

City of Sacramento
Animal Wellbeing Commission Report
915 I Street Sacramento, CA 95814
www.cityofsacramento.org

File ID: 2026-00640

3/11/2026

Discussion of Methods to Promote Adoption or Rescue of Senior Animals and Animals at Risk of Euthanasia

File ID: 2026-00640

Location: Citywide

Recommendation: Review and comment.

Contact: Ryan Hinderman, Communications and Customer Service Manager, (916) 808-7911, rhinderman@cityofsacramento.org, Community Development Department

Presenter: None

Attachments:

1-Description/Analysis

2-California Animal Shelters

Additional Description/Analysis

Issue Detail: Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of outward marketing of euthanasia risk along with possible options for sharing this information such as social media, website posts, kennel signs, and a “final plea” program.

Policy Considerations: None.

Economic Impacts: None.

Environmental Considerations: None.

Sustainability: None.

Commission/Committee Action: Not applicable.

Rationale for Recommendation: The Animal Wellbeing Commission and Animal Care Services share the goal of maximizing lifesaving. This discussion will provide an opportunity for commission members and Animal Care Services to propose ideas, present evidence, and share perspectives on

the benefits and drawbacks of various methods of increasing lifesaving for at-risk animals. To aid the conversation, please refer to Attachment 2 (California Animal Shelters: Opportunities for Growth Study), pages 13-15 and 21.

Financial Considerations: Not applicable.

Local Business Enterprise (LBE): Not applicable.

CALIFORNIA ANIMAL SHELTERS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

**Learnings from L.A., Sacramento,
and the Central Valley**

December 2024

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Methodology



METHOD:

- Online survey
- First wave executed in California from November 8th to November 24th



AUDIENCE:

- N=450 respondents located in Los Angeles, Sacramento, Bakersfield, or Fresno open to acquiring a dog or cat
 - Including n=94 Spanish-speaking Hispanics
- Males and females
- Ages 18-80



RESULTS:

- This report includes results for the combined California sample.
- Results are reported at the total level; deeper looks at the 3 target DMAs and Spanish speakers will be provided in full reporting
- Percentages are rounded and may add to more than 100%



RESEARCH PARTNER:

- California Animals and Off Madison Avenue have partnered with Ipsos in the design, execution, and interpretation of this research

Summary of Insights

- 1. Perception vs. Reality Gap:** While a high percentage of consumers in California say they are likely to adopt from animal shelters (85%) and have visited shelters (87%), only half have actually adopted a pet. This indicates a gap between intention and action.
- 2. Barriers to Adoption:** Key barriers include concerns about shelter conditions, 'kill' shelters, sadness, euthanasia, and the health and behavior of the pets.
- 3. General Perception:** Overall perceptions of animal shelters are positive but could be improved in areas such as animal health, atmosphere, and availability of desired breeds.
- 4. Geographic and Demographic Variations:** Los Angeles shows the most room for improvement in perceptions. Spanish speakers tend to have slightly better perceptions, especially regarding animal health.
- 5. Experience of Past Adopters:** Individuals who have adopted from shelters have better perceptions of shelters but identify areas for improvement in the in-person experience.
- 6. Effective Messaging:** Messages that emphasize saving an animal's life resonate well but may be contributing to negative perceptions of shelters. Highlighting healthy pets, low-cost services and compassionate staff can further influence positive perceptions.

KEY FINDINGS

1

There is a disconnect between perception & reality

85%

of consumers are very or somewhat likely to adopt from an animal shelter,

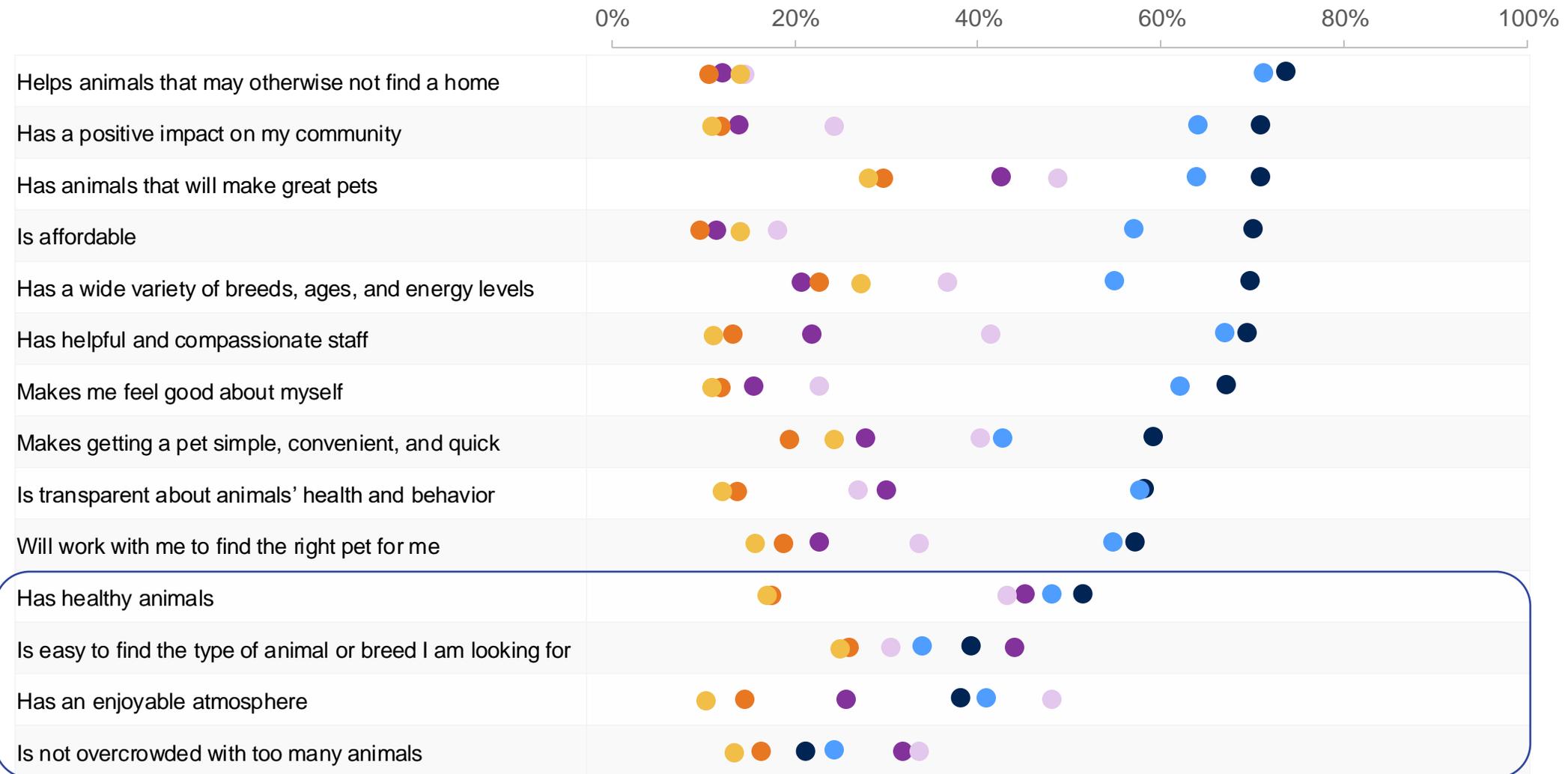
87%

of consumers have visited an animal shelter in the past, but only

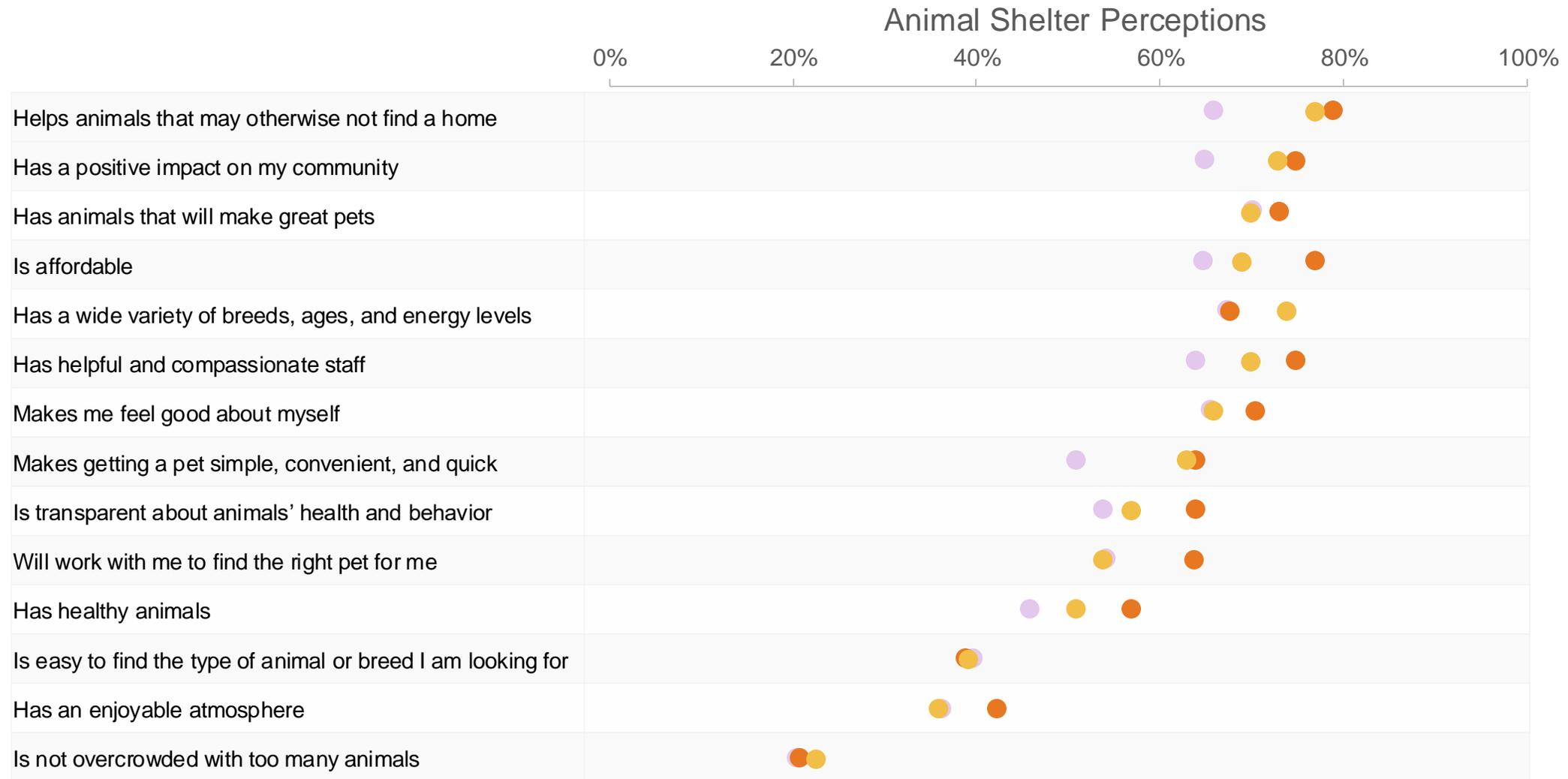
50%

of consumers have adopted a pet from an animal shelter

Perceptions of Animal Shelters are generally positive, with room to improve on animal health, atmosphere, and ease of finding desired breeds.

