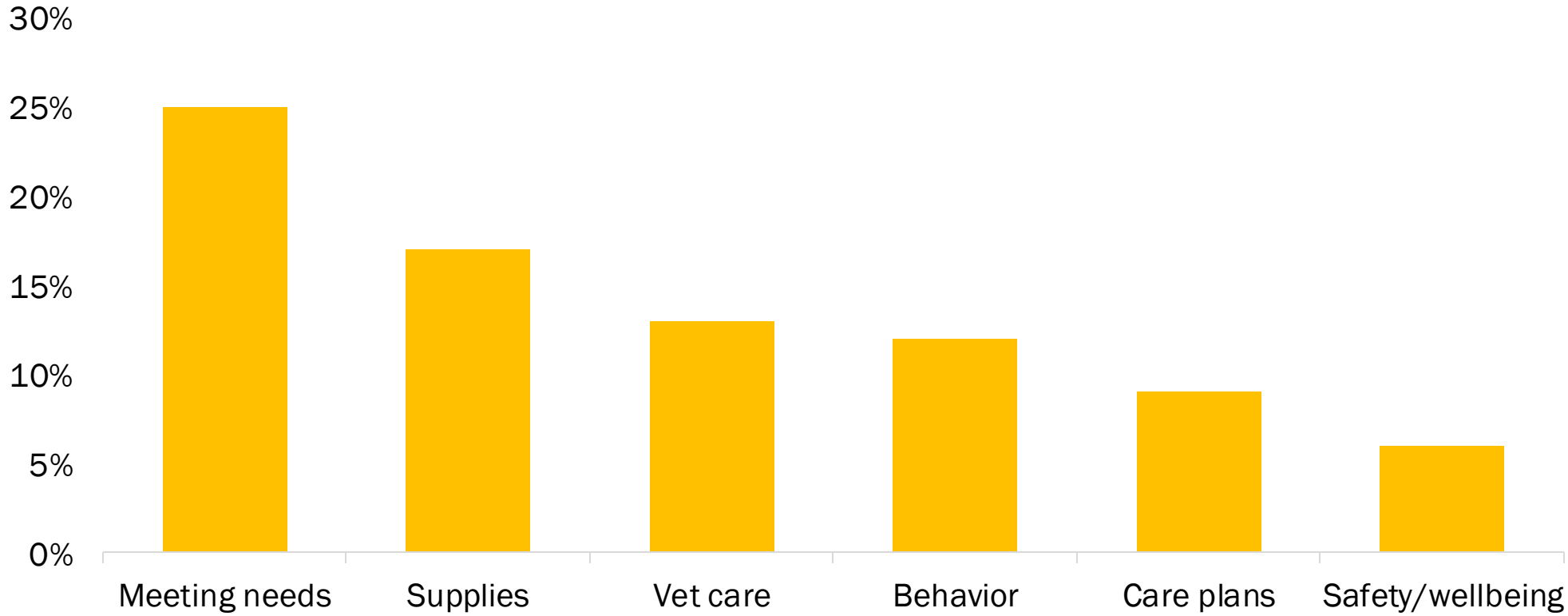
“How so?”

“Tell us about any difficulties you have had with your pets by social distancing or shelter-in-place.”

“What are the pros and cons of living with pets during COVID-19?”



