

The Pet Theft and Abduction Report 2026

Crime Trends, Enforcement Challenges, and Priorities for Reform

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In partnership with PetDatabase.com

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1. Executive Summary

The Pet Abduction Act 2024 marked an important legal change by recognising dogs and cats as more than property. This report examines whether the introduction of the Act has been accompanied by changes in recorded dog and cat theft and abduction, offence classification, recovery and criminal justice outcomes.

The analysis draws on Freedom of Information responses from 45 UK territorial police forces. The number of forces contributing data varies between analyses because forces provided different levels of information. The findings therefore represent the available police-recorded data rather than a complete national total.

Dogs

36 forces provided basic annual dog crime data. Across these forces, recorded dog theft and abduction increased from 1,041 crimes involving 1,137 dogs in 2024 to 1,085 crimes involving 1,193 dogs in 2025. This represents increases of 4.2% in recorded crimes and 4.9% in the number of dogs stolen or abducted.

Among forces providing offence classification data, use of the Pet Abduction Act 2024 increased substantially, accounting for 33.0% of classified dog offences in 2025, compared with 9.5% in 2024. However, the Theft Act 1968 remained the more frequently recorded classification.

Criminal justice outcomes remained poor. In the 2025 dog outcome dataset, 11 cases (1.4%) resulted in a charge or summons. Cases closed because no suspect was identified or because of evidential difficulties accounted for a substantial proportion of outcomes. The 1.4% figure applies only to cases with usable recorded outcomes and should not be interpreted as a national charge/summons rate across all recorded dog offences.

Recovery data were available from 17 forces. Within this dataset, 102 of 497 stolen or abducted dogs (20.5%) were recorded as recovered in 2025.

Cats

34 forces provided basic annual cat crime data. Across these forces, recorded cat theft and abduction increased from 408 crimes involving 464 cats in 2024 to 466 crimes involving 507 cats in 2025. This represents increases of 14.2% in recorded crimes and 9.3% in the number of cats stolen or abducted.

Among the 25 forces providing clear offence-classification data, use of the Pet Abduction Act 2024 increased from 16.9% of classified cat offences in 2024 to 51.9% in 2025, making it the most frequently recorded classification in 2025.

Despite this increased use of the legislation, recorded criminal justice outcomes remained poor. Three cat cases (0.9%) resulted in a charge or summons in 2025. As with dogs, this figure relates only to cases with usable recorded outcomes.

Recovery data were available from 16 forces. Within this dataset, 32 of 213 stolen or abducted cats (15.0%) were recorded as recovered in 2025.

Key implications

The findings indicate a modest increase in recorded dog theft and abduction between 2024 and 2025, compared with a substantially larger increase in recorded cat theft and abduction. Use of the Pet Abduction Act 2024 increased considerably for both species, particularly for cats, but this has not yet been accompanied by improved recorded charge/summons outcomes.

The report also identifies substantial inconsistencies in police recording and data availability. Although 36 forces provided basic dog data and 34 provided basic cat data, smaller subsets provided information on offence classification, outcomes, recovery and other variables. This limits direct national comparisons and demonstrates the need for standardised recording practices, consistent outcome and classification categories, clearer national guidance, improved intelligence sharing, and annual publication of comparable pet theft and abduction statistics.

Overall, the evidence suggests that the Pet Abduction Act 2024 has changed how pet abduction is recorded, but significant challenges remain in consistent recording, investigation, recovery and criminal justice outcomes.

2. Introduction

For many families, the theft or abduction of a dog or cat is far more than a property crime (Allen and Wyatt, 2024); it represents the loss of a valued companion and family member. Such incidents can cause significant emotional distress, trauma, and long-term psychological harm for caregivers, while also negatively affecting the welfare and wellbeing of the animals involved (Allen et al., 2022; Arathoon et al., 2024; Venaktramanan & Roberts, 2024). Beyond the harm to human and animal victims, pet theft and abduction can also generate substantial criminal profit through illegal resale, breeding, and organised criminal activity (Home Office, 2021).

Before the introduction of the Pet Abduction Act 2024, incidents of dog and cat theft were recorded under a variety of offence codes, most commonly as “other theft”, but also under burglary, robbery, theft from a motor vehicle, and other categories. The absence of a dedicated offence reduced visibility in crime recording systems and made these offences difficult to track consistently across police forces.

In response to growing public concern, the Pet Abduction Act 2024 came into force on 24 August 2024 in England and Northern Ireland, creating a specific criminal offence for the abduction of dogs and cats for the first time (Defra, 2024). This marked a significant shift in the legal recognition of companion animals, moving beyond their traditional treatment solely as property under theft legislation. However, Scotland and Wales did not adopt equivalent legislation.

Although the Pet Abduction Act 2024 introduced a standalone offence, it does not replace the Theft Act 1968 in all circumstances. As the Home Office (2026, p. 82) explains:

“Under this legislation it is an offence in England and Northern Ireland to take and detain a dog, whereas for cats only the taking of a cat is criminalised. This Act exempts cat and dog abductions involving parties who previously lived in the same household”.

Police must determine the most appropriate offence category based on the facts of each case. Under Home Office crime recording rules, standalone pet abduction - for example, where a dog is taken from a garden or while being walked without any associated offence - is recorded under the Pet Abduction Act 2024 using Home Office code 049/10.

Where a pet is taken during another offence, such as burglary or robbery, the principal offence remains the more serious crime. In such cases, the theft or abduction of the dog or cat is typically recorded under burglary or robbery-related offence codes rather than under the Pet Abduction Act 2024. Additional offences, such as handling stolen goods, may also be recorded if the animal is later sold.

Home Office guidance states:

“Because pet abduction is not a Theft Act crime, careful consideration needs to be given where either violence is used, and robbery could be appropriate, or

where a building is entered by a trespasser either with the intention to take a dog or cat or having entered as a trespasser a dog or cat is taken. Also, if the abduction offence is committed and the dog or cat is sold, consideration must be given as to whether a crime of handling stolen goods is appropriate for the person buying the pet” (Crime Recording Rules for Frontline Officers and Staff, 2026/27).

While the legislation represents important progress in recognising the unique status of companion animals (Allen et al., 2025; Flynn, in press), significant questions remain regarding how consistently pet theft and abduction are recorded, investigated, and prosecuted in practice, particularly given continuing data gaps and very low charge rates. In particular, there is limited publicly available evidence on the consistency of police recording practices and the operational use of the new offence.

Earlier reports (Pet Theft Awareness, 2022; Direct Line, 2025) and studies (Allen et al., 2019; Selby-Fell and Allen, 2021; Walliss et al., 2025) have examined aspects of pet theft in the UK. However, there has been no comprehensive UK-wide analysis of both dog and cat offences using police-recorded data since the introduction of the Pet Abduction Act 2024.

The Pet Theft and Abduction Report 2026 provides the first UK-wide comparative analysis of dog and cat theft and abduction for the implementation year (2024) and the first full calendar year following implementation (2025) of the Pet Abduction Act 2024, covering 2024 and 2025. It examines national trends, geographic distribution, offence classification, investigative outcomes, targeted breeds/types, theft locations, and seasonal patterns across all UK jurisdictions - England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. The Pet Abduction Act 2024 applies in England and Northern Ireland; it does not extend to Scotland or Wales, where existing legislation and recording frameworks continue to apply.

To address this evidence gap, data were collected through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests submitted to all 45 territorial police forces across the UK. Response quality varied substantially. While some forces provided detailed offence-level datasets, others rejected requests, supplied incomplete data, or recorded offences in ways that prevented meaningful comparison. Even among responding forces, substantial inconsistencies in recording practices and data quality were evident.

Despite these limitations, clear patterns emerge from the available data. This report aims to improve transparency, strengthen evidence-based understanding of pet theft and abduction, and identify where policing practice, legislation, and victim support require reform to better protect companion animals and their caregivers.