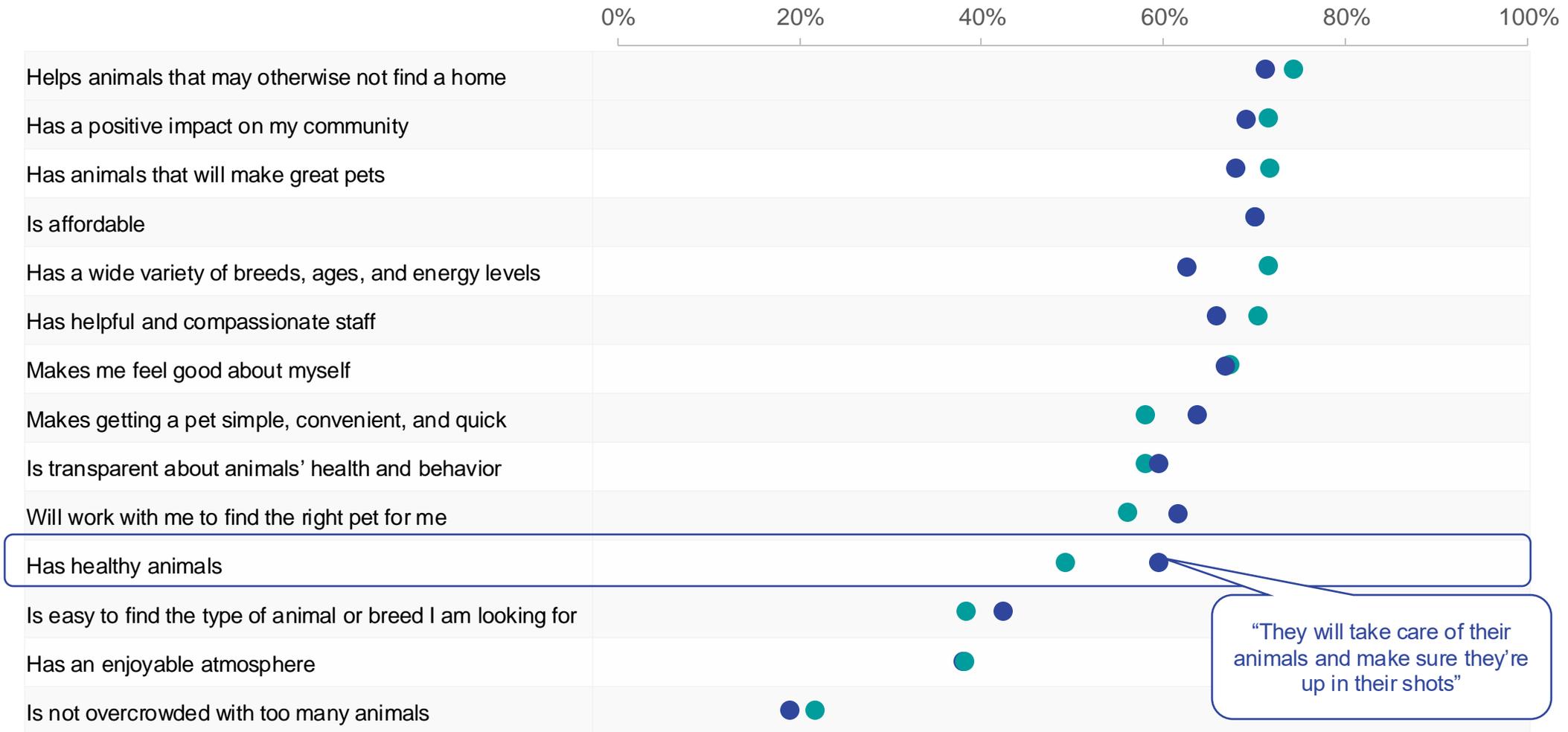


A similar pattern exists across our three markets, with most room to improve perceptions in Los Angeles



And while Spanish speakers feel similarly, perceptions around the health of the animals in shelters is a bit stronger among this group.

Animal Shelter Perceptions

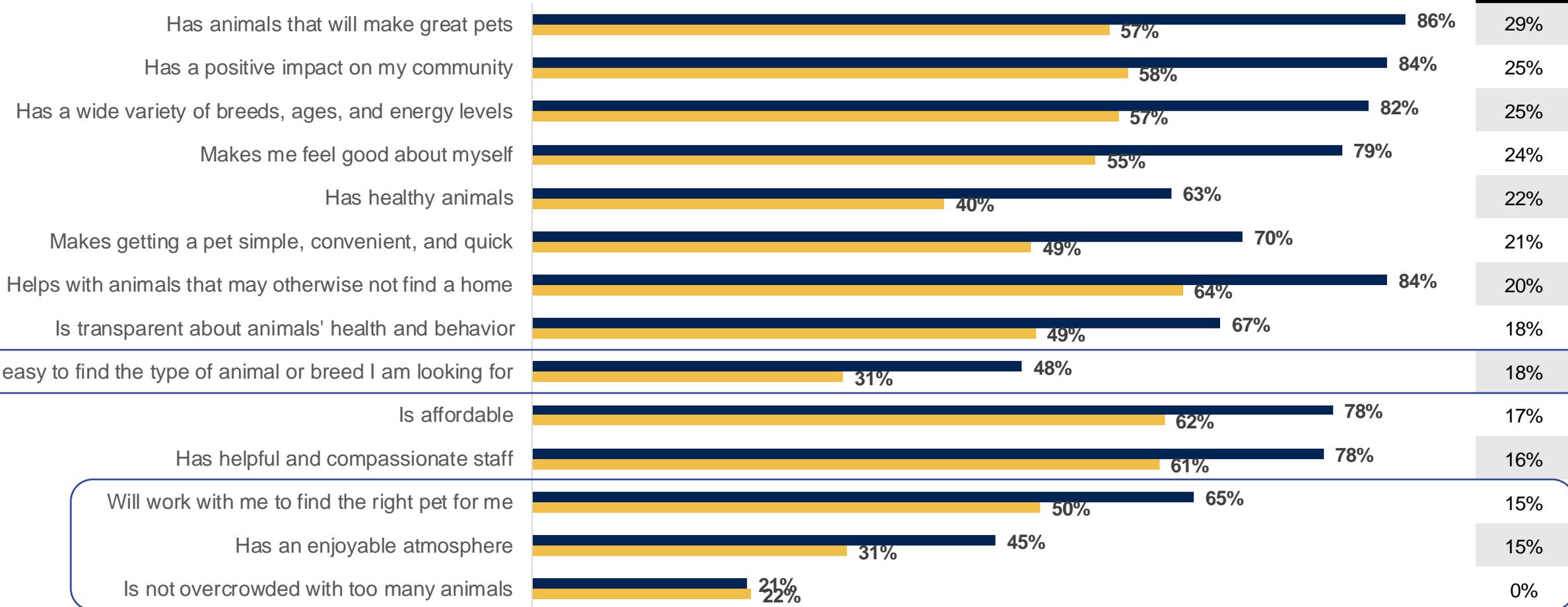


“They will take care of their animals and make sure they’re up in their shots”

Those who have adopted from a Shelter perceive them better across statements, but less so for key perceptions around the in-person experience.

Animal Shelter Perceptions

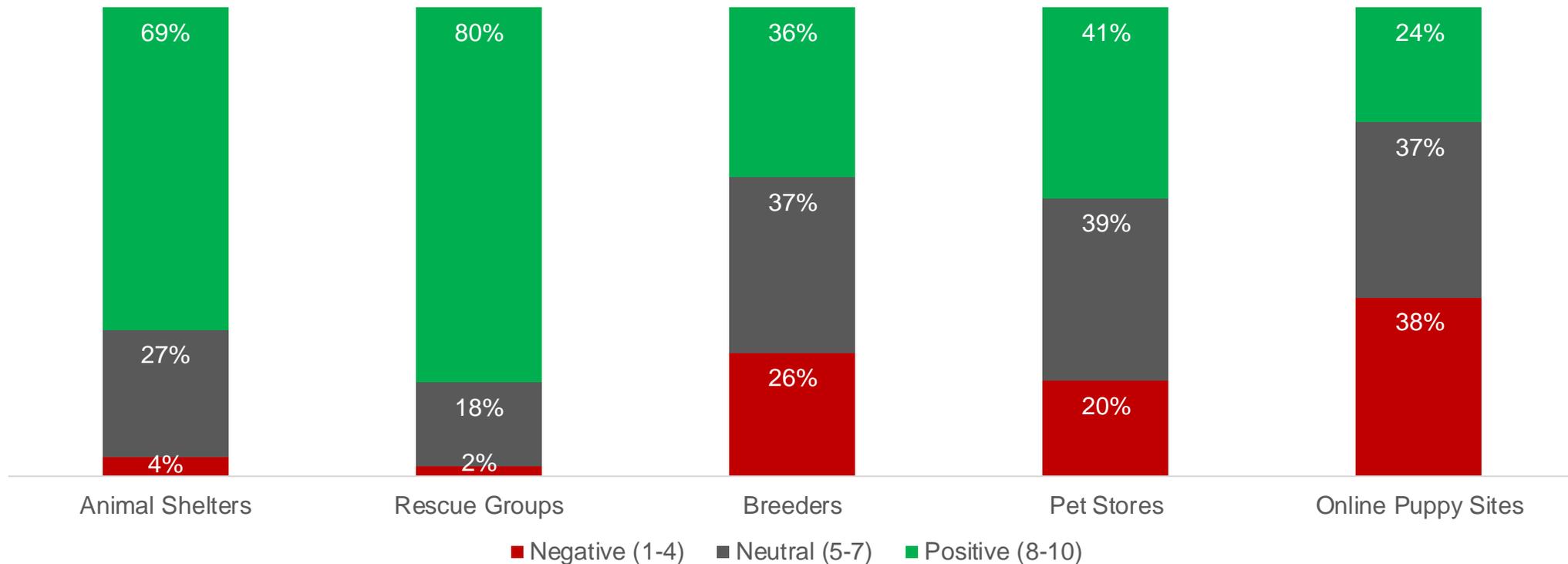
Gap



■ Has adopted from a shelter ■ Has not adopted from a shelter

Californians feel more positively towards Animal Shelters, and especially Rescue Groups, than they do Breeders, Pet Store, or Online Puppy Sites.

