

Almost a quarter of a million unowned cats estimated in UK urban areas

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The number of unowned cats in urban areas of the UK is estimated to be 247,429 according to a modeling study published in *Scientific Reports*. The authors suggest that urban areas with higher human density and

deprivation may have more unowned cats (feral, lost or abandoned cats).

Drs. Jenni McDonald and Elizabeth Skillings modeled data from 3,101 surveys of residents in five urban towns and cities in England (Beeston, Bradford, Bulwell, Dunstable and Houghton Regis, and Everton) between 2016 and 2018. The authors analyzed findings with 877 separate resident reports and 601 expert reports. The two significant factors that predicted unowned cats in the [model](#) were socioeconomic deprivation (predicted 31% of the variation of unowned cat abundance) and human [population density](#) (predicted 7% of the variation of unowned cat abundance).

The authors scaled up their model to estimate the densities of unowned cats in England and across the UK using data on human population density and deprivation. The findings suggest that there are on average 9.3 unowned cats per km² in the UK, but the number varies between 1.9 and 57 unowned cats per km² depending on the location. The authors suggest in areas with greater human population densities, there may be more owned cats as pets which can produce accidental litters, be abandoned or stray from home. Unowned cats in areas with greater [human population density](#) may also be supported through access to nutrition sources such as human food waste, according to the authors. The authors speculate that in high [deprivation](#) areas, the barriers to the timely neutering of pet cats, which prevents them from breeding, may be related to higher densities of unowned cats.

The authors caution that their model is based on data estimates and many factors may influence populations in each area, but suggest that the model provides an insight into the densities of unowned cats in the UK and may help guide interventions to manage these populations.

More information: Dr. Jenni McDonald, Human influences shape the first spatially explicit national estimate of urban unowned cat abundance,

Scientific Reports (2021). DOI: [10.1038/s41598-021-99298-6](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-99298-6).
www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-99298-6

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