3. Methodology & Data Limitations

This report is based on Freedom of Information (FOI) requests submitted to all 45 territorial police forces across the UK. The requests, sent in January and again in June 2026, sought detailed information on dog and cat theft and abduction crimes for 2024 and 2025, including:

- Number of recorded incidents
- Number of animals stolen or abducted
- Offence classification (Theft Act 1968 vs Pet Abduction Act 2024)
- Case outcomes
- Recovery rates
- Breed or type of animal
- Location of offence
- Monthly trends

All figures in this report are extracted from live police recording systems and represent a snapshot at the time of each force's response. Crime data is subject to late recordings - incidents that are reported or entered into the system after the data extraction date. Therefore, the totals may increase slightly as forces continue to update their records.

3.1 Response Rates

Dogs:

- A total of 36 (80%) of the 45 forces provided basic crime/dog count data, including partial or merged datasets (see appendix 10.1).
- Although 36 of 45 forces supplied basic annual dog crime data, far fewer provided complete supporting data for deeper analysis. 27 forces supplied usable offence classification or outcome data (a further 5 provided merged data for 2024-2025), 23 provided breed/type data, and 18 supplied usable location data (a further 7 provided merged data for 2024-2025). This uneven variable coverage limits comparability across analytical sections.
- 9 forces (20%) did not provide usable data, either because requests were rejected or because no response was received within the statutory 20-working-day period.

Cats:

- 34 police forces (75.6%) provided basic annual cat crime data, while supporting analytical variables were available from smaller subsets of forces (see appendix 10.2).
- 26 forces supplied offence classification data (and 31 forces in the combined dataset), 27 provided monthly trend data, 17 provided usable breed/type data, and 16 provided location data. This uneven coverage limits national comparability, particularly for breed/type and location analyses.
- 11 forces (24.4%) did not provide usable data, either because requests were rejected or because no response was received within the statutory 20-working-day period.

3.2 Key Data Limitations

- **Incomplete national coverage:** A substantial proportion of police forces did not supply usable data for one or more requested categories. For dogs, 36 of 45 police forces provided basic annual crime data, compared with 34 of 45 for cats. Supporting variables such as breed/type, location, offence classification, and case outcomes were available from smaller subsets of forces. As a result, the figures in this report are likely to under-represent the true scale of pet theft and abduction.
- **Missing police forces:** The Metropolitan Police Service and Greater Manchester Police - two of the largest police forces in the UK - did not supply usable data for dogs or cats. Crimes within these force areas are therefore not included in the dataset, reducing national coverage and limiting direct comparison with previous years.
- **Under-reporting of incidents:** Some pet theft and abduction incidents are likely never reported to the police, particularly cat-related cases where caregivers may assume the animal has wandered off or struggle to obtain a crime reference number.
- **Inconsistent recording practices:** Police forces varied considerably in how offences were classified, how case outcomes were recorded, and whether supporting details such as breed/type and location were captured in searchable formats.
- **High levels of missing information:** Even among responding forces, substantial gaps remained in the available data. Breed/type information was missing in 38.1% of dog cases and 80.7% of cat cases in 2025. Location data was also incomplete in many responses, particularly for cats, limiting more detailed analysis of offending patterns.
- **Merged or limited datasets:** Some forces provided combined 2024–2025 figures, making direct year-on-year comparisons difficult. Greater Manchester Police, for example, could only extract data under the Home Office offence code 049/03 (Abduction of pet dog/cat) and could not separate offences involving dogs from those involving cats. They also provided no wider theft data. This meant data for this force was excluded from this report.

These limitations mean that, while this report offers the most comprehensive overview currently possible using available police data, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. The true scale of pet theft and abduction is likely higher than the recorded figures suggest, and meaningful national comparisons remain constrained by inconsistent data quality and recording standards. These patterns are examined in the following sections.

4. Dogs

A total of 36 of the 45 UK territorial police forces provided dog theft and abduction data. However, the number of forces included in each analysis varies depending on the availability of usable supporting data. For example, outcome data was available from 27 forces, breed/type data from 23 forces, and location data from 18 forces. Full details of response rates and data coverage are provided in Section 3.1.

4.1 National Overview (Crimes & Dogs Stolen/Abducted)

4.1.1 Dog Theft/Abduction Crimes and Stolen/Abducted Dogs, 2024-2025 Comparison <i>(Note: 36 of 45 UK territorial forces provided dog crime data)</i>			
Category	2024	2025	Change
Dog Theft/Abduction Crimes	1041	1085	+4.2%
Number of Dogs Stolen/Abducted	1137	1193	+4.9%

The national picture for dog theft and abduction in 2025 shows a modest increase in both recorded crimes and the number of dogs stolen or abducted. Across the 36 forces that provided data, 1,041 dog theft and abduction crimes were recorded in 2024, rising to 1,085 crimes in 2025 - an increase of 4.2%. Dogs stolen and abducted increased by 4.9% (from 1,137 in 2024 to 1,193 in 2025), suggesting a very slight increase in the average number of dogs taken per recorded offence (from approximately 1.092 dogs per crime in 2024 to 1.100 in 2025).

However, due to incomplete national data, these figures should not be interpreted as definitive evidence of UK-wide trends in dog theft and abduction.

4.2 Geographic Patterns

4.2.1 Highest Dog Theft/Abduction Forces by 2025 Crime Count									
Rank	Police Force	Crimes 2024	Crimes 2025	Crimes % Change	Pop. Figures	Crime rate per 100,000 2025	Dogs Stolen 2024	Dogs Stolen 2025	Dogs Stolen % Change
1	Lancashire	91	103	+13.19	1,601,600	6.43	114	118	+3.51%
2	Kent	114	95	-16.7%	1,931,700	4.92	121	102	-15.7%
3	West Yorkshire	103	84	-18.4%	2,435,200	3.45	111	94	-15.3%
4	Essex	45	83	+84.4%	1,929,000	4.30	52	95	+82.7%
5	Northumbria	48	66	+37.5%	1,509,800	4.37	60	66	+10.0%
6	West Midlands	53	63	+18.9%	3,036,600	2.07	64	73	+14.1%
7	South Yorkshire	74	55	-25.7%	1,430,600	3.84	74	55	-25.7%
8	Scotland	55	53	-3.6%	5,545,500	0.96	60	58	-3.3%
9	Hertfordshire	42	41	-2.4%	1,236,200	3.32	47	44	-6.4%
10	Nottinghamshire	42	38	-9.5%	1,188,100	3.20	42	39	-7.1%

The forces with the highest number of recorded crimes in 2025 accounted for 681 of the 1,085 recorded dog theft and abduction crimes nationally (62.8%). Lancashire recorded both the highest number of crimes (103) and the highest crime rate (6.43 per 100,000 population) in 2025. Essex showed the largest increase, rising from 45 to 83 crimes (+84.4%). Northumbria and the West Midlands also recorded marked rises. Several high-volume forces saw falls, including Kent, West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire.

4.2.2 Lowest Dog Theft/Abduction Forces by 2025 Crime Count

Rank	Police Force	Crimes 2024	Crimes 2025	Crimes % Change	Pop. Figures	Crime rate per 100,000 2025	Dogs Stolen 2024	Dogs Stolen 2025	Dogs Stolen % Change
1	City of London	0	0	-	15,100	0	0	0	-
2	Surrey	6	1	-83.3%	1,248,600	0.08	6	1	-83.3%
3	Wiltshire	0	4	-	767,600	0.52	0	4	-
4	West Mercia	30	9	-70.0%	1,340,800	0.67	30	9	-70.0%
5	Cleveland	20	10	-50.0%	600,400	1.67	20	19	-5.0%
6	Durham Constabulary	4	10	+150%	650,500	1.54	4	10	+150%
7	Leicestershire	8	11	+37.5%	1,175,400	0.94	9	12	+33.3%
7	Bedfordshire	14	11	-21.4%	749,900	1.47	15	12	-20.0%
7	Suffolk	10	11	+10.0%	786,200	1.40	10	11	+10.0%
10	North Yorkshire	14	12	-14.3%	844,600	1.42	15	13	-13.3%
10	Sussex	21	12	-42.9%	1,759,800	0.68	23	13	-43.5%
(Note: three forces share rank 7 and three share rank 10)									

While some police forces recorded very low levels of dog theft and abduction in 2025, others saw large percentage changes from a small base. Durham rose from 4 to 10 crimes (+150%) and Leicestershire from 8 to 11 (+37.5%), while remaining among the lowest-volume forces. West Mercia fell sharply from 30 to 9 crimes (-70.0%), and Cleveland from 20 to 10 (-50.0%). Surrey recorded only one crime in 2025. Some unusually low counts may reflect under-reporting, inconsistent crime recording, refusal to issue crime reference numbers, FOI data-quality issues, or genuinely low offending in that area.