Overall Perception (1-10)



Most recognize that shelters do good work and are appreciative of their mission.



Positive Perceptions (69%)

“The dog I have now is from a shelter and he is the best dog there every was”

“This is where I got my cat, and my friends all got their amazing dogs. I've only met good dogs and cats from animal shelters”

“I know that they are doing their best to take care of animals, keep them healthy and prep them for adoption. They make sure that they are spayed or neutered, and the fees are only to cover for their chip and medical fees. I feel completely comfortable with their transparency”

“They do their best considering the resources and the number of discarded animals”

“They take animals that ordinarily would have no place to go including those awful people "throw" away. People mostly love and care about animals”

“The animal shelter provides a safe and caring environment for abandoned pets offering them the opportunity to find loving forever homes”

“I feel this way because animal shelters do the best they can to provide new homes to animals who need it. They have a great selection of pets and their employees will work with you to help you find the perfect pet”

Shelter conditions and concern around “kill” shelters are barriers.



Neutral Perceptions (27%)

“It is due to the kill rate and in some cases sub standard conditions”

“There are pros and cons with animal shelters. I've heard that sometimes they can get overcrowded. On the flip side, they do try to find homes for these animals”

“No kill shelters are amazing, I don't agree with kill shelters”

“Animal shelters do their best but are usually underfunded and crowded”

“I like that animal shelters help animals, but some of the shelters are filthy and the animals are not treated with the care that they need”

“I feel that yes they are helpful, but it is difficult when they have to euthanize animals. I understand there's not enough room, but it makes me very sad.”

“They're great and all but not always easy to visit or adopt from.”

“They're a great place to find your new family member and can find almost any breed or age of pet, but they're over crowded, don't always take care of the animals properly.”



Negative Perceptions (4%)

“They put a lot of animals down for no reason. Over crowding. They really don't give animals a chance or the time to find a home. It's more of an over crowded kill shelter”

“They kill dogs and everyone I know that gets a shelter dog the dog is always sick”

“Because of the number of animals that they put down every year”

“Because typically at the shelters it's been animals that have been abused and that's not a pet I really want to buy ..”

“I've seen some dogs being mistreated and short in staff to take care of these animals.”

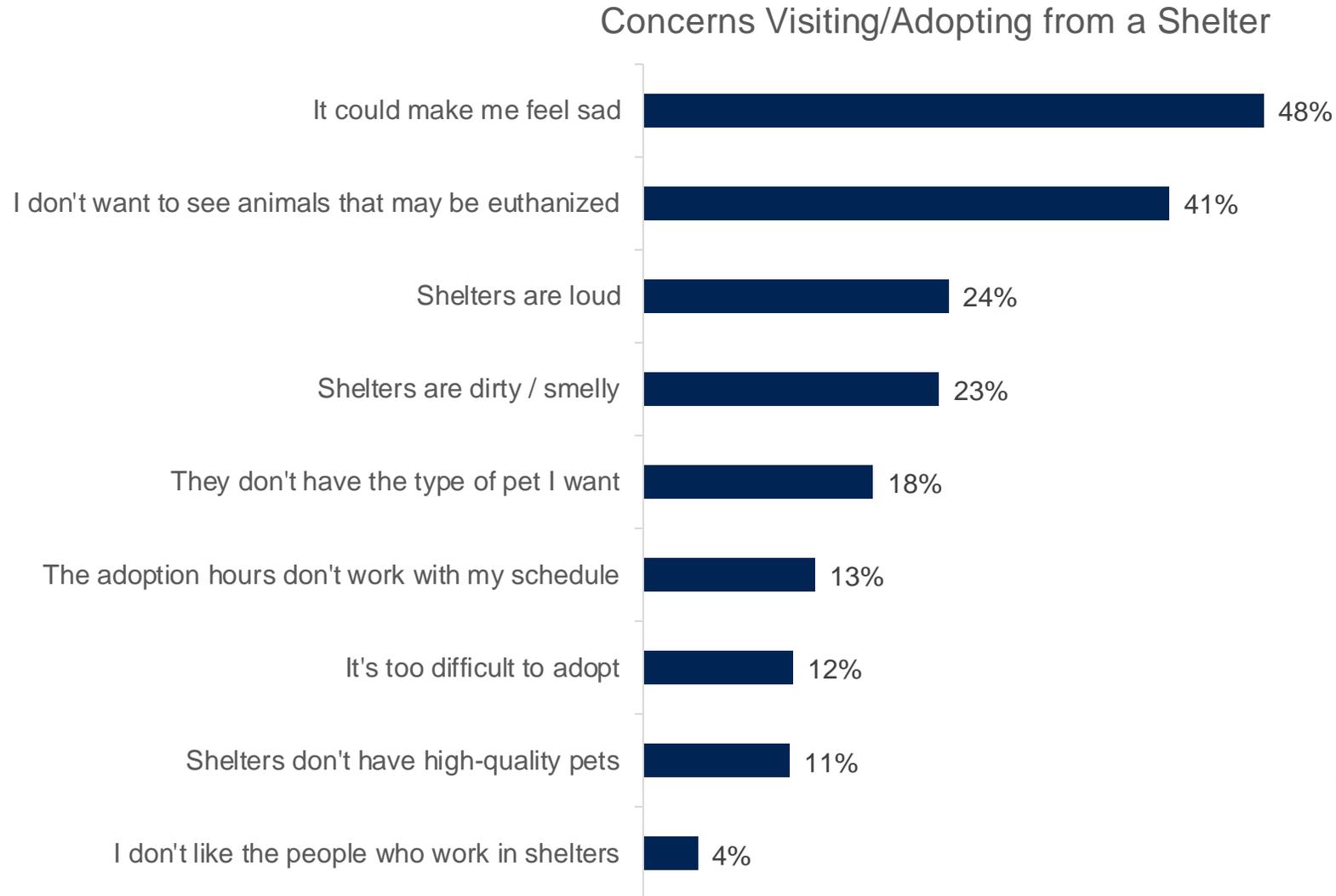
“I feel like they are not good places for animals.”

“Often overcrowded and under staffed. Animals don't get the attention they need”

“They euthanize animals that can't find homes for”

“Overcrowded and scary”

Consumers hesitate to visit or adopt from shelters mainly due to sadness and euthanasia concerns.

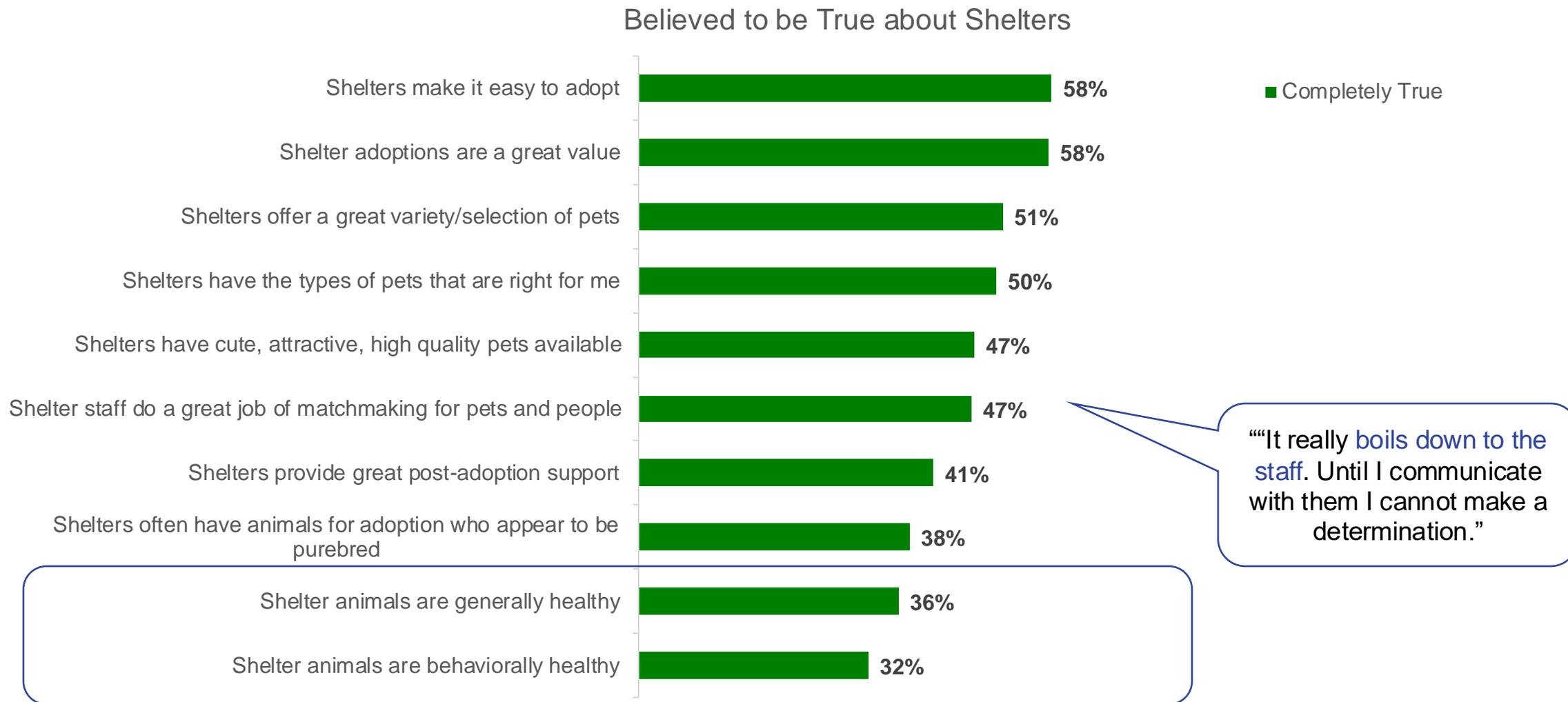


“I’ve been to them before and it’s a sad atmosphere plus it’s not all that clean and all the animals look sad and are trapped in cages”