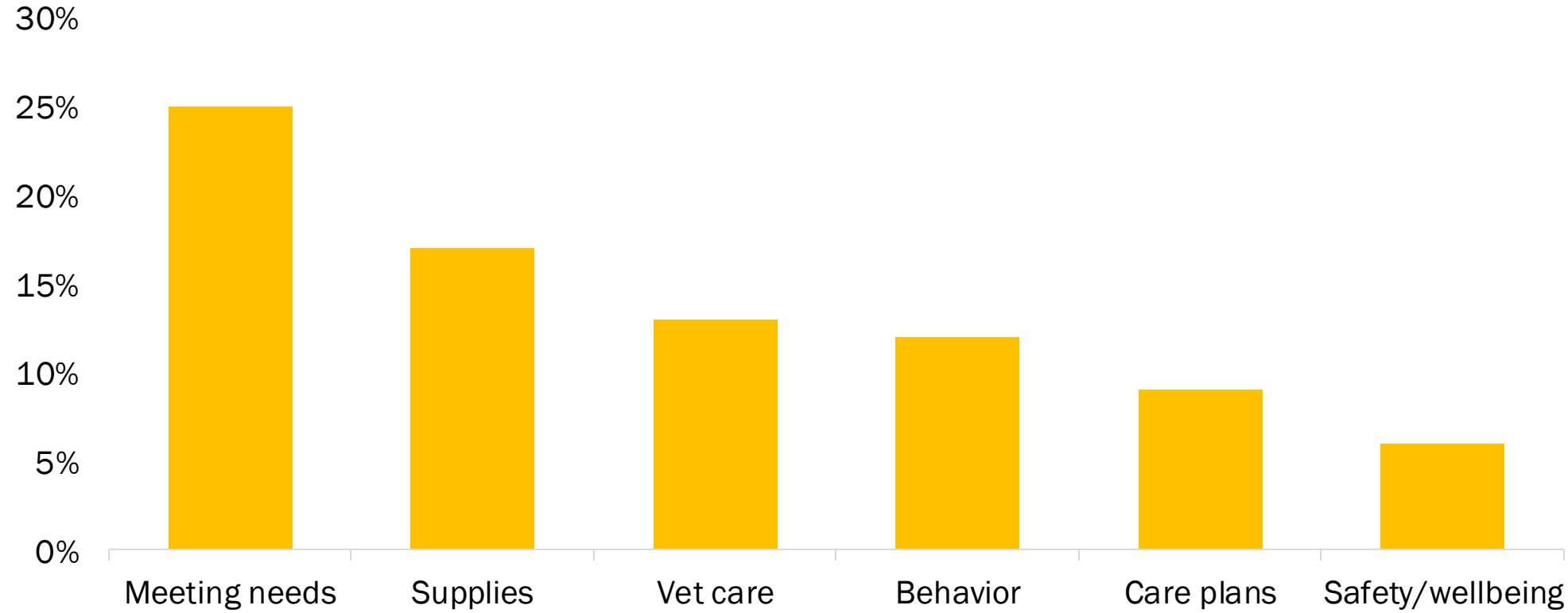
Pet concerns





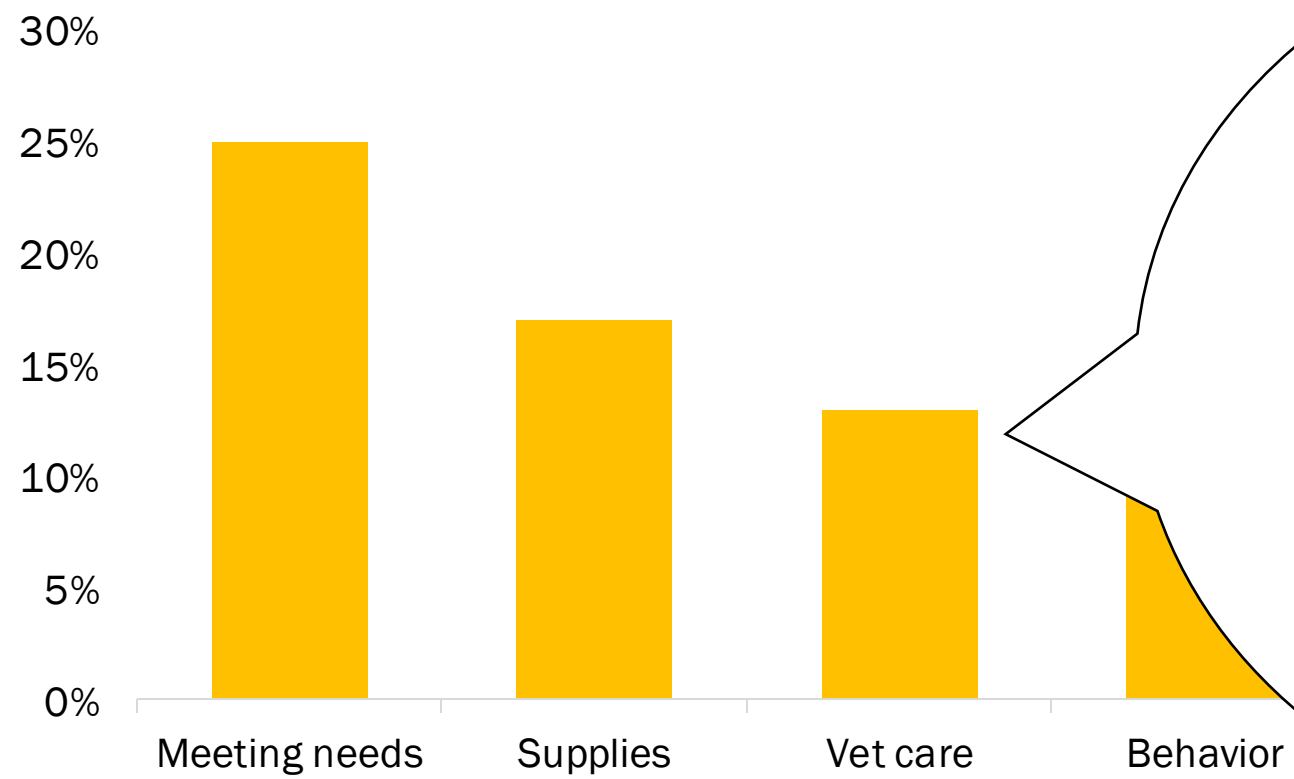


Pet concerns





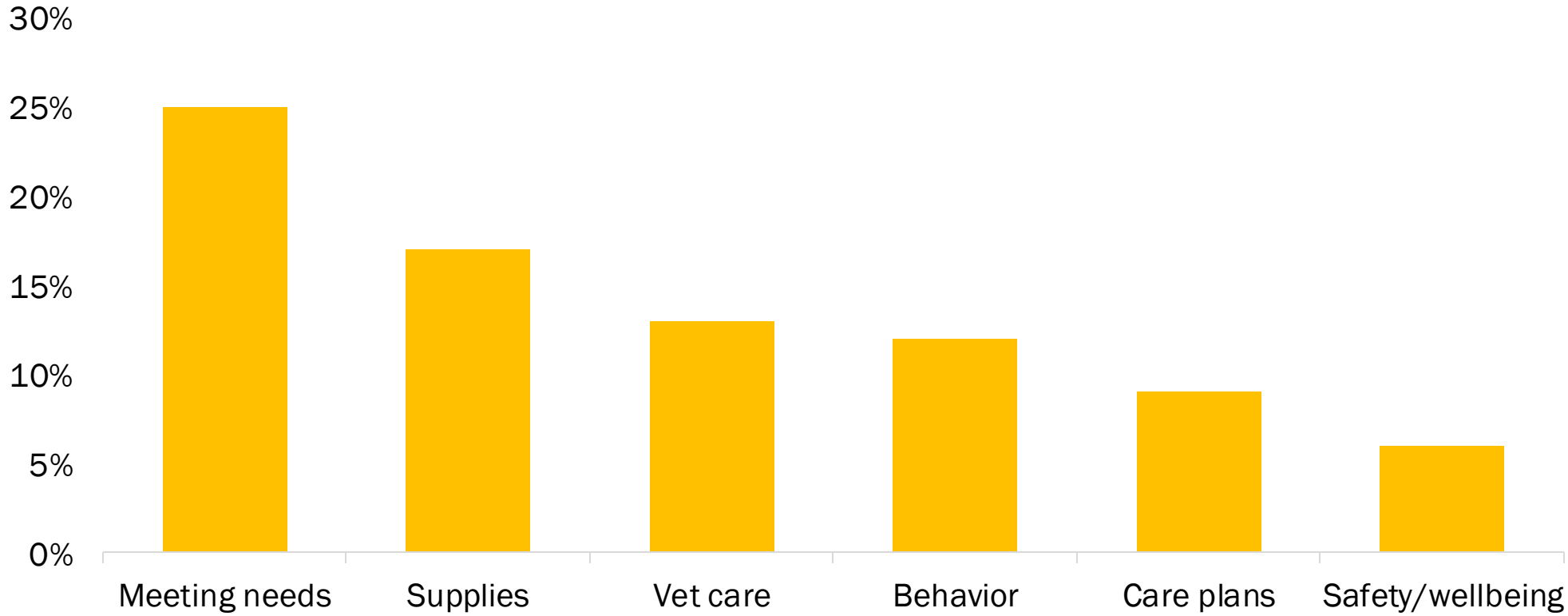
Pet concerns

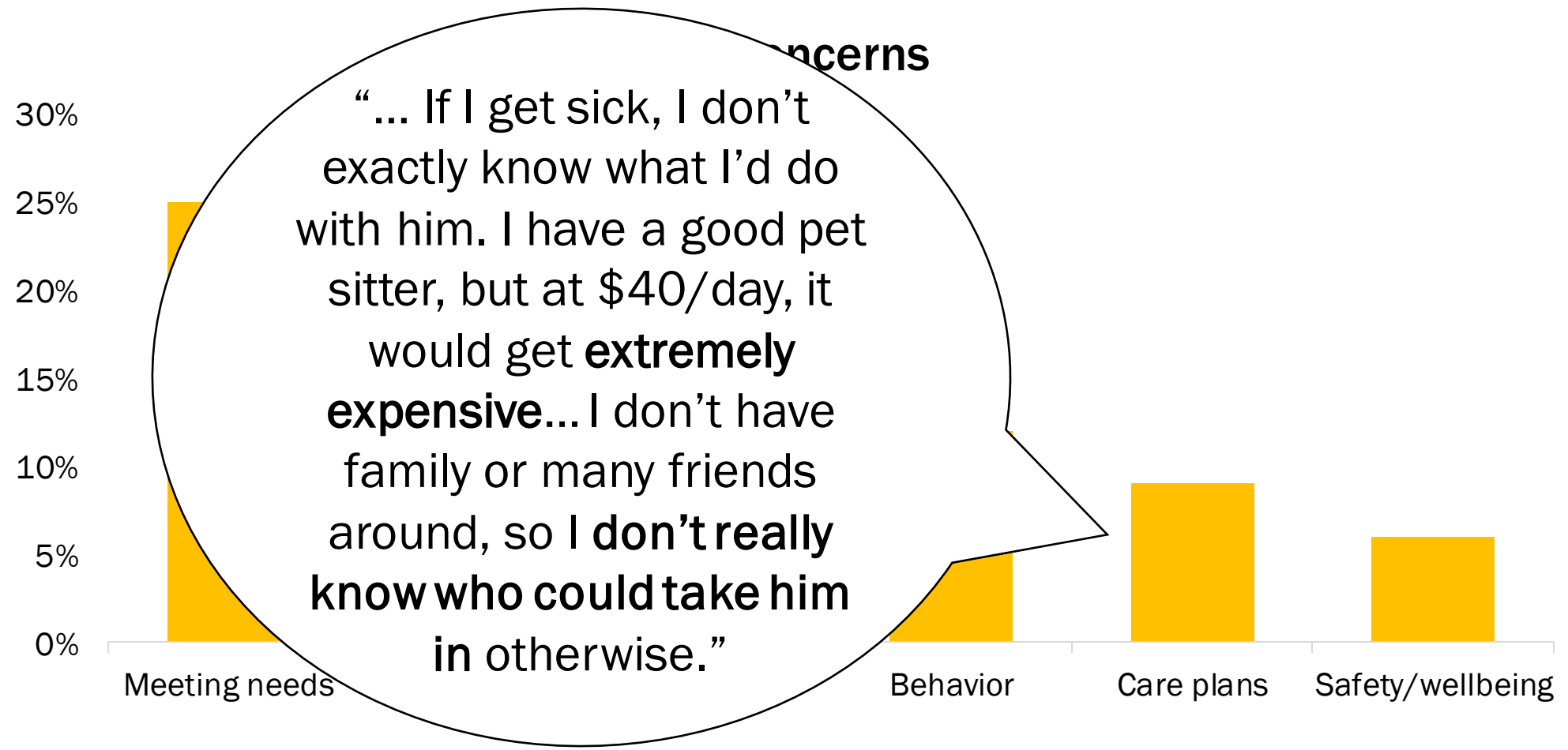


“She is old and could develop anytime into a situation that would **require her to be euthanized**. I am concerned that my vet would not allow me and/or my husband to attend a euthanasia inside the hospital. **That would make a difficult situation horrible...**”