4.3 Theft Act 1968 vs Pet Abduction Act 2024

4.3.1 Dogs: Offences recorded under Theft Act 1968 & Equivalent (for Northern Ireland)

and Pet Abduction Act 2024 (Note: 28 of 40 forces in England and Northern Ireland provided a clear breakdown. The Pet Abduction Act 2024 does not apply to Scotland or Wales)					
Year	Theft Act 1968	Pet Abduction Act 2024	Total	Theft Act 1968 %	Pet Abduction 2024 %
2024	776	81	857	90.5	9.5
2025	591	291	882	67.0	33.0
2024 plus 2025	1,367	372	1,739	78.6	21.4

The proportion of dog cases recorded under the Pet Abduction Act 2024 increased significantly, rising from 9.5% in 2024 to 33.0% in 2025. This indicates growing use of the new legislation for dog-related offences. However, even in 2025, 67.0% of classified cases remained recorded under the Theft Act 1968 (or equivalent legislation). While some of these classifications are expected - particularly where the theft formed part of a burglary or robbery - the continued high reliance on the Theft Act 1968 raises concerns that some standalone dog abduction cases may still not be consistently recorded under the new legislation. This suggests uneven implementation across police forces.

4.4 Outcomes

4.4.1 Dog Outcomes (Note: Outcome data was available from 27 of 36 forces that provided dog crime data – a further 5 forces (32 of 36) provided merged data for 2024-2025)							
	2024 (27 forces)		2025 (27 forces)		2024-2025 (+5*, 32 forces)		
Outcome Category	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	% of Total
Investigation Complete – No Suspect Identified	297	37.6%	287	36.2%	112	41%	696 37.5%
Named Suspect – Victim Supports Police Action	222	28.1%	170	21.5%	62	22.7%	454 24.5%
Named Suspect – Victim Does Not Support	218	27.6%	175	22.1%	65	23.8%	458 24.7%
Charged / Summoned	8	1.0%	11	1.4%	2	0.7%	21 1.1%

Community Resolution	2	0.3%	8	1.0%	2	0.7%	12 0.6%
Other	43	5.4%	141	17.8%	30	11%	214 11.5%
Total	790	100%	792	100%	273	100%	1,855
*Avon & Somerset, Essex, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Merseyside							

Criminal justice outcomes for dog theft and abduction remained poor across both years. The largest category was Investigation Complete – No Suspect Identified (37.6% in 2024 and 36.2% in 2025). Where a suspect was named, cases were still far more likely to end in evidential difficulties or a victim withdrawing support than in a charge. Charge rates stayed very low, at 1.0% in 2024 and 1.4% in 2025 (1.1% across all classified outcomes). Community resolutions were also rare (0.3% in 2024 and 1.0% in 2025). The rise in Other in 2025 (to 17.8%) is largely explained by unsplit or residual codes, including a large block of unspecified evidential-difficulties cases from West Yorkshire. These findings indicate that dog theft and abduction continues to be a low-risk crime for offenders, with charge/summons remaining a rare outcome even when a suspect is named.

Outcome percentages are based only on cases for which a usable outcome was supplied and should not be interpreted as national charge rates across all recorded offences.

4.4.2 Dog Recovery Rates (Police forces providing requested annual data for recovered dogs in 2024 and 2025 - 17 of 36 forces)						
	Stolen / Abducted Dogs 2024	Recovered Dogs 2024	Recovery Rate %	Stolen / Abducted Dogs 2025	Recovered Dogs 2025	Recovery Rate %
Total Forces: 17	421	77	18.3%	497	102	20.5%

Annual figures supplied by the 17 police forces provided comparable data on stolen or abducted dogs and subsequent recoveries in 2024 and 2025. Across these forces, 421 dogs were recorded as stolen or abducted in 2024, of which 77 were recovered (18.3%). In 2025 the recorded total rose to 497, of which 102 were recovered (20.5%). See Appendix 10.1.1 for more information.

4.5 Breed/Type

4.5.1 Most Recorded Breed/Type of Dog (Note: Annual breed/type data was available from 24 of 36 forces that provided dog crime data)				
	2024		2025	
Breed/Type	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Unknown / Not recorded / Not stated	346	41.9%	345	40.6%
All other grouped breeds / types / descriptions (incl. mixed, crossbreeds, 'dog')	110	13.3%	153	18.0%
Bulldog family (Bulldog, British, English, Old English, French Bulldog, French Bull Dog, Frenchie, Blue French, etc.)	106	12.8%	87	10.2%
Staffordshire Bull Terrier (Staffy, Staffie, Irish Staffy, etc.)	50	6.1%	41	4.8%
Dachshund (all types)	11	1.3%	29	3.4%
Spaniel / Cocker Spaniel	15	1.8%	27	3.2%
Bully types (XL Bully, American Bully, Pocket Bully, Bully type, Staffy XL crosses, etc.)	29	3.5%	27	3.2%
German Shepherd (incl. crosses)	18	2.2%	26	3.1%
Lurcher / Sighthound group (Lurcher, Greyhound, Whippet, Saluki, Deerhound cross)	23	2.8%	20	2.4%
Border Collie / Collie	14	1.7%	20	2.4%
Chihuahua (incl. crosses)	24	2.9%	14	1.6%
Jack Russell (all variants & crosses)	19	2.3%	14	1.6%
Labrador (incl. crosses)	13	1.6%	12	1.4%
Husky (incl. Alaskan)	7	0.8%	9	1.1%
Rottweiler	13	1.6%	8	0.9%
Yorkshire Terrier	10	1.2%	7	0.8%
Pug	8	1.0%	5	0.6%
Pomeranian (incl. Mini)	10	1.2%	5	0.6%
Total	826	100%	849	100%

When breed/type were grouped into broader categories, dogs from the Bulldog family (including French Bulldogs, British Bulldogs, English Bulldogs and related types) remained the most recorded named group in both years: 106 dogs (12.8%) in 2024 and 87 dogs (10.2%) in 2025. Staffordshire Bull Terriers were second among named groups (50, 6.1% in 2024; 41, 4.8% in 2025). Unknown / not recorded stayed the single largest row (346 and 345). Figures cover 24 of 36 forces (826 dogs in 2024 and 849 in 2025).

4.5.2 Most Reported Stolen and Abducted Breed/Type for 2025 (Note: Annual breed/type data was available from 24 of 36 forces that provided dog crime data)				
Rank	Breed/Type	Count	Total	Change from 2024 (number of dogs)
1	Staffordshire Bull Terrier	41	8.1%	-9
2	French Bulldog	40	7.9%	-10
3	Dachshund	29	5.8%	+18
4	German Shepherd	26	5.2%	+8
5	Cocker Spaniel	17	3.4%	+9
This is based on the 504 dogs with a recorded breed/type, not all 849 dogs.				

When looking at recorded breed/type as named, Staffordshire Bull Terriers were most frequently recorded named breed/type in 2025 (41 dogs, 8.1% of cases where a breed was given), down 9 on 2024. French Bulldogs were second (40 dogs, 7.9%), down 10. Dachshunds were third after a sharp rise (29 dogs, 5.8%, +18). German Shepherds were fourth (26 dogs, 5.2%, +8). Cocker Spaniels entered the top five (17 dogs, 3.4%, +9). Chihuahuas and Jack Russells, third and fourth in 2024, both fell to 14. Figures cover 24 of 36 forces; 504 of 849 dogs had a recorded breed/type.