“So many sad and lonely animals”

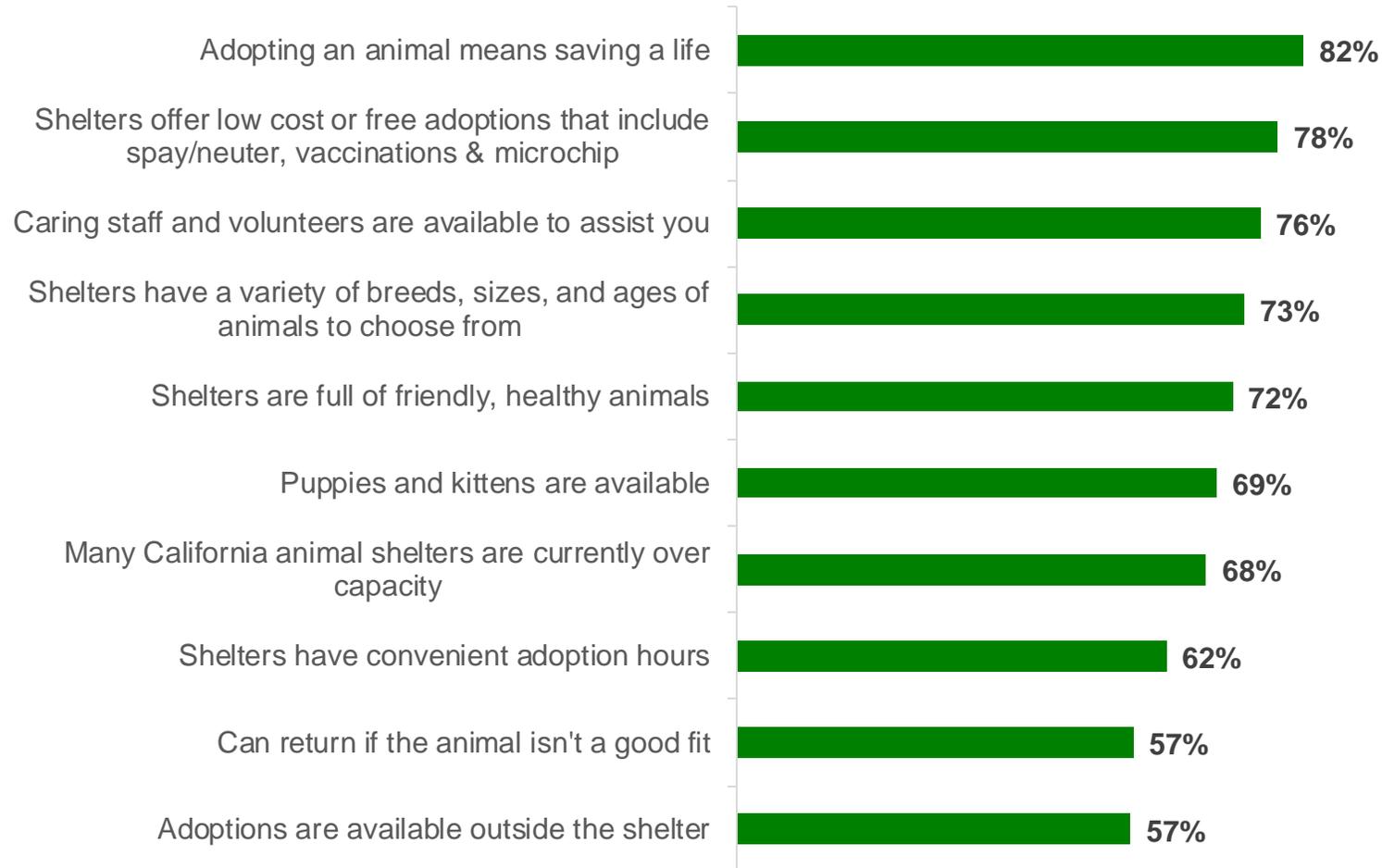
“There are good animal shelters and bad animal shelters. Some that keep the shelter clean and actually care about the animals and there are some that don't care at all.”

Additionally, there are concerns around the health and behavior of pets at shelters.



Consumers respond positively to all messages but are most impacted by the idea of saving an animal's life. Low-cost services and caring staff at shelters are also highly influential.

Impact of Information on Adoption Likelihood



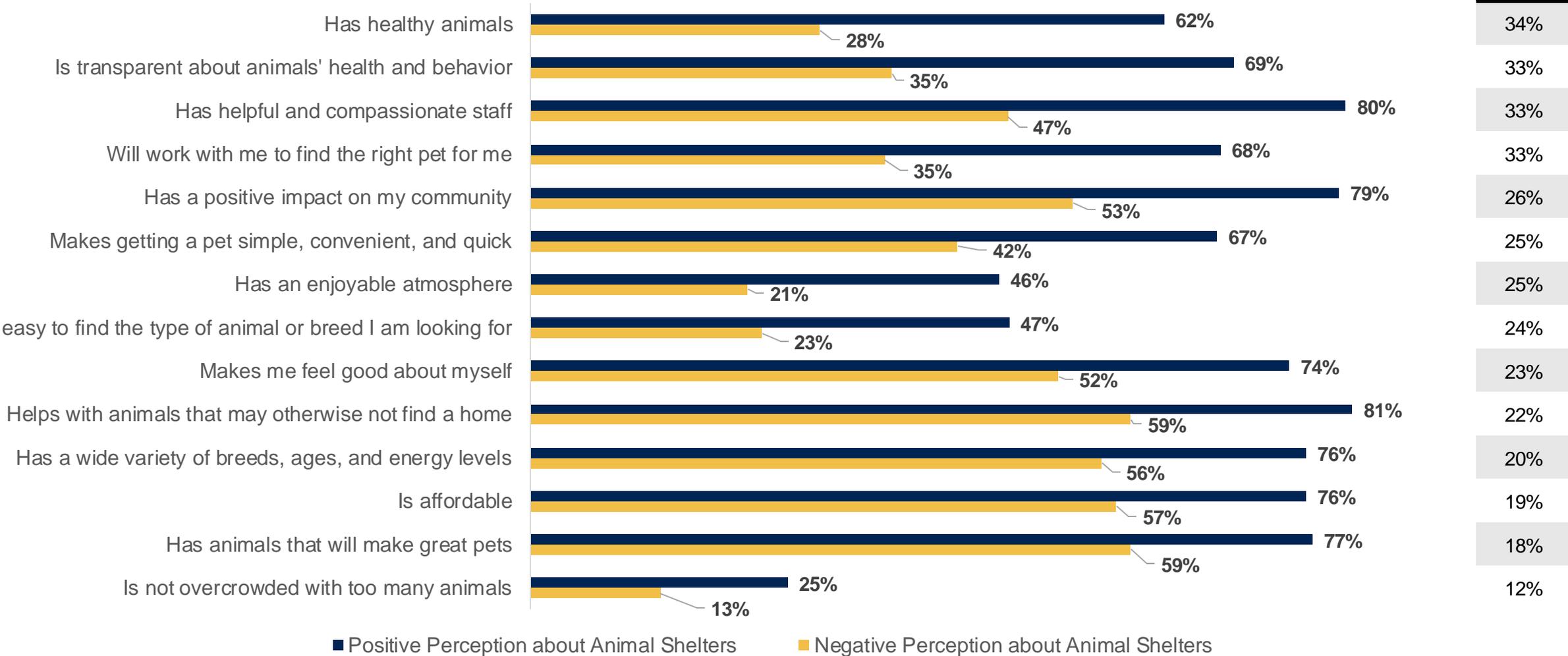
While saving a life is a motivator, it is already a commonly held belief about Animal Shelters.

■ More Likely to Consider

Those who have positive perceptions of Animal Shelters have much higher perceptions of animal health and the compassion/helpfulness of staff. Focus on these attributes to drive the biggest impact on overall perception.