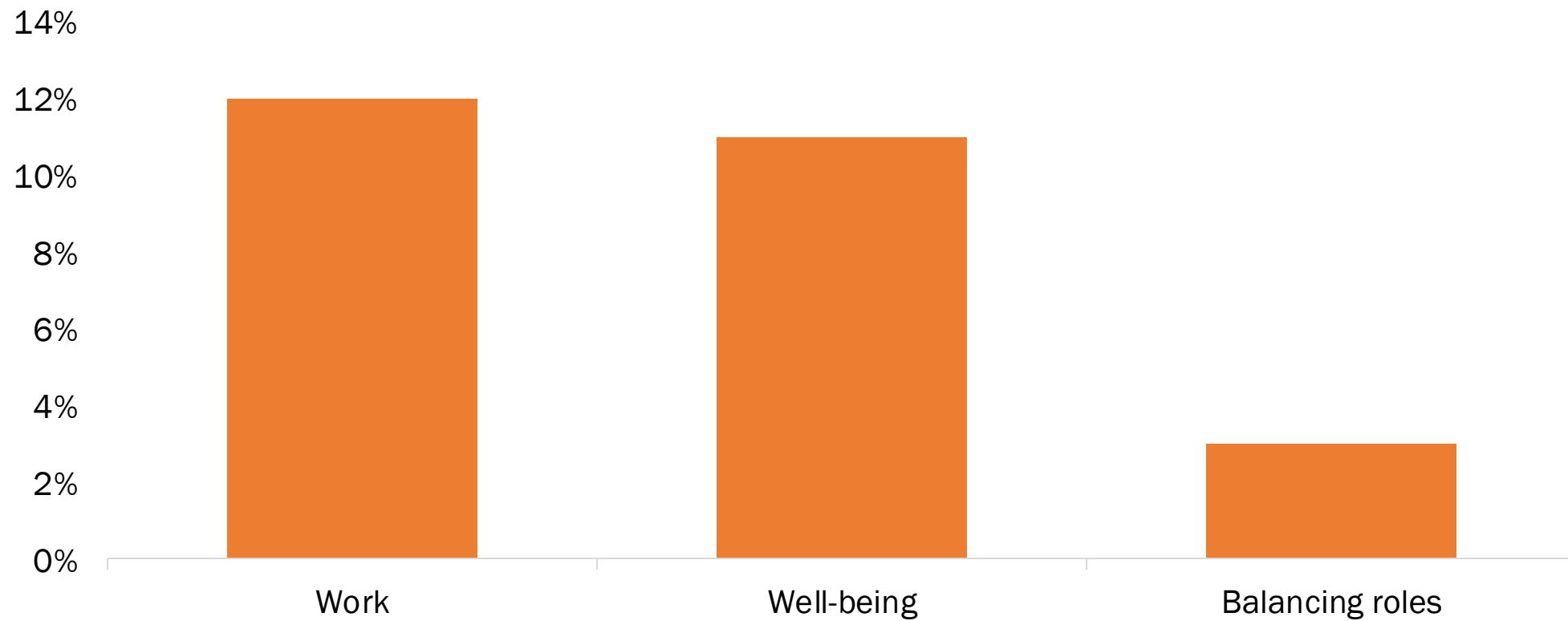
Pet concerns





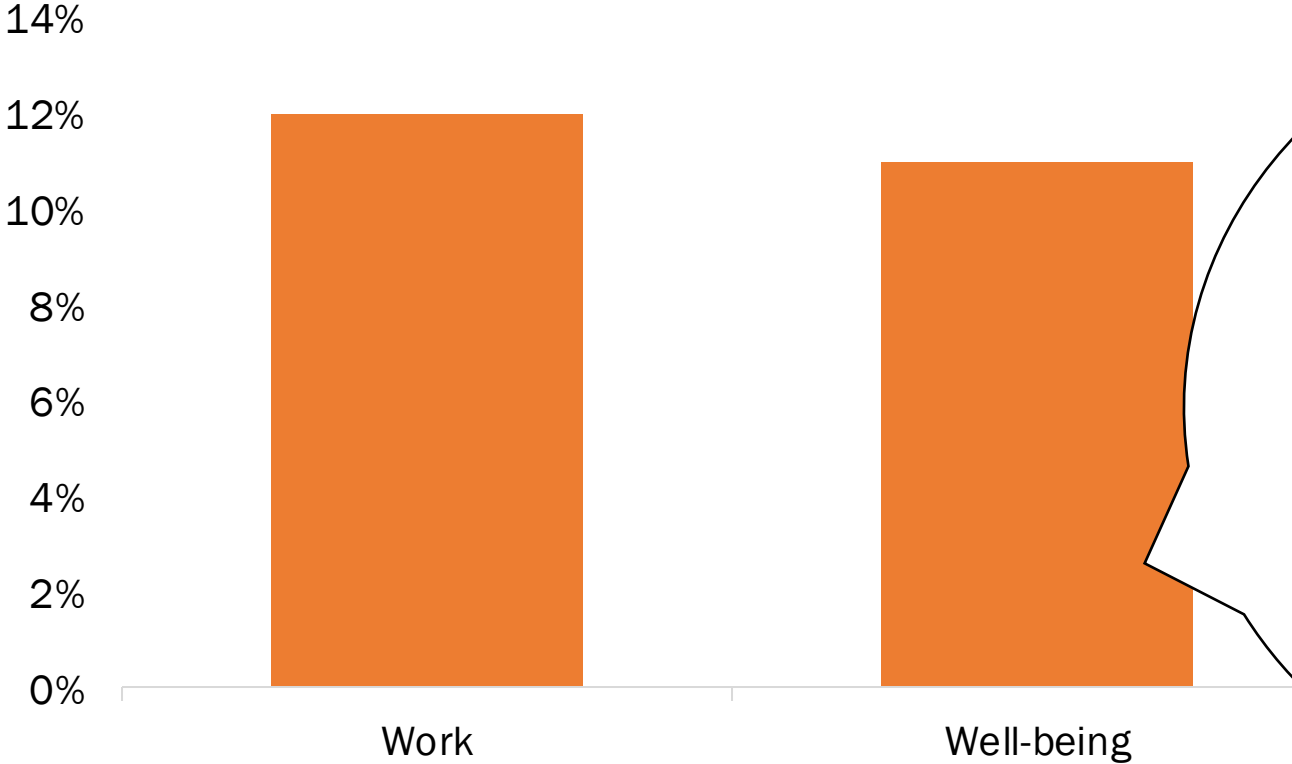


Human concerns





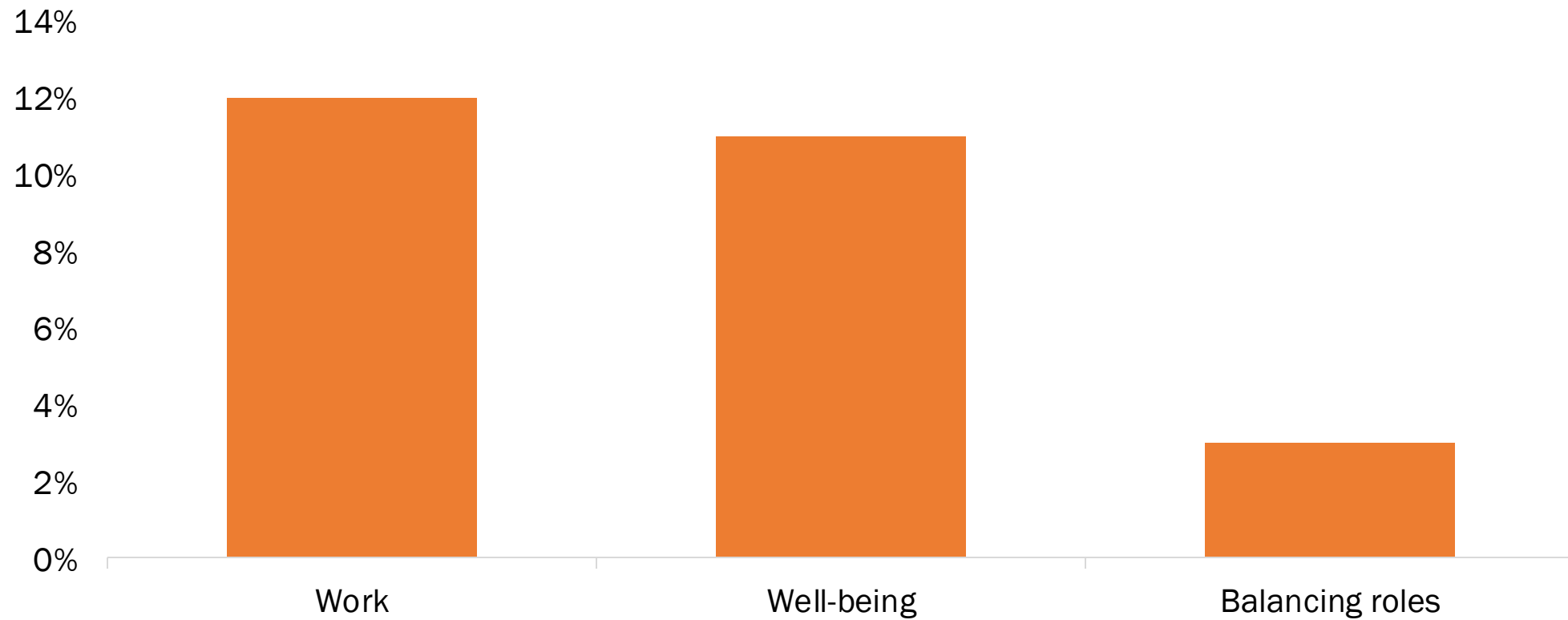
Human concerns