4.6 Location

4.6.1 Dog Locations

(Note: Annual location data was available from 18 of the 36 forces that provided dog crime data -- a further 7 forces (25 of 36) provided merged data for 2024-2025)

	2024 (18 forces)			2025 (18 forces)			Combined 2024-2025 data, including 7 forces supplying merged data - the combined total is not obtained by adding the 2024 and 2025 columns.		
Location	Total	Percentage	% excluding not recorded	Total	Percentage	% excluding not recorded	Total	Percentage	% excluding not recorded
House / Home / Dwelling	211	34.5%	52.0%	221	36.1%	53.5%	152	25.6%	47.2%
Not recorded / Unknown	206	33.7%	-	199	32.5%	-	272	45.8%	-
Garden / Yard / Kennel / Shed	62	10.1%	15.3%	57	9.3%	13.8%	44	7.4%	13.7%
Other	13	2.1%	3.2%	26	4.2%	6.3%	33	5.6%	10.2%
Flat / Apartment	13	2.1%	3.2%	25	4.1%	6.1%	4	0.7%	1.2%
Street / Road / Pavement	28	4.6%	6.9%	21	3.4%	5.1%	22	3.7%	6.8%
Commercial / Shop / Pub / Vet	21	3.4%	5.2%	17	2.8%	4.1%	5	0.8%	1.6%
Public / Open place / Park / Walk	34	5.6%	8.4%	16	2.6%	3.9%	22	3.7%	6.8%
Refused to return / left with suspect	16	2.6%	3.9%	16	2.6%	3.9%	37	6.2%	11.5%
Farm / Field / Woods / Barn / Stables	8	1.3%	2.0%	14	2.3%	3.4%	3	0.5%	0.9%
Total	612	100%	406	612	100%	413	594	100%	322

*Essex, Kent, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire. Merseyside, Norfolk, Suffolk

(Note: Annual location data was available from 18 of the 36 forces that provided dog crime data – a further 7 forces (25 of 36) provided merged data for 2024-2025)

In 2025, location data was compiled for 612 dog theft/abduction crimes across 18 forces. Houses and homes remained the most common setting, accounting for 36.1% of all cases (rising to 53.5% when unknown locations are excluded). Gardens, yards, kennels and sheds were the next largest coded group at 9.3%. Flats and apartments rose to 4.1%, from 2.1% in 2024.

Combined, houses and homes (221), flats and apartments (25), and gardens, yards, kennels and sheds (57) accounted for 303 of 612 cases in 2025 (49.5%). Among the 413 cases with a coded location, that same group was 303 of 413 (73.4%). This suggests that dog theft and abduction is largely concentrated in residential and immediately associated domestic settings, with most known incidents occurring at or immediately around the caregiver's property.

4.7 Monthly Trends

4.7.1 Dog Theft and Abduction Crimes by Month (Note: Annual month data was available from 27 of the 36 forces that provided dog crime data)				
	2024		2025	
Month	Total Crimes	Percentage	Total Crimes	Percentage
January	51	6.6%	69	8.2%
February	55	7.1%	59	7.0%
March	67	8.6%	63	7.5%
April	51	6.6%	67	8.0%
May	65	8.4%	89	10.6%
June	67	8.6%	72	8.6%
July	64	8.2%	84	10.0%
August	89	11.5%	68	8.1%
September	68	8.8%	81	9.6%
October	76	9.8%	63	7.5%
November	62	8.0%	64	7.6%
December	61	7.9%	61	7.3%
Total	776	100%	840	100%

Dog theft and abduction rose in the warmer months in both years, but the peak month changed.

In 2024, cases ran from 6.6% in January and April to 11.5% in August. August was the high point (89 crimes), then October (76, 9.8%) and September (68, 8.8%). The third quarter was the strongest period (28.5%). June–August together made up 28.4% of cases.

In 2025, the peak shifted to late spring and midsummer. May was highest (89 crimes, 10.6%), then July (84, 10.0%) and September (81, 9.6%). February was quietest (59 crimes, 7.0%). The second and third quarters were almost level (27.1% and 27.7%). June–August made up 26.7% of cases.

Winter was quieter in both years. The first quarter was about 22% each year, and December was unchanged at 61 crimes.

These figures cover 27 of the 36 forces that supplied dog crime data: 776 crimes in 2024 and 840 in 2025.

4.8 Dogs - Key Findings for 2025

- Offending increased: recorded dog theft and abduction crimes rose by 4.2% (1,041 to 1,085).
- Dogs stolen and abducted increased: (1,137 in 2024 to 1,193 in 2025), suggesting a very slight increase (4.9%) in the average number of dogs taken per recorded offence.
- Use of Pet Abduction Act 2024 increased: 33.0% of dog offences were recorded under the Act (up from 9.5% in 2024).
- Charge rate remained extremely low: only 1.4% of cases (11) resulted in a charge or summons
- Fewer than one in five stolen or abducted dogs were recorded as recovered.
- Staffordshire Bull Terriers were the most frequently recorded named breed/type in 2025 (41 dogs, 8.1% of cases where a breed was given). French Bulldogs were second (40 dogs, 7.9%),
- Crime remained overwhelmingly residential: houses, flats, and gardens accounted for 73.4% of cases where location data was recorded in 2025.
- Monthly trends: May recorded the highest number of offences in 2025, followed by July and September.

5. Cats

A total of 34 of the 45 UK territorial police forces provided cat theft and abduction data. However, the number of forces included in each analysis varies depending on the availability of usable supporting data. For example, monthly trend data were available from 27 forces, offence outcome from 26, law use breakdown from 25, breed/type data from 17, and location data were available from only 16 forces. Full details of response rates and data coverage are provided in Section 3.1.

5.1 National Overview (Crimes & Cats Stolen/Abducted)

5.1.1 Cat Theft/Abduction Crimes and Stolen/Abducted Cats, 2024-2025 Comparison (Note: 34 of 45 UK territorial forces provided cat crime data)			
Category	2024	2025	Change
Cat Theft/Abduction Crime	408	466	+14.2%
Cats Stolen/Abducted	464	507	+9.3%

Cat theft and abduction increased between 2024 and 2025. Recorded crimes rose by 14.2% (from 408 to 466), while the number of cats stolen or abducted increased by 9.3% (from 464 to 507). Unlike dogs, which remained broadly stable, cat theft and abduction showed an upward trend. However, overall volumes remain significantly lower than for dogs, and due to incomplete national data these figures should not be interpreted as definitive evidence of UK-wide trends in cat theft and abduction.

5.2 Geographic Patterns

5.2.1 Highest Cat Theft/Abduction Forces by 2025 Crime Count									
Rank	Police Force	Crimes 2024	Crimes 2025	Crimes % Change	Pop. Figures	Crime rate per 100,000 2025	Cats Stolen 2024	Cats Stolen 2025	Cats Stolen % Change
1	Essex	34	50	+47.1%	1,929,600	2.59	34	50	+47.1%
2	West Yorkshire	44	46	+4.5%	2,435,200	1.89	78	53	-32.1%
3	Lancashire	32	37	+15.6%	1,601,600	2.31	32	38	+18.8%
4	Kent	45	36	-20.0%	1,931,700	1.86	48	41	-14.6%
5	Derbyshire	24	26	+8.3%	1,096,500	2.37	24	26	+8.3%
6	South Yorkshire	16	23	+43.8%	1,430,600	1.61	16	23	+43.8%
7	West Midlands	21	20	-4.8%	3,036,600	0.66	21	28	+33.3%
7	Hertfordshire	21	20	-4.8%	1,236,200	1.62	23	20	-13.0%
9	West Mercia Police	8	19	+137.5%	1,340,800	1.42	12	26	+116.7%
10	Devon & Cornwall	3	17	+466.7%	1,840,800	0.92	3	26	+766.7%

Cat theft and abduction remained concentrated in a relatively small number of police force areas in 2025, with Essex recording both the highest number of crimes (50) and the highest crime rate among the reporting forces (2.59 per 100,000). Derbyshire (2.37) and Lancashire (2.31) also recorded relatively high rates. West Yorkshire had the second-highest crime count (46) but a lower rate (1.89). Several forces saw very large percentage increases from low baselines, particularly Devon and Cornwall (crimes +466.7%; cats +766.7%) and West Mercia (crimes +137.5%; cats +116.7%). These patterns should be interpreted cautiously because several large forces did not supply data, and there are known barriers to reporting and recording.