Animal Shelter Perceptions

Gap



■ Positive Perception about Animal Shelters

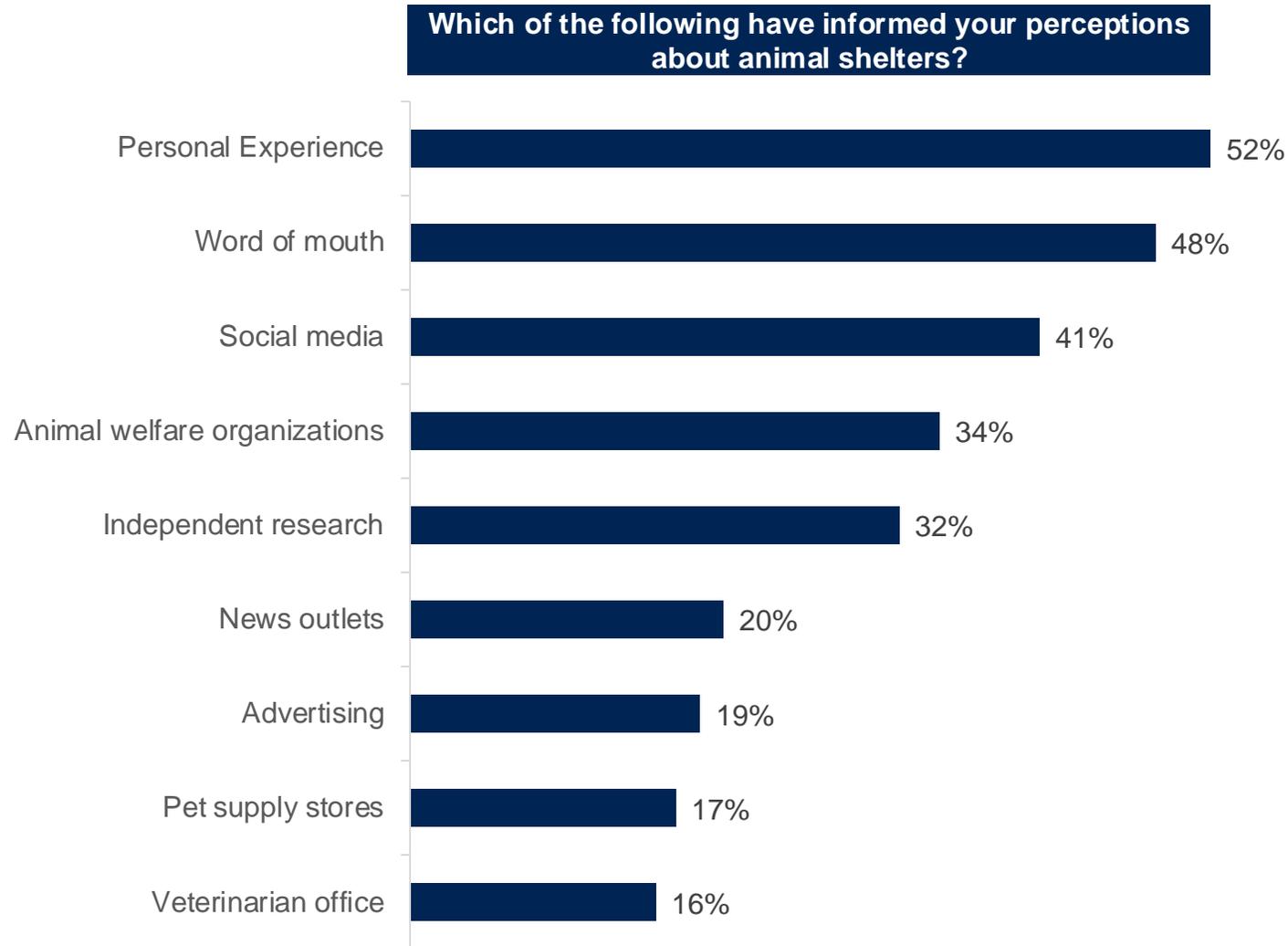
■ Negative Perception about Animal Shelters

INFORMATION & MEDIA

General Pet Adoption Media
ASPCA & Best Friends Ad Response

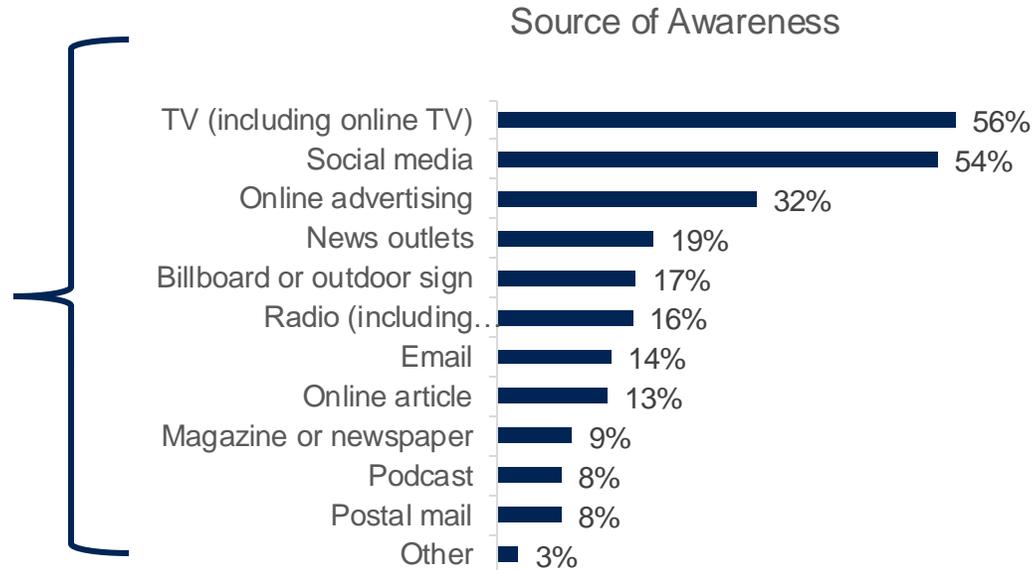
2

Consumers primarily form their perceptions of animal shelters based on personal experiences, word of mouth, and social media. Less than a fifth cite advertising.

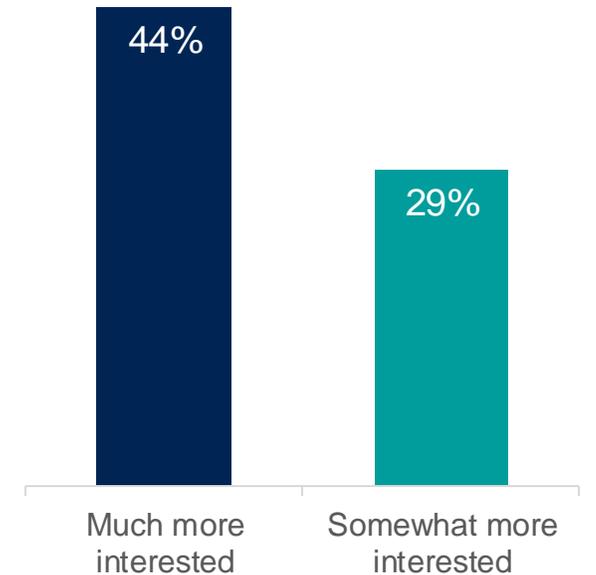


The majority of consumers recall encountering advertisements promoting animal shelters, primarily from TV and social media. The ads make consumers either much more or somewhat more interested in adopting.

Do you recall seeing any advertising promoting animal shelters or pet adoption in the last year?



How did these campaigns impact your interest in adopting a pet?

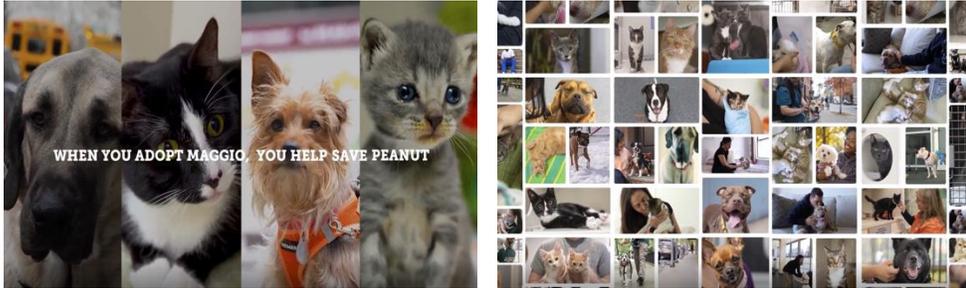


Both ads tested focus on saving lives and feature healthy, happy pets, resulting in enjoyable ads that motivate action.

ASPCA Adoption Rescue Effect Video

Ad Recall (Norm = 25%)

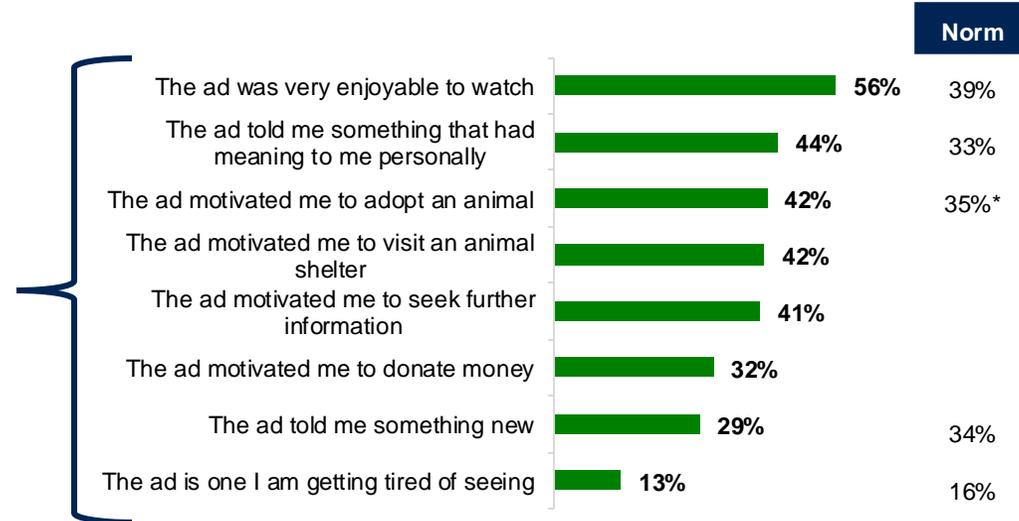
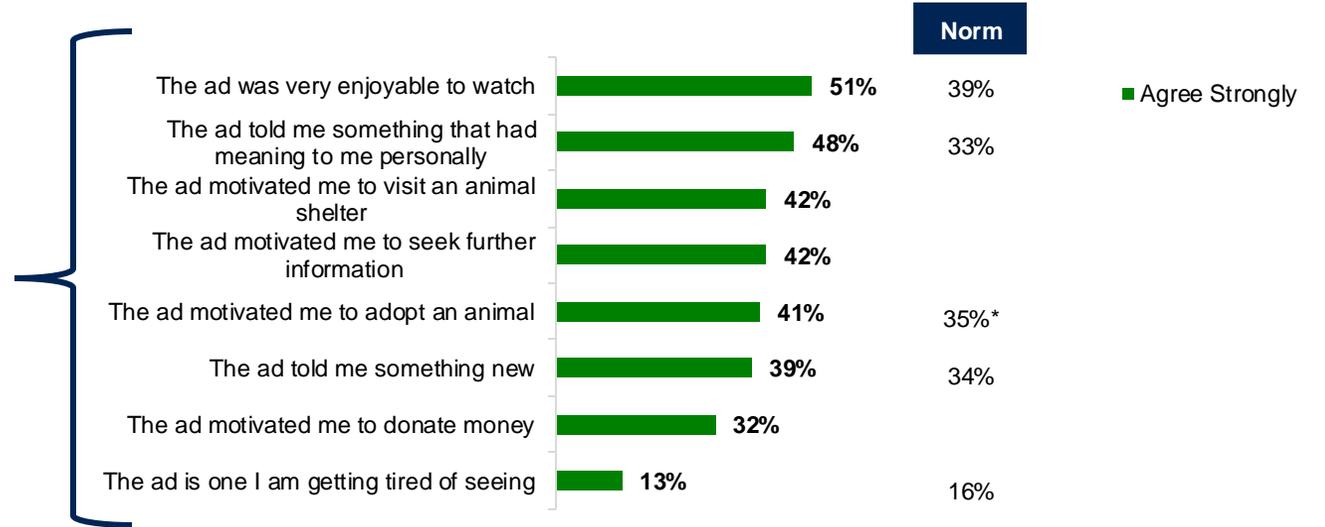
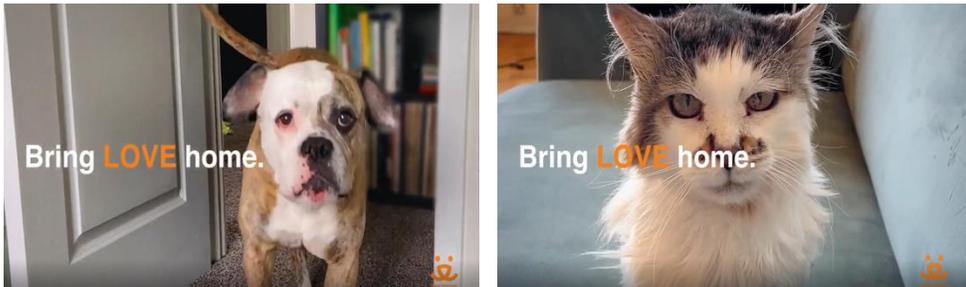
25%