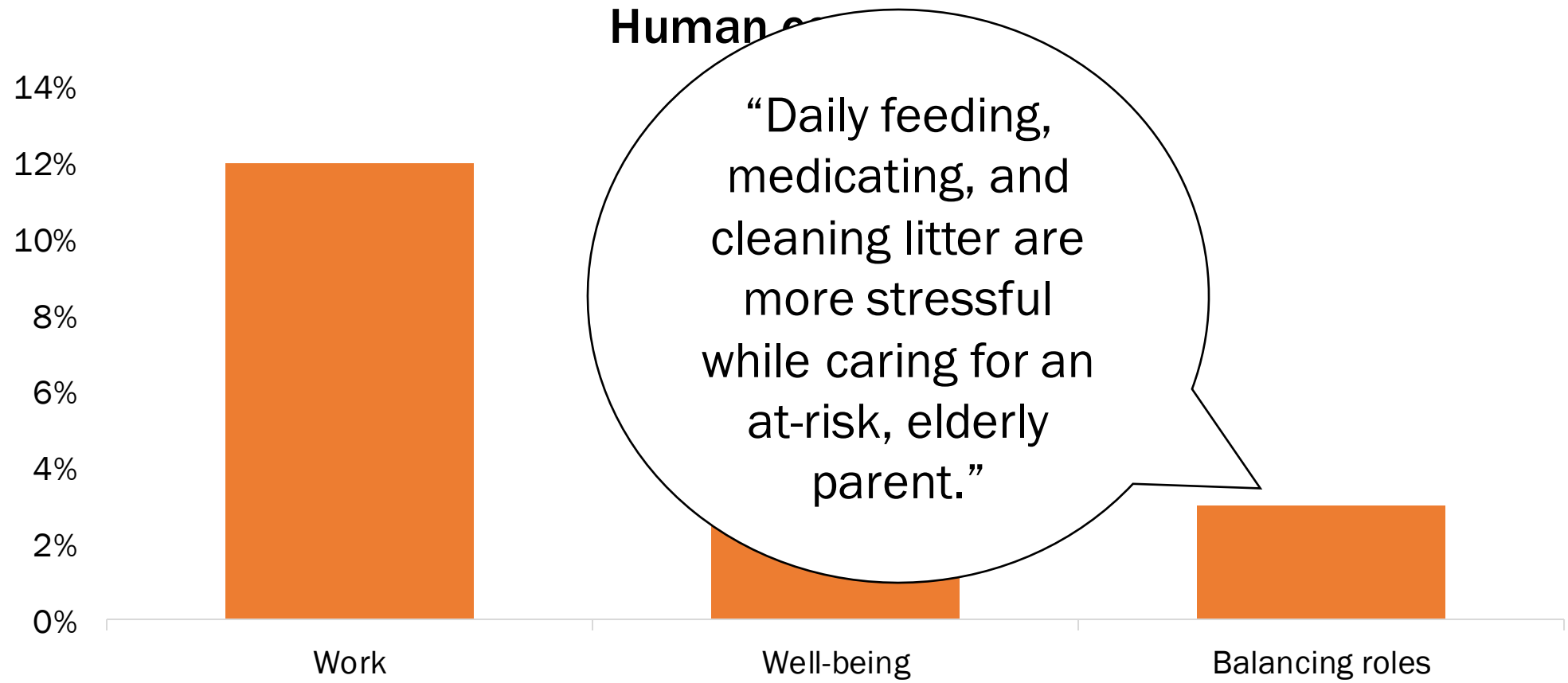


“... And also, what would I do if something happened to him while sheltering in place – being alone and grieving alone with no comfort.”