5.2.2 Lowest Cat Theft/Abduction Forces by 2025 Crime Count									
Rank	Police Force	Crimes 2024	Crimes 2025	Crimes % Change	Pop. Figures	Crime rate per 100,000 2025	Cats Stolen 2024	Cats Stolen 2025	Cats Stolen % Change
1	City of London	0	0	N/A	15,100	0	0	0	N/A
2=	Cleveland	5	2	-60.0%	600,400	0.33	5	2	-60.0%
2=	Dorset	5	2	-60.0%	798,900	0.25	7	2	-71.4%
4=	Durham	0	3	N/A	650,500	0.46	0	3	N/A
4=	Gloucestershire	7	3	-57.1%	669,400	0.45	7	3	-57.1%
4=	Merseyside	3	3	0.0%	1,475,500	0.20	3	3	0.0%
7=	Humberside	5	4	-20.0%	962,500	0.42	10	4	-60.0%
7=	Northern Ireland	0	4	N/A	1,920,400	0.21	0	4	N/A
7=	Dyfed-Powys	14	4	-71.4%	528,000	0.76	14	4	-71.4%
10=	Cumbria	7	5	-28.6%	510,700	0.98	8	6	-25.0%
10=	Lincolnshire	1	5	+400%	789,500	0.63	1	5	+400%
10=	Surrey	2	5	+150.0%	1,214,500	0.41	2	5	+150%
10=	Wiltshire	5	5	0.0%	747,000	0.67	5	10	+100%

While some low-incidence forces recorded reductions in cat theft and abduction, others were unchanged or rose from a very small base. Cleveland and Dorset both fell by 60.0%, from 5 crimes to 2. Gloucestershire fell from 7 to 3 (-57.1%), and Dyfed-Powys from 14 to 4 (-71.4%). Cumbria declined from 7 to 5 (-28.6%). Lincolnshire rose from 1 to 5 (+400.0%) and Surrey from 2 to 5 (+150.0%). Wiltshire's crime count was unchanged at 5, though the number of cats recorded rose from 5 to 10. City of London recorded no offences in either year. Durham and Northern Ireland moved from zero to 3 and 4 crimes respectively. These year-on-year percentage changes should be treated with caution because the underlying numbers are very small.

5.3 Theft Act 1968 vs Pet Abduction Act 2024

5.3.1 Cats: Offences recorded under Theft Act 1968 and Pet Abduction Act 2024 (Note: 25 of 40 forces in England and Northern Ireland provided a clear breakdown. The Pet Abduction Act 2024 does not apply to forces in Scotland or Wales)					
Year	Theft Act 1968	Pet Abduction Act 2024	Total	Theft Act 1968 %	Pet Abduction 2024 %
2024	256	52	308	83.1%	16.9%
2025	165	178	343	48.1%	51.9%
Total	421	230	651	64.7%	35.3%

In 2024, the majority of classified cat offences (83.1%) were still recorded under the Theft Act 1968. Only 16.9% were recorded under the Pet Abduction Act 2024. That is expected, as the Pet Abduction Act 2024 only came into force in August 2024. By 2025, use of the new legislation had increased substantially. The Pet Abduction Act 2024 accounted for 51.9% of classified cases, while the Theft Act 1968 accounted for 48.1%. Across both years, the Theft Act 1968 still accounts for the majority of classified cat offences (64.7%), but the Pet Abduction Act 2024 now represents a substantial share (35.3%).

This shows a clear shift in how police forces are recording cat theft and abduction offences. Following the introduction of the Pet Abduction Act 2024, a much larger share of cases is being recorded under the new legislation rather than the older Theft Act 1968. By 2025 the two categories had crossed over, with abduction slightly ahead. This suggests that police forces are increasingly using the specific Pet Abduction Act 2024 when dealing with the theft or abduction of cats.

5.4 Outcomes

5.4.1 Cat Outcomes (Note: Outcome data was available from 26 of 34 forces that provided cat crime data – a further 5 forces (31 of 34) provided merged data for 2024-2025)						
	2024 (26 forces)		2025 (26 forces)		2024-2025 including merged data from 5* forces (31 forces)	
Outcome Category	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Investigation Complete – No Suspect Identified	119	40.1%	117	36.1%	303	39.9%
Named Suspect – Victim Supports Police Action	66	22.2%	90	27.8%	175	23.0%
Named Suspect – Victim Does Not Support	56	18.8%	54	16.7%	125	16.5%
Charged / Summoned	3	1.0%	3	0.9%	6	0.8%
Community Resolution	7	2.4%	6	1.8%	19	2.5%
Other / Not Recorded	46	15.5%	54	16.7%	131	17.3%
Total	297	100.0%	324	100.0%	759	100.0%
*Essex, Leicestershire, Merseyside, Surrey, Sussex						

Cat theft and abduction outcomes for 2024, 2025 and the combined period across UK police forces are shown below. The data covers 26 forces in the individual years and 31 forces in the combined dataset, which includes merged data from five additional forces. Criminal justice outcomes for cat theft and abduction remained extremely poor. Only 3 cases resulted in a charge or summons in 2024 (1.0%) and 3 in 2025 (0.9%).

Across the combined 31 force dataset for 2024 and 2025 there were 6 charges or summonses (0.8%). The largest share of cases were closed because no suspect was identified (40.1% in 2024

and 36.1% in 2025; 39.9% across the combined period). While the proportion of cases involving a named suspect where the victim supported police action increased from 22.2% in 2024 to 27.8% in 2025, this still did not translate into charge/summons outcomes. Community Resolution remained very low (2.4% in 2024 and 1.8% in 2025; 2.5% combined). These findings indicate that cat theft and abduction continues to be a low-risk offence for offenders, with very limited consequences through the criminal justice system.

5.4.2 Cat Recovery Rates (Police forces providing requested annual data for recovered cats in 2024 and 2025 - 16 of 34 forces)						
	Stolen / Abducted Cats 2024	Recovered Cats 2024	Recovery Rate %	Stolen / Abducted Cats 2025	Recovered Cats 2025	Recovery Rate %
Total Forces: 16	163	27	16.6%	213	32	15.0%

Annual figures supplied by the 16 police forces provided comparable data on stolen or abducted cats and subsequent recoveries in 2024 and 2025. Across these forces, 163 cats were recorded as stolen or abducted in 2024, of which 27 were recovered (16.6%). In 2025 the recorded total rose to 213, of which 32 were recovered (15.0%). See Appendix 10.2.1 for more information.

5.5 Breed/Type

5.5.1 Most Recorded Cat Breed/Type (Note: Annual breed/type data was available from 17 of 34 forces that provided cat crime data)				
	2024 (17 forces)		2025 (17 forces)	
Breed/Type	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Not Recorded / Unknown	232	73.2%	281	80.7%
Other breeds / descriptions	27	8.6%	17	5.1%
Tabby	9	2.8%	15	4.3%
Maine Coon	2	0.6%	8	2.3%
Bengal (incl. half / pedigree Bengal)	13	4.1%	5	1.4%
British Shorthair (incl. British Blue)	10	3.2%	6	1.7%
Ragdoll	3	0.9%	4	1.1%
Russian Blue	2	0.6%	4	1.1%
Kitten (age given, no other breed)	6	1.9%	5	1.4%
Black / black-and-white	7	2.2%	1	0.3%
Domestic / other shorthair	4	1.3%	1	0.3%
Persian	2	0.6%	1	0.3%
Total	317	100.0%	348	100.0%

In both years, the majority of records had no breed/type information recorded. This figure increased from 73.2% in 2024 to 80.7% in 2025, meaning that by 2025 just over four-fifths of cat theft and abduction records had no usable breed/type data.

