



**Pet
Behaviour
Science**
open access journal

Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

*Email: lharvey@unitec.ac.nz

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

¹ Manukau Institute of Technology and
Unitec, Auckland, New Zealand

A transnational snapshot of burnout in professional dog trainers

Laura Harvey^{1,*}, Kelly McFarlane¹, Kristie Cameron¹

Abstract: The effects of burnout have been reported in professionals who work in the animal field, including the veterinary and animal welfare sectors, but not in professional dog trainers. This study aims to investigate burnout in professional dog trainers as part of a global call out in New Zealand, Canada, USA and UK. The data was collected via an anonymous online survey disseminated to various social media groups and international dog associations (including 'The Academy for Dog Training, and 'Environmental and Animal Sciences – Unitec' , via email to various organisations that employ dog trainers, e.g., Blind Low Vision NZ, and emails to dog training associations that offer membership to professional dog trainers in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, America, and Canada e.g. APDTNZ.), for sharing to their networks. Responses from 407 dog trainers were analysed. Of them, 91% of participants were female and there was an even spread across age groups of respondents 28 - 59+ years old, and 62% resided in the United States of America. The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory was used to assess the level of personal, work-related and client-related burnout reported by dog trainers. The results showed that 0.25% of participants reported no/low personal burnout, 49% moderate, 24% high, and 1% severe. Work-related burnout had 46% of participants reporting no/low burnout, 42% moderate, 11% high, and 1% severe. Out of the participants, 53% reported no/low burnout, 36% moderate, 9% high and 2% as severe when asked about client-related burnout. In conclusion, dog trainers are suffering burnout with participants reporting a merging of personal and work- related burnout. This research has highlighted the need for the development of targeted measurement tools and services for professional dog trainers to mitigate the effects of burnout in this industry.

Keywords: Burnout; Dog Trainer; Work Stress; Client-related stress

HIGHLIGHTS

- Burnout was common among professional dog trainers, with many participants reporting moderate to high levels
- Younger dog trainers reported higher burnout levels than older trainers
- Most dog trainers used positive reinforcement training techniques
- There is an increasing need for trainer-specific burnout measurement tools and support



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

INTRODUCTION

Dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*) are one of the most popular companion animals worldwide. As a result, industries such as dog training have expanded, exposing trainers to increases in the likelihood of work-related issues, such as burnout, for professionals in these roles. In Aotearoa New Zealand, there were approximately 850,000 dogs in 2020, an increase from 700,000 in 2011, with a third of households sharing their home with a dog (Companion Animals NZ, 2020). The number stayed relatively stable in 2024, with approximately 830,000 dogs which relates to a third of New Zealand households with a dog (Companion Animals NZ, 2024). In comparison, in Australia there are approximately 6 million dogs and nearly 50% of households have a canine companion (pop. 27 million people; Australian Bureau of Statistics, n.d.; Animal Medicines Australia, 2022). In the United Kingdom there are 13.5 million dogs and 36% of households have a dog (pop. 68 million people; Office for National Statistics, n.d.). In the United States there are an estimated 60 million dogs, with 65% of households owning a dog (Soanca, 2025). Considering the prevalence of dog ownership there is a clear need for behaviour training to maintain good animal human relationships (Companion Animals New Zealand, 2024). Such training can mitigate relinquishment or in severe cases the euthanasia of dogs that are lacking training or are demonstrating preventable behaviours requiring professional intervention.

Dog trainers provide education and practical training support to pet owners to reduce the presence of 'problem behaviours' - those behaviours deemed unacceptable by owners, but are normal for the dog. These include barking, jumping on people, hyperactivity and chewing (Chung et al., 2016; Patronek et al., 2022). If left unchanged, these behaviours can contribute to the decision to relinquish dogs to a shelter for rehoming (Patronek et al., 2022). The methods used in dog training include positive and negative reinforcement or punishment, however positive reinforcement is becoming the most popular and socially acceptable (de Castro et al., 2000; Hiby et al., 2004). Greater stress experienced by dog trainers has been connected to the type of problem behaviour they aim to improve, such as high aggression cases (Malone, 2025). The NZRSPCA and Companion Animals New Zealand, two reputable animal welfare agencies, recently supported the introduction of accreditation for animal trainers, most of whom are self-employed, who provide training using the encouragement and reinforcement of desirable behaviours (Skyner et al., 2020). Some international organisations also provide certification for dog trainers including the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

(International Association of Canine Professionals, n.d.), and the International Association of Canine Professionals (Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers, n.d.).