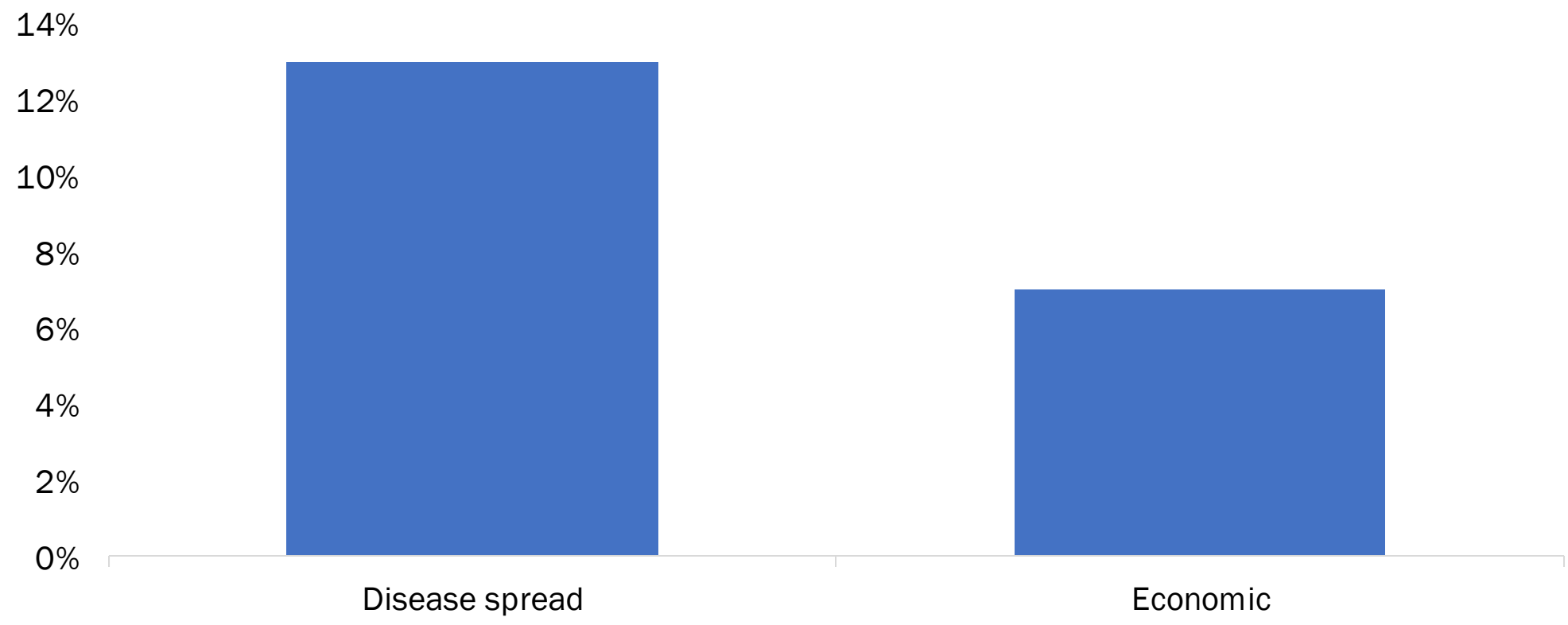
Human concerns





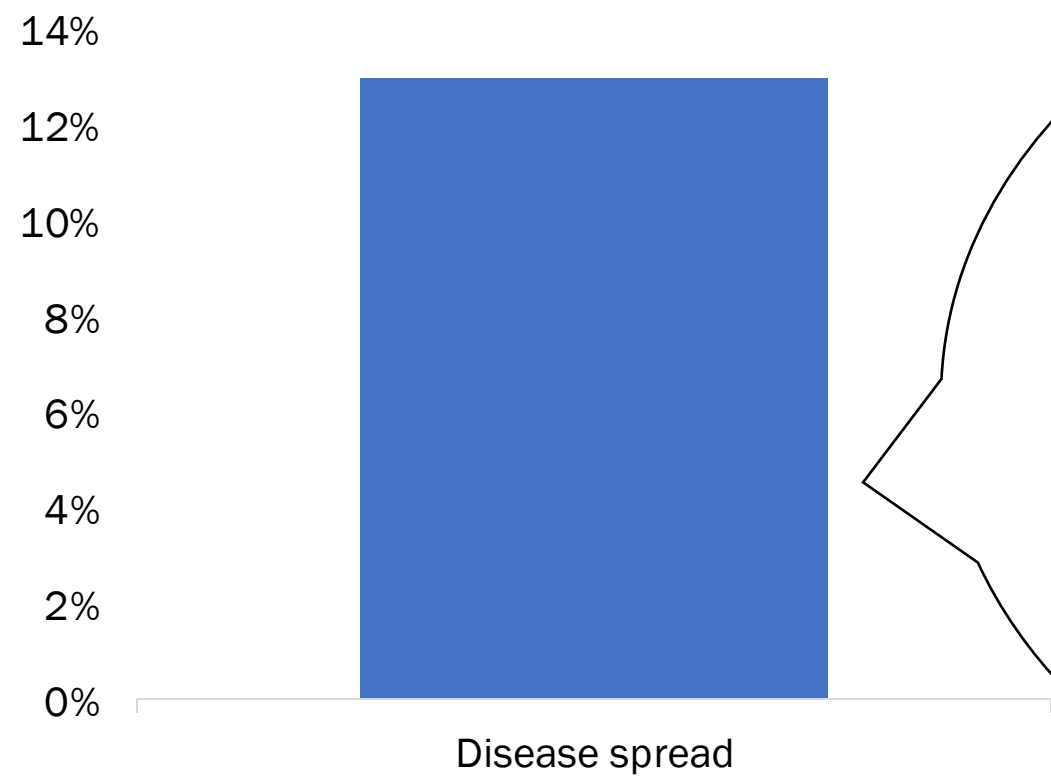


Household concerns





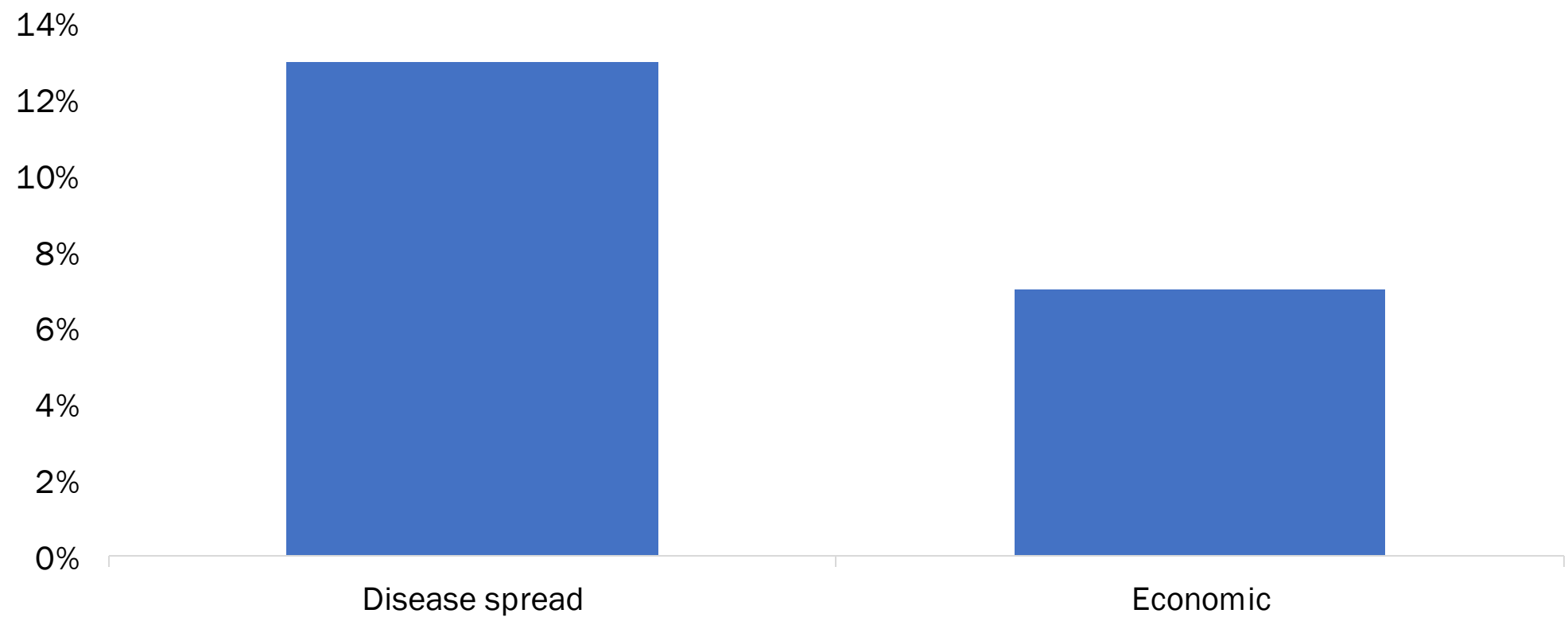
Household concerns



“Walking my dog causes me to come in contact with people sometimes. Also, I had to take one of my dogs to the vet, which required going out when we’re supposed to shelter in place. **I wasn’t sure what the right thing to do was.** Not taking her was a risk, because she had suddenly become aggressive and there is a child in the home, but taking her risked being out and around people”