Among the cases where a breed/type was recorded, the pattern changed between years. In 2024, Bengal was the most frequently named specific breed (4.1%), followed by British Shorthair (3.2%) and Tabby (2.8%). In 2025, Tabby was the most recorded cat type (4.3%), followed by Maine Coon (2.3%) and British Shorthair (1.7%). Maine Coon rose from 0.6% in 2024 to 2.3% in 2025. Bengal fell from 4.1% to 1.4%.

Overall, the data indicates that breed and type information is poorly recorded in cat theft and abduction cases. While some patterns can be observed - such as the rise in Tabby and Maine Coon records and the fall in Bengal - the high proportion of “Not Recorded / Unknown” entries significantly limits the reliability and usefulness of these findings.

5.6 Location

5.6.1 Cats Locations (Note: Annual location data was available from 16 of 34 forces that provided cat crime data – a further 6 forces (22 of 34) provided merged data for 2024-2025)			
	2024 (16 forces)	2025 (16 forces)	2024-2025 including merged data from 6* forces (22 forces)

Location	Total	Percentage	% excluding not recorded (71)	Total	Percentage	% excluding not recorded (55)	Total	Percentage	% excluding not recorded (188)
Not Recorded / Unknown	71	29.6	N/A	55	24.3	N/A	188	30.0	N/A
House / Home / Dwelling	98	40.8	58.0	127	56.2	74.3	251	40.1	57.3
Garden	18	7.5	10.7	5	2.2	2.9	31	5.0	7.1
Street / Road	41	17.1	24.3	24	10.6	14.0	67	10.7	15.3
Outside / Public place	1	0.4	0.6	2	0.9	1.2	58	9.3	13.2
Other	11	4.6	6.5	13	5.8	7.6	31	4.9	7.1
Total	240	100.0	N/A	226	100.0	N/A	626	100.0	N/A
*Essex, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Norfolk, Suffolk									

Among cases with a recorded location, houses and dwellings accounted for a substantially larger share (58.0% in 2024; 74.3% in 2025). This indicates that cats were increasingly taken directly from residential properties. Street locations declined as a share of recorded cases, from 24.3% to 14.0%, while garden thefts remained uncommon and fell from 10.7% to 2.9%. A substantial proportion of cases still had no location recorded (29.6% in 2024 and 24.3% in 2025), which limits the strength of these trends. The higher combined share of “outside / public place” locations is largely driven by Essex’s merged returns, which coded a large number of cases simply as “outside”, and should not be read as a year-on-year change among the 16 forces that supplied annual data.

5.7 Monthly Trends

5.7.1 Cat Theft and Abduction Crimes by Month (Note: Monthly trend figures are based on 27 of 34 forces that supplied monthly breakdowns and therefore differ from national crime totals)				
	2024 (27 forces)		2025 (27 forces)	
Month	Total Crimes	Percentage	Total Crimes	Percentage
January	27	7.7%	22	5.6%
February	23	6.6%	17	4.3%
March	19	5.4%	30	7.6%
April	27	7.7%	30	7.6%
May	31	8.8%	37	9.4%

June	30	8.6%	36	9.1%
July	35	10.0%	39	9.9%
August	26	7.4%	48	12.2%
September	36	10.3%	37	9.4%
October	35	10.0%	42	10.6%
November	30	8.6%	31	7.8%
December	31	8.9%	26	6.6%
Total	350	100.0%	395	100.0%

Cat theft and abduction increased from 350 crimes in 2024 to 395 in 2025 (+12.9%) among the 27 forces that supplied monthly data. Both years were quieter at the start of the year. In 2024 the highest monthly total was September (10.3%), followed by July and October (both 10.0%). In 2025 August was the peak month (12.2%), with October recording the second-highest monthly total (10.6%). The quietest month was March in 2024 (5.4%) and February in 2025 (4.3%).

5.8 Cats – Key Findings for 2025

- Cat theft and abduction increased: recorded crimes rose by 14.2% (from 408 to 466).
- Stolen and abducted cats increased: up 9.3% (from 464 to 507).
- The Pet Abduction Act 2024 accounted for 51.9% of classified cases, while the Theft Act 1968 accounted for 48.1%.
- Charge rate remained low: Only 3 cases resulted in a charge or summons in 2025 (0.9%).
- Recovery rate: 32 abducted and stolen cats were recovered (15.0%).
- The breed/type of 80.7% (281) of stolen and abducted cat cases were not recorded.
- Offending became increasingly residential: houses and dwellings accounted for 74.3% of cases where the location was recorded in 2025.
- Monthly trends: Cat theft and abduction was lower in winter, increased through the summer, and peaked in late summer.

6. Discussion & Interpretation

This report highlights a clear gap between legislative reform and practical outcomes. Although the Pet Abduction Act 2024 introduced specific offences for dog and cat theft and abduction, the 2025 data provides limited evidence that this has translated into reduced offending or improved criminal justice outcomes.

6.1 Legal Reform Has Not Yet Improved Enforcement

The most notable operational change since 2024 has been increased use of the Pet Abduction Act, particularly for cat-related offences. This suggests that some police forces are beginning to recognise these incidents as distinct from general property crime. However, greater legislative uptake has not led to better outcomes. Charge rates remained extremely low for dogs (1.4%) and cats (0.9%), indicating that legal reform alone has been insufficient to improve enforcement.

The continued reliance on the Theft Act 1968 for many standalone cases also points to uneven implementation across forces, likely reflecting variation in local training, guidance, and recording practices.

6.2 Pet Theft and Abduction Remains a Low-Risk Crime

Criminal justice outcomes for both species remained very poor. The vast majority of cases were closed either because no suspect was identified or due to evidential difficulties, with few cases resulting in a criminal charge. This pattern creates minimal deterrence for offenders. Cat offences were particularly concerning, with 3 cases (0.9%) resulting in a charge or summons despite rising numbers and more cases involving named suspects.

The combination of low charge rates and high case closures suggests that many offenders currently face little risk of meaningful consequences.

6.3 Residential Targeting and Offending Patterns

Offending was heavily concentrated in residential settings for both species, with this pattern particularly pronounced for cats in 2025.

For cats, proving criminal intent remains especially difficult because they frequently roam freely and may disappear for reasons unrelated to theft or abduction. This creates additional evidential barriers for police and helps explain the persistently poor outcomes in cat cases.

6.4 Different Trends for Dogs and Cats

Dog theft and abduction crimes increased slightly in 2025 (4.2% rise). In contrast, cat theft and abduction increased more sharply (14.2%). While part of this rise may reflect improved recognition under the Pet Abduction Act 2024, historically high levels of under-reporting for cat incidents suggest that genuine increases in offending may also be occurring.

6.5 Poor Data Quality Limits Understanding

One of the most significant findings is the poor quality and inconsistency of available police data. Substantial gaps remain in offence classification, outcomes, breed/type, location, and recovery status - particularly for cats, where only 17 forces provided usable breed data and 16 provided location data. Combined with missing data from several major forces and high levels of under-recording, the true scale of pet theft and abduction is likely underestimated. These limitations also restrict the ability to identify repeat offenders or emerging trends (repeat offending was not measured in this study).

6.6 The Core Challenge Is Operational

The central challenge is no longer legislative recognition - the legal framework now exists. Instead, the greater challenge lies in ensuring that police forces can apply the law consistently and effectively. This requires more standardised recording practices, clearer operational guidance, improved investigative capacity, and stronger intelligence sharing across forces.

Until these systemic weaknesses are addressed, pet theft and abduction is likely to remain a high-harm, low-enforcement crime - resulting in significant distress for victims while carrying limited consequences for offenders.

7. Conclusion

The Pet Abduction Act 2024 marked a significant step forward in recognising dogs and cats as more than property. However, the findings of this report show that legal reform has not yet delivered the operational or criminal justice improvements many had hoped for.

