

Pets help owners meet people and make friends

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Pets play an important role in developing healthy neighbourhoods by helping their owners to meet people, make friends and even gain emotional and practical support from these friendships, according to researchers at The University of Western Australia.

The research, published in *PLOS One*, found pet owners were significantly more likely to get to know people in their neighbourhood than non-pet owners.

Lead author Associate Professor Lisa Wood, from UWA's School of Population Health, said previous research had revealed that strong social networks were good for mental and [physical health](#) and the latest study

focused on the ability of pets to promote this.

"We found that around 40 per cent of pet owners reported receiving one or more types of social support from someone they met through their pet – this ranged from someone they could talk to about problems or things that were worrying them, through to being able to ask someone for advice or practical help," Associate Professor Wood said.

Dogs were the most common pets, but cats, rabbits, birds and guinea pigs were also included. All pet owners were more likely to know people in their [neighbourhood](#) than those who didn't own a pet, she said.

"With loneliness and social isolation a major problem in Australia, [pet](#) ownership may be one way to help those who feel alone. Pets create opportunities for people to interact and that can lead to deeper friendships."

About 2600 [pet owners](#) in Perth, San Diego, Portland and Nashville took part in the study.

Provided by University of Western Australia

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