Best Friends Bring Home Love Video

Ad Recall (Norm = 25%)

23%



Final Thoughts and Campaign Considerations

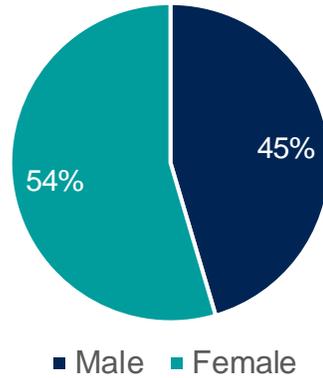
1. **Address Perception Gaps:** Develop campaign messages that address the gap between intent and action, focusing on the positive experiences and stories of successful adoptions.
2. **Focus on In-Person Experience:** Highlight positives of shelter environments and processes to drive potential adopters towards visiting in person.
3. **Targeted Messaging:** Tailor messages to address specific concerns in Los Angeles.
4. **Barrier Reduction:** Directly address and dispel myths about 'kill' shelters and emphasize the health checks and care given to animals.
5. **Highlight Positive Attributes:** Consider testimonials and stories to underscore animal health and compassionate staff.
6. **Adapt Messaging:** While the life-saving aspect of adoptions is a strong motivator, it is too closely related to negative ideas of “kill” shelters. Consider how to keep the emotional impact of adopting while maintaining positive messaging.

APPENDIX

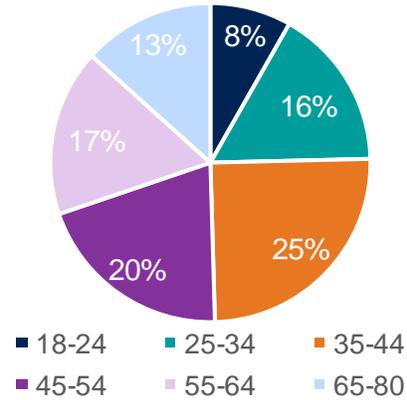
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Respondent Profile

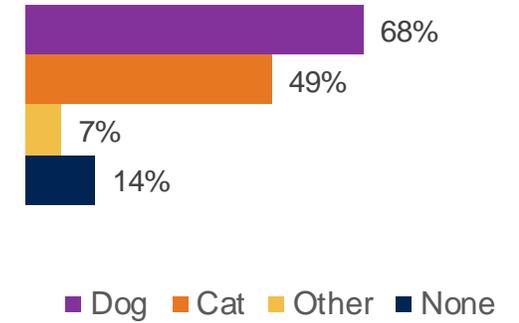
Gender



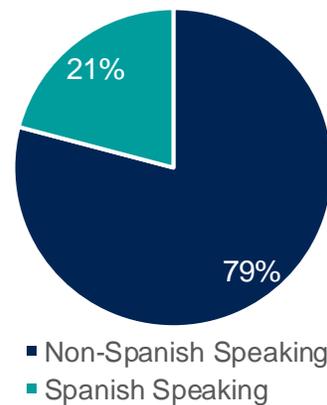
Age



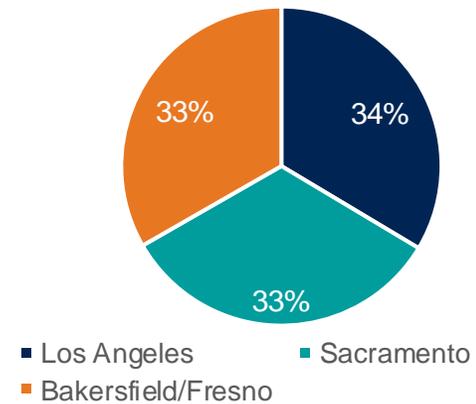
Current Pets



Language

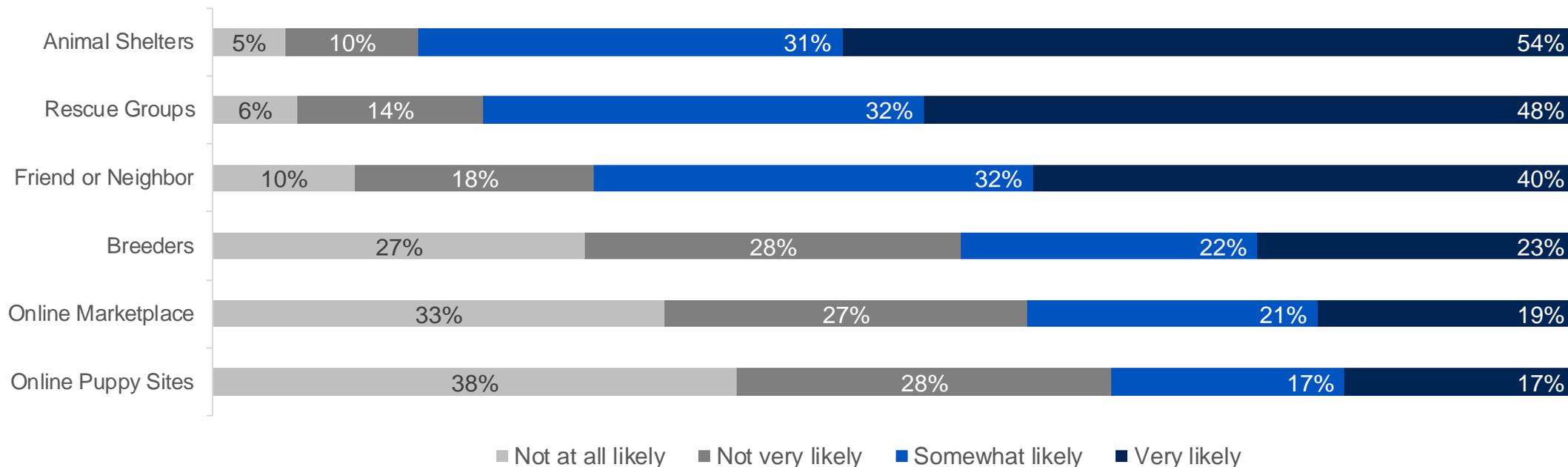


Market Area



Consumers say they are most likely to acquire future pets from an animal shelter or rescue group.