Household concerns





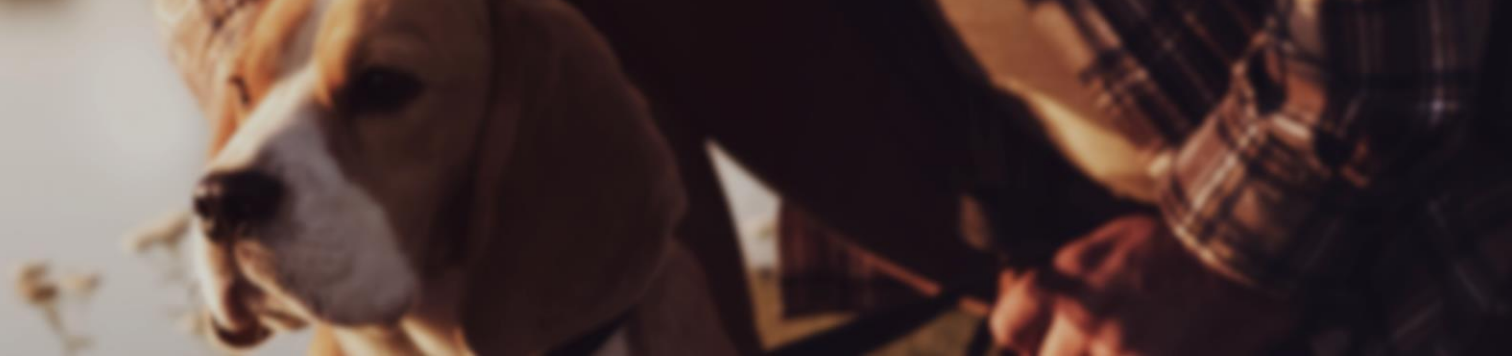
Household concerns





The Impact of Pets on Everyday Life for Older Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Jennifer W. Applebaum^{1*}, Carlyn Ellison^{2†}, Linda Struckmeyer², Barbara A. Zsembik¹ and Shelby E. McDonald³



“The only con is worrying what would happen to him if I die. Or go to hospital. How he would not understand. I have always prayed I outlive him, so he doesn’t suffer.”

“Do not give your pet up unless you absolutely need to. Your pet would rather stay with you and share your illness than sit in a shelter not knowing why they were sent away.”



- The human-animal bond shapes human behavior
- Hard to balance human and animal interests in resource-constrained environments
- Look upstream for solutions

A photograph of a dog sitting on a mossy log in a forest. The dog is light-colored and is looking towards the camera. The forest is dense with tall trees, and sunlight is filtering through the canopy, creating a soft, dappled light effect. The overall mood is peaceful and natural.

Social inequalities are the problem

POLICY

- Economic resources for multispecies families facing hardship
- Public policy reflect that people treat pets as family members

COMMUNITY

- Partnerships between animal welfare and social service providers

A photograph of a woman with long, wavy brown hair, seen from the back, holding a small brown dog. The dog is looking towards the camera. The image is overlaid with a white rectangular box containing the word 'IMPLICATIONS' in bold white capital letters.

IMPLICATIONS

RESEARCH AGENDA

Toward multispecies social justice

DATA

- Representative samples
- Vulnerable populations

MARGINALIZED GROUPS

- Impact of social inequalities on human-animal bond
- Adversities both strengthen and threaten human-animal bonds



**FUTURE
DIRECTIONS**

COVID-19

- LGBTQ+; Community factors

PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

- Intersectional & inclusive HAI

HOUSING

- Pet fee burden higher for non-White, low-income communities

STRESS & HEALTH

- “Pet effect” not evident in all groups



IN THE WORKS

FURTHER READING

- Applebaum, JW, Adams, BL, Eliasson, MN, Zsembik, BA, & McDonald, SE. (2020). **How Pets Factor into Healthcare Decisions for COVID-19: A One Health Perspective.** *One Health*, 11, 100176.
- Applebaum, JW, Tomlinson, CA, Matijczak, A, McDonald, SE, & Zembik, BA. (2020). **The Concerns, Difficulties, and Stressors of Caring for Pets during COVID-19: Results from a Large Survey of U.S. Pet Owners.** *Animals*, 10(10), 1882.
- Applebaum, JW, Ellison, C, Struckmeyer, L, Zsembik, BA, & McDonald, SE. (2021). **The Impact of Pets on Everyday Life for Older Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic.** *Frontiers in Public Health*, 9, 652610.
- McDonald, SE, O'Connor, K, Matijczak, A, Applebaum, JW, Murphy, JL, & Zsembik, BA. (2021). **Attachment to Pets Moderates Latent Patterns of Mental Health Following the Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Results from a Survey of U.S. Adults.** *Animals*, 11(3), 895.
- Adams, BL, Applebaum, JW, Eliasson, MN, McDonald, SE, & Zsembik, BA. (2021). **Child and Pet Care-Planning During COVID-19: Considerations for the Evolving Family Unit.** *Family Relations*.

THANK YOU

 jennyapplebaum@ufl.edu

 [@jwapplebaum](https://twitter.com/jwapplebaum)

Thanks to my collaborators and co-authors:

Dr. Barbara A. Zsembik
Dr. Shelby E. McDonald
Dr. Britni Adams
Camie Tomlinson
Angela Matijczak
Michelle Eliasson
Carlyn Ellison
Dr. Linda Struckmeyer

Research reported in this presentation was supported by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under University of Florida Clinical and Translational Science Awards TL1TR001428 and UL1TR001427. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.