The national picture for dog theft and abduction in 2025 shows very little change in the overall number of recorded crimes, but a small increase in the number of dogs stolen and abducted. Across the 36 forces that provided data, 1041 dog theft and abduction crimes were recorded in 2024, rising only slightly to 1085 crimes in 2025 - an increase of 4.2%. By contrast, cat theft and abduction increased sharply, with recorded crimes rising by 14.2% (from 408 to 466), while the number of cats stolen or abducted increased by 9.3% (from 464 to 507). The Pet Abduction Act 2024 became the primary offence category for cat cases in 2025, suggesting increasing legislative uptake. Although police forces made greater use of the new legislation - particularly for cat offences – charge/summons rates remained extremely low for both species. The majority of cases continued to be closed without a suspect being identified or due to insufficient evidence.

Offending was heavily concentrated in residential settings. However, persistent weaknesses in data recording, combined with the absence of data from several major police forces, continue to limit understanding of the problem and the effectiveness of the response. These issues reflect broader inconsistencies in how pet theft and abduction are recorded, prioritised, and investigated.

England and Northern Ireland now have a specific legal framework for pet abduction, while Scotland has introduced separate dog-theft legislation and Wales has no equivalent standalone offence. The next challenge is to translate this legal recognition into consistent practice. Real progress will require stronger national recording standards, consistent outcome and classification practices, regular publication of national statistics, clearer guidance and training, improved intelligence sharing, and closer collaboration between police and animal welfare organisations. Without these improvements, pet theft and abduction will continue to carry low risk for offenders and high costs for victims.

8. Recommendations

The findings of this report highlight several areas where improvements could help police forces respond more effectively to dog and cat theft and abduction. Meaningful progress will depend on better data, clearer guidance, improved coordination, and stronger collaboration between police and external organisations.

8.1 Introduce Standardised National Recording Practices

Police forces currently record dog and cat theft and abduction offences inconsistently. This creates significant gaps in national understanding and makes it difficult to identify patterns, emerging threats, or repeat offending. A minimum UK-wide recording standard, with jurisdiction-specific offence classifications where necessary, should be developed in consultation with police forces and adopted across the UK.

The standard should include consistent recording of the following:

- Offence type (Theft Act 1968 vs Pet Abduction Act 2024)
- Breed/type of animal
- Number of animals stolen or abducted
- Location of offence
- Date of offence and/or date reported
- Recovery status (whether the animal was recovered or returned to the caregiver)
- Standardised case outcome, using mandatory categories such as: victim/caregiver does not support further action; insufficient evidence; community resolution; charged/summonsed; prosecution/court outcome, where available
- Whether a suspect was identified
- Whether the offence occurred alongside another crime, such as burglary or robbery
- Microchip status, including whether the animal was microchipped and whether registration details were current, where available

These fields should be recorded in a consistent and searchable format so that they can be aggregated reliably across police forces and used for national monitoring, intelligence, prevention and evaluation.

Standardised recording would give officers, analysts, and intelligence teams a clearer and more consistent picture of offending patterns, supporting more effective investigation and prevention.

The same minimum data fields should be used for future national statistical returns and Freedom of Information responses. This would ensure that requests for pet theft and abduction data produce comparable information across police forces and reduce the need to reconstruct national trends from inconsistent force-level returns.

8.2 Establish Annual National Publication of Pet Theft and Abduction Statistics

The Home Office and police forces should establish a consistent annual publication of national pet theft and abduction statistics. Published data should distinguish between dogs and cats and should include recorded offences, animals stolen or abducted, offence classification, case outcomes, recovery rates and key geographic and temporal patterns.

Publication should use consistent definitions and reporting fields each year, allowing meaningful year-on-year comparisons and reducing reliance on Freedom of Information requests to establish the scale and characteristics of pet theft and abduction.

Annual publication would improve transparency, support evaluation of the Pet Abduction Act 2024, and allow police forces, policymakers, researchers and animal welfare organisations to identify emerging trends and assess changes in recording, investigation and criminal justice outcomes over time.

8.3 Improve National Guidance and Training on the Pet Abduction Act 2024

Although use of the Pet Abduction Act 2024 increased substantially in 2025, recording practices remain inconsistent across police forces. While some forces have made extensive use of the new legislation, others have recorded minimal or no use. The reasons for this variation cannot be established from the available data. However, the increased use of the new classification has not yet been accompanied by improved recorded case outcomes.

The Home Office should issue clear, practical national guidance on the recording and investigation of pet theft and abduction offences, in consultation with police forces and relevant animal welfare organisations. The guidance should be accompanied by targeted training for relevant police staff and should be reviewed periodically to reflect changes in legislation, recording practice and emerging evidence.

This guidance should clarify:

- When the Pet Abduction Act 2024 should be used in standalone cases
- How pet theft or abduction should be recorded when it occurs alongside burglary, robbery, or other offences, including how the pet-related offence should be captured where another offence is recorded as the principal offence
- The importance of accurate classification for intelligence, prevention, and national monitoring

8.4 Strengthen Investigations, Intelligence Sharing, and Data Systems

Extremely low charge/summons rates and a high proportion of cases closed due to evidential difficulties or no suspect being identified suggest that current investigative approaches face significant challenges. To help address these issues, police forces could consider the following:

- Improving the consistency and timeliness of intelligence sharing between forces, particularly in relation to repeat offenders.
- Developing more structured partnerships with animal welfare organisations, microchip databases, and rescue organisations, with the aim of improving intelligence and recovery rates.

Better quality data would enable forces to more effectively identify offenders, geographic hotspots, and emerging patterns, supporting more targeted prevention and enforcement.

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10. Appendices

10.1 Police forces providing requested annual data for dog theft and abduction in 2024 and 2025.

		Crime Count (Dogs) 2024	Crime Count (Dogs) 2025	Law Use Breakdown T/A 2024	Law Use Breakdown T/A 2025	Offence Outcome	Breed / Type	Location	Month
1	Avon & Somerset	11 (11)	33 (36)	0/11	0/33	Merged	Merged	No	Yes
2	Bedfordshire	14 (15)	11 (11)	12/2	2/9	Yes	No	No	No
3	Cambridgeshire	18 (27)	21 (26)	13/5	9/12	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Cheshire	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
5	City of London	0 (0)	0 (0)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	Cleveland	20 (20)	10 (19)	11/9	2/8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	Cumbria	27 (30)	18 (21)	22/5	13/5	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
8	Derbyshire	12 (12)	24 (24)	11/1	12/12	Yes	No	No	Yes
9	Devon & Cornwall	8 (8)	26 (28)	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
10	Dorset	20 (20)	21 (23)	20/0	3/18	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
11	Durham	4 (4)	10 (10)	3/1	0/10	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
12	Essex	45 (45)	83 (83)	36/9	26/57	Merged	No	Merged	Yes
13	Gloucestershire	20 (20)	16 (16)	11/9	12/4	Merged	Yes	Yes	No
14	Greater Manchester	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
15	Hampshire	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
16	Hertfordshire	42 (50)	41 (57)	39/3	34/7	Yes	No	Yes	No
17	Humberside	15 (17)	15 (19)	15/0	15/0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
18	Kent	114 (121)	95 (102)	114/0	86/9	Yes	Yes	Merged	Yes
19	Lancashire	91 (114)	103 (118)	89/2	81/22	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
20	Leicestershire	7 (8)	11 (16)	7/0	2/9	Merged	Merged	Merged	Merged
21	Lincolnshire	5 (5)	14 (19)	2/3	4/10	Yes	Yes	Merged	Yes
22	Merseyside	26 (26)	21 (21)	23/3	12/9	Merged	Merged	Merged	Yes
23	Metropolitan	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
24	Norfolk	8 (8)	15 (15)	Merged	Merged	Yes	No	Merged	Yes
25	North Yorkshire	14 (15)	12 (12)	11/3	8/4	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
26	Northamptonshire	35 (38)	33 (35)	34/1	26/7	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
27	Northumbria	48 (60)	62 (66)	48/0	62/0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
28	Nottinghamshire	42 (42)	38 (39)	41/1	33/5	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
29	South Yorkshire	74 (74)	55 (55)	No	No	No	No	Merged	No
30	Staffordshire	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