Future Acquisition Location Likelihood

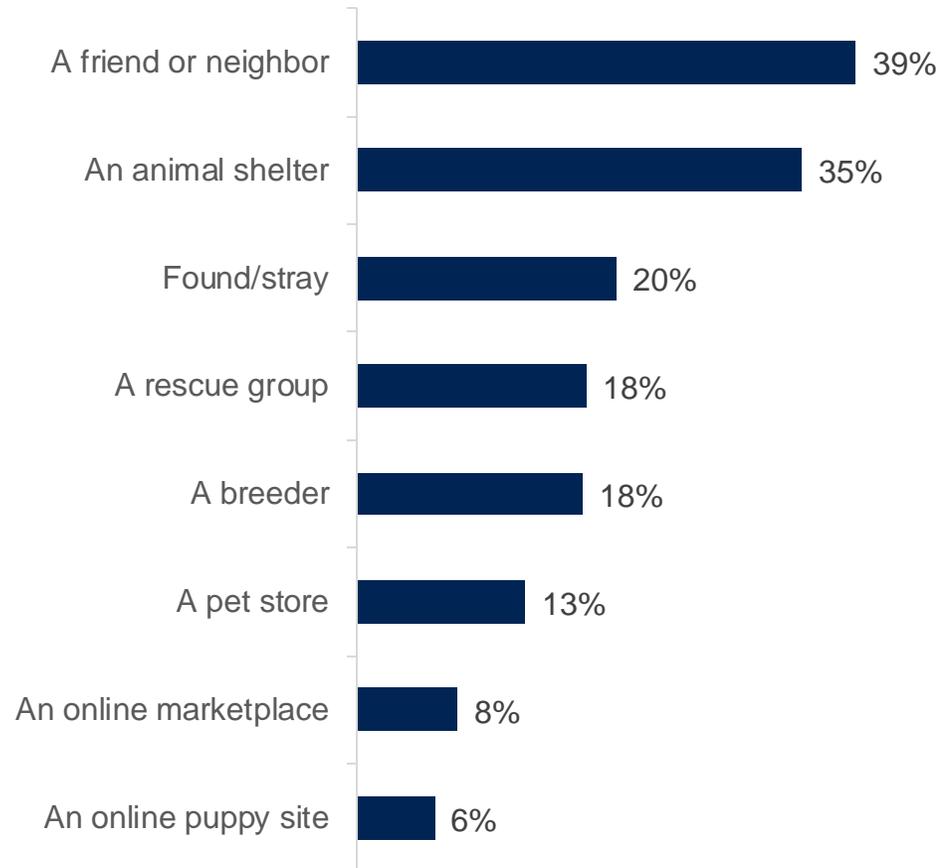


Future Acquisition Timeframe

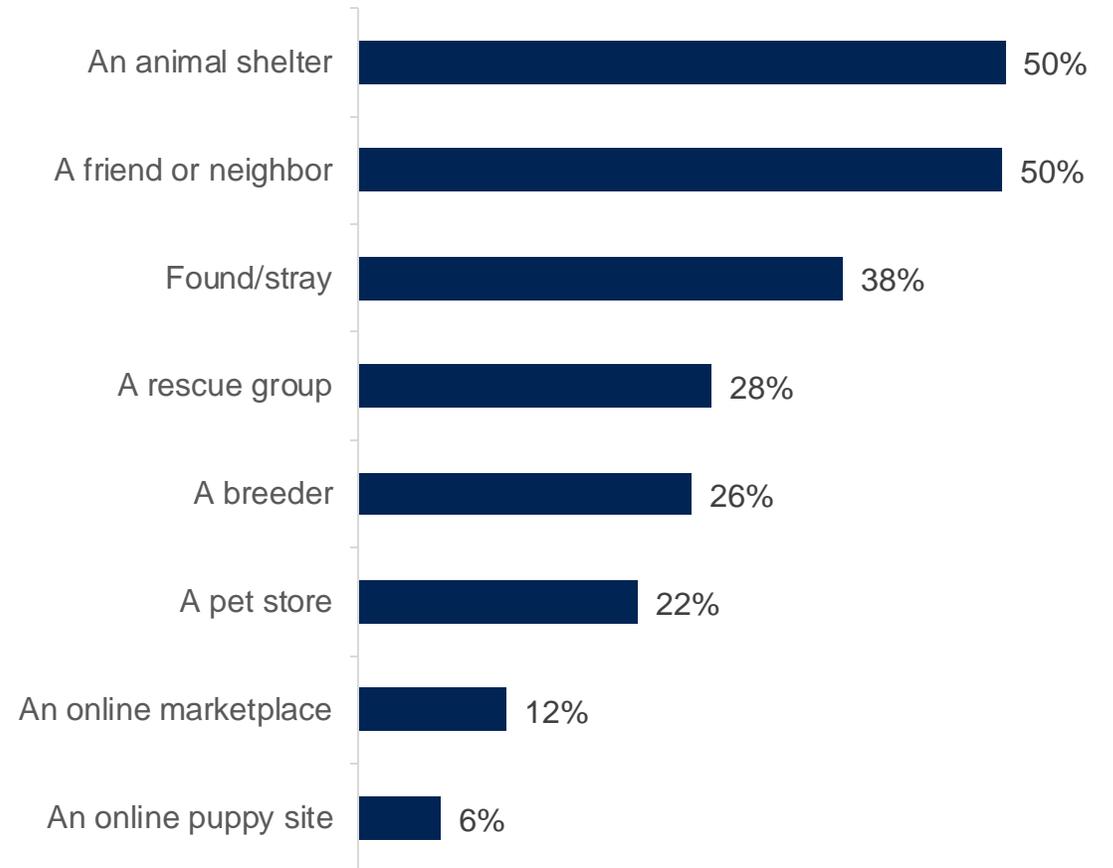


Shelters are one of the most common ways that respondents acquired their current and past pets; half have adopted from a shelter.

Current Pet Acquisition

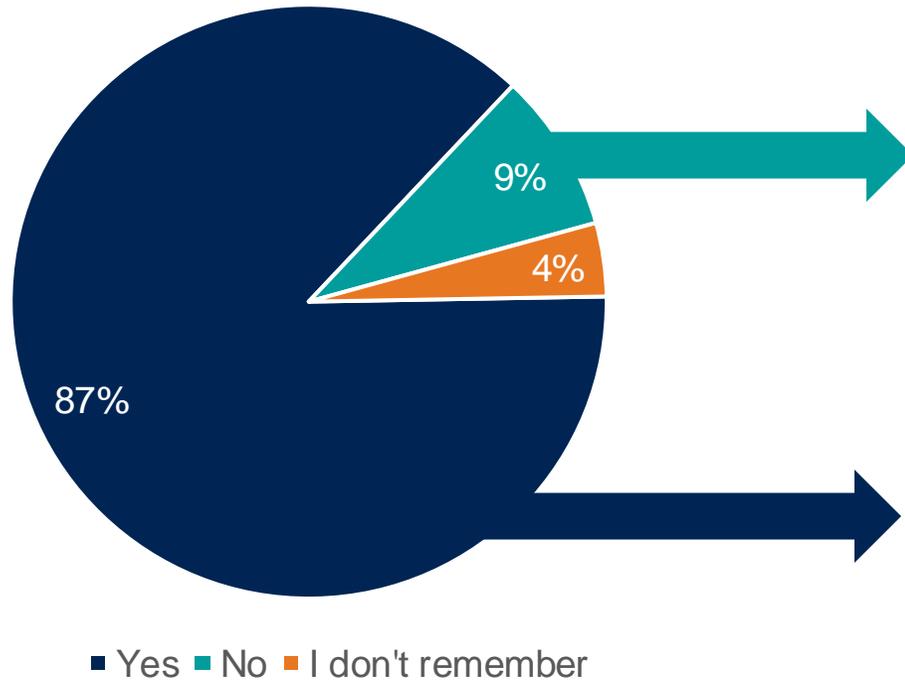


All Past Pet Acquisition

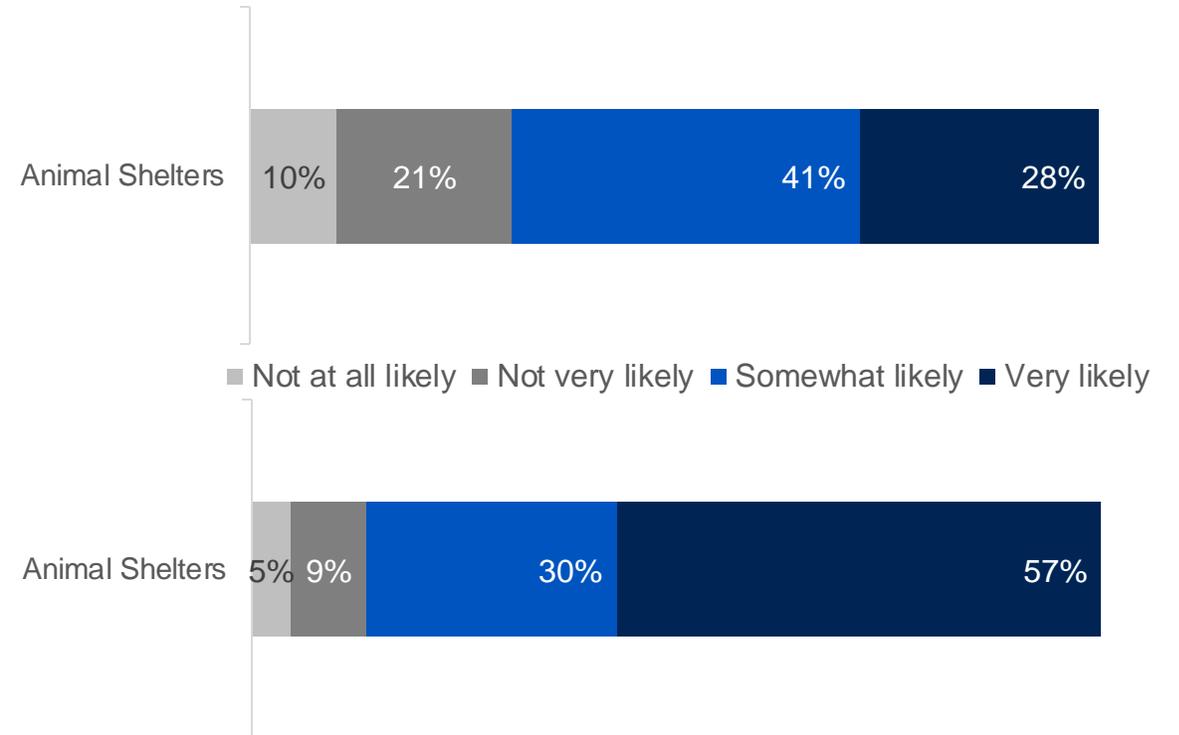


Consumers who have visited an animal shelter in the past are much more likely to consider adopting from one in the future.

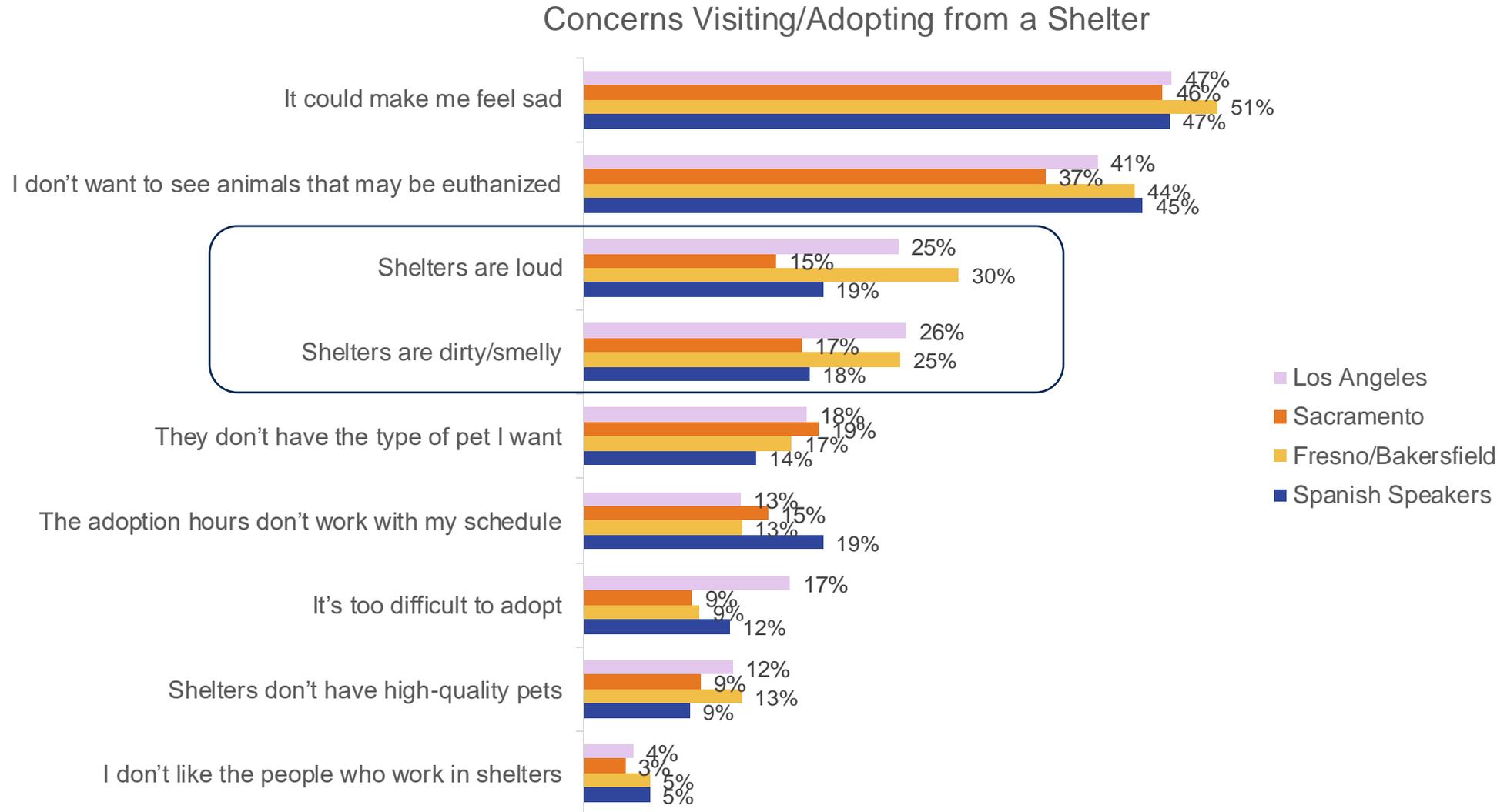
Have you personally ever visited an animal shelter?



Future Acquisition Likelihood

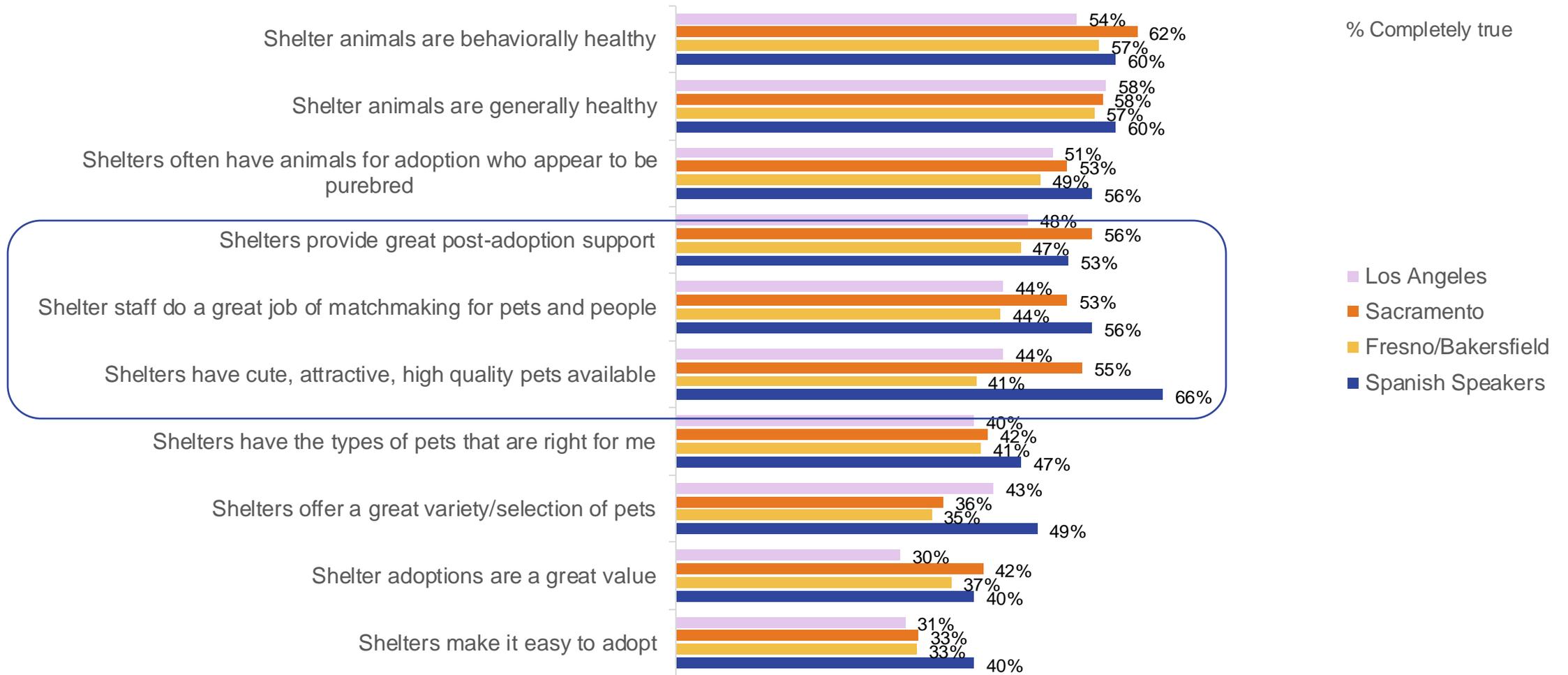


Concerns are generally similar across cities, but consumers in Sacramento feel better about the in-shelter atmosphere than those from L.A. or Fresno/Bakersfield.



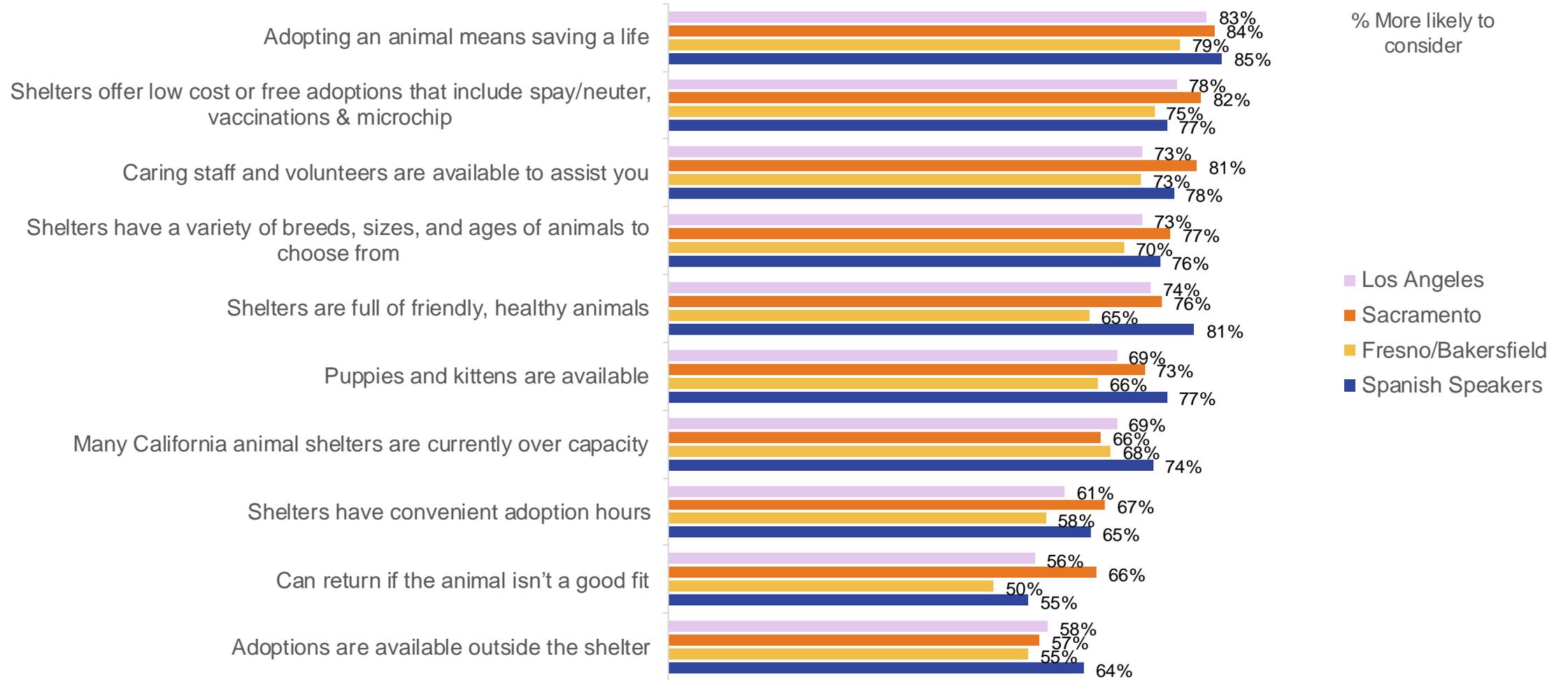
Perceptions of shelters and shelter pets are generally higher among Spanish Speakers and in Sacramento.

Believed to be True about Shelters



The most impactful information is the same across markets. Spanish Speakers respond more positively to the fact that shelters are full of friendly, healthy animals.

Impact of Information on Adoption Likelihood



% More likely to consider

- Los Angeles
- Sacramento
- Fresno/Bakersfield
- Spanish Speakers