31	Suffolk	10 (10)	11 (11)	Merged	Merged	Yes	No	Merged	Yes
32	Surrey	6 (8)	1 (1)	6/0	0/1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
33	Sussex	21 (21)	12 (12)	19/3	0/12	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
34	Thames Valley	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
35	Warwickshire	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
36	West Mercia	30 (30)	9 (9)	22/8	0/9	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
37	West Midlands	53 (64)	63 (73)	52/1	60/3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
38	West Yorkshire	103 (111)	84 (94)	102/1	77/7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
39	Wiltshire	0 (0)	4 (4)	0/0	0/4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
40	Northern Ireland	13 (13)	17 (17)	13/0	12/5	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
41	Scotland	55 (60)	53 (56)	N/A	N/A	No	Yes	Yes	No
42	Dyfed-Powys	14 (14)	18 (24)	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
43	Gwent	16 (16)	21 (21)	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
44	North Wales	No	No	N/A	N/A	No	No	No	No
45	South Wales	No	No	N/A	N/A	No	No	No	No
	Total Forces	36	36	28	28	27	24	18	28
		1041 crimes	1085 crimes	T=776 A=81	T= 591 A= 291				
		1137 dogs	1193 dogs	857 crimes	882 crimes				

10.1.1 Police forces providing requested annual data for recovered dogs in 2024 and 2025.

		Stolen / Abducted Dogs 2024	Recovered Dogs 2024	Recovery Rate %	Stolen / Abducted Dogs 2025	Recovered Dogs 2025 (%)	Recovery Rate %
1	Avon & Somerset	11	4	36.4%	36	4	11.1%
2	Bedfordshire	15	0	0.0%	11	2	18.2%
3	Cambridgeshire	27	1	3.7%	26	4	15.4%
4	Cleveland	20	1	5.0%	19	6	31.6%
5	Derbyshire	12	1	8.3%	24	4	16.7%
6	Devon & Cornwall	8	3	37.5%	28	12	42.9%
7	Durham	4	3	75.0%	10	4	40.0%
8	Hertfordshire	50	5	10.0%	57	8	14.0%
9	Humberside	17	1	5.9%	19	0	0.0%
10	Leicestershire	8	5	62.5%	16	1	6.2%
11	Norfolk	8	2	25.0%	15	4	26.7%
12	Northamptonshire	38	0	0.0%	35	1	2.9%
13	Northumbria	60	18	30.0%	66	15	22.7%
14	Nottinghamshire	42	9	21.4%	39	9	23.1%
15	South Yorkshire	74	13	17.6%	55	11	20.0%
16	Northern Ireland	13	4	30.8%	17	9	52.9%
17	Dyfed-Powys	14	7	50.0%	24	8	33.3%
Total Forces: 17		421	77	18.3%	497	102	20.5%

10.2 Police forces providing requested annual data for cat theft and abduction in 2024 and 2025.

		Crime Count (Cats) 2024	Crime Count (Cats) 2025	Law Use Breakdown T/A 2024	Law Use Breakdown T/A 2025	Offence Outcomes	Breed/Type	Location	Month
1	Avon & Somerset	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
2	Bedfordshire	5 (5)	7 (9)	1/4	1/6	Yes	No	No	No
3	Cambridgeshire	9 (13)	14 (18)	2/7	2/12	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
4	Cheshire	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
5	City of London	0 (0)	0 (0)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	Cleveland	5 (5)	2 (2)	2/3	1/1	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
7	Cumbria	7 (8)	5 (6)	5/2	0/5	Yes	Merged	No	Yes
8	Derbyshire	24 (24)	26 (26)	23/1	15/11	Yes	No	No	Yes
9	Devon & Cornwall	3 (3)	17 (26)	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
10	Dorset	5 (7)	2 (2)	5/0	1/1	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
11	Durham	0 (0)	3 (3)	0/0	0/3	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
12	Essex	34 (34)	50 (50)	19/15	13/37	Merged	No	Merged	Yes
13	Gloucestershire	7(7)	3 (3)	6/1	1/2	Yes	No	Yes	No
14	Greater Manchester	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
15	Hampshire	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
16	Hertfordshire	21 (23)	20 (20)	19/2	5/15	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
17	Humberside	5 (10)	4 (4)	5/0	4/0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
18	Kent	45 (48)	36 (41)	44/1	31/5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
19	Lancashire	32 (32)	37 (38)	32/0	25/12	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
20	Leicestershire	4 (4)	15 (15)	Merged	Merged	Merged	No	Merged	Merged
21	Lincolnshire	1 (1)	5 (5)	0/1	0/5	Yes	Merged	Merged	Yes
22	Merseyside	3 (3)	3 (3)	Merged	Merged	Merged	Merged	Merged	Yes
23	Metropolitan	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
24	Norfolk	7 (7)	12 (12)	Merged	Merged	Yes	No	Merged	Yes
25	North Yorkshire	5 (5)	7 (7)	5/0	7/0	Yes	No	No	Yes
26	Northamptonshire	12 (13)	11 (11)	10/2	4/7	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
27	Northumbria	18 (18)	15 (25)	18/0	14/1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
28	Nottinghamshire	8 (8)	11 (11)	7/1	5/6	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
29	South Yorkshire	16 (16)	23 (23)	12/4	13/10	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
30	Staffordshire	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
31	Suffolk	14 (14)	12 (12)	Merged	Merged	Yes	No	Merged	Yes
32	Surrey	2 (2)	5 (5)	2/0	3/2	Merged	No	No	Yes
33	Sussex	13 (13)	9 (9)	11/2	0/9	Merged	No	Yes	Yes
34	Thames Valley	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

35	Warwickshire	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
36	West Mercia	8 (12)	19 (26)	7/1	0/19	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
37	West Midlands	21 (21)	20 (28)	21/0	20/0	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
38	West Yorkshire	44 (78)	46 (53)	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
39	Wiltshire	5 (5)	5 (10)	0/5	0/5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
40	Northern Ireland	0 (0)	4 (4)	0/0	0/4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
41	Scotland	11 (11)	14 (14)	N/A	N/A	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
42	Dyfed-Powys	14 (14)	4 (4)	N/A		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
43	Gwent	No	No	N/A		No	No	No	No
44	North Wales	No	No	N/A		No	No	No	No
45	South Wales	No	No	N/A		No	No	No	No
	Total Forces	34	34	25	25	26	17	16	27
		408 crimes	466 crimes	T= 256 83.1% A= 52 16.9%	T= 165 48.1% A= 178 51.9%				
		464 cats	507 cats	308 crimes	343 crimes				

10.2.1 Police forces providing requested annual data for recovered cats in 2024 and 2025.

		Stolen / Abducted Cats 2024	Recovered Cats 2024	Recovery Rate %	Stolen / Abducted Cats 2025	Recovered Cats 2025	Recovery Rate %
1	Bedfordshire	5	0	0.0%	9	1	11.1%
2	Cambridgeshire	13	1	7.7%	18	0	0.0%
3	Cleveland	5	0	0.0%	2	0	0.0%
4	Derbyshire	24	1	4.2%	26	7	26.9%
5	Devon & Cornwall	3	0	0.0%	26	10	38.5%
6	Durham	0	0	-	3	1	33.3%
7	Hertfordshire	23	2	8.7%	20	2	10.0%
8	Humberside	10	0	0.0%	4	0	0.0%
9	Leicestershire	4	0	0.0%	15	0	0.0%
10	Norfolk	7	3	42.9%	12	2	16.7%
11	Northamptonshire	13	1	7.7%	11	0	0.0%
12	Northumbria	18	3	16.7%	25	3	12.0%
13	Nottinghamshire	8	4	50.0%	11	1	9.1%
14	South Yorkshire	16	2	12.5%	23	1	4.3%
15	Northern Ireland	0	0	-	4	1	25.0%
16	Dyfed-Powys	14	10	71.4%	4	3	75.0%
Total Forces: 16		163	27	16.6%	213	32	15.0%