The need for behaviour training for dogs surged during and after the Covid-19 associated lockdowns (Waters, 2021). Gray (2020) reported that approximately 25% of dog owners in the UK reported that their dog's behaviour had changed due to the lockdown, and long-term working from home. Behaviours such as an increase in barking and whining (82% of owners) and behaviours associated with dogs hiding or moving away from people (54%; Gray, 2020). Without intervention these behaviours can result in poor outcomes for the dogs. In an Australian study almost a third of young dog deaths in primary practice were associated with undesirable behaviours such as aggression (Yu et al., 2021). The lack of management of behaviour problems has highlighted the value of dog trainers in the human animal relationship, with intervention being crucial to the connection before outcomes, such as rehoming or euthanasia, are sought.

Professions that cope with the most vulnerable side of people, such as in the health sector (including doctors, nurses, paramedics), report higher rates of burnout (Izdebski et al, 2023). Burnout was originally only discussed in the context of human-service work. It was characterised by emotional exhaustion, withdrawal from work, and energy loss (Borritz et al., 2006). Burnout could be described as a battery that cannot be recharged, gradually losing its power and efficiency. Ultimately, there is a long-term imbalance between output and outcomes caused by giving too much for too long and receiving too little in return (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 2020). Burnout can also be defined as a toxic mix of the emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and feelings of reduced accomplishment within the working environment (Murphy & Daly, 2021), leading to reduced productivity and self-esteem (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Over time, chronic workplace stress results in feelings of energy depletion or fatigue, increased mental distance from one's job or feelings of negativism and cynicism related to one's career, and reduced professional effectiveness (World Health Organization, 2019). It is, however, not classed as a medical condition, but described instead under "factors influencing health status or contact with health services" (World Health Organization, 2019)..

Burnout, in addition to related emotional factors of stress and compassion fatigue, has been identified in animal industries, such as in veterinarians and veterinary nurses, due to job factors that involve people in a vulnerable state, their sick animals, and ongoing exposure to euthanasia, cruelty, and moral injury (Harvey & Cameron, 2020; Williamson et al., 2022). This takes a



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

toll on the emotional capacity of veterinary professionals on top of factors that cause stress and burn out such as long hours, toxic workplaces, a lack of social support, and a high-demand, low-control working environment (Black et al., 2011; Maslach et al., 2001; Moore et al., 2014). Among veterinarians, this toll has resulted in increased rates of suicide. For veterinarians, this toll has resulted in an increased number of suicides (Silva et al., 2023). Dog trainers, who also navigate complex, human, animal, social and behavioural dynamics alongside their personal life, are likely to have to manage similar challenges to veterinary professionals. Dog trainers may manage emotionally charged situations that have negative outcomes and could lead to burnout in the form of work overload, isolation of those who work alone, and a high-demand environment (Channawar, 2023).

Tools to measure burnout in animal-related industries include the Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL5) that measures burnout, compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress. The ProQOL5 test is a 30-item test that includes questions related to thoughts and feelings when helping others, and has been tested in animal-related and veterinary industries such as in dog trainers (Andrukonis et al., n.d.; Malone, 2025; Scotney et al., 2019). The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), a 19-item test assessing experiences of fatigue and exhaustion related to personal (generally experienced by the individual), work (perceived as related to an individual's work environment), and client (related to working with clients) interaction, and is an alternative tool to measure burnout. It includes a direct measure for client-related stress. Due to dog trainers often being self-employed, and therefore having a direct interaction with clients, rather than an employer, (Hunsaker et al., 2015; Scotney et al., 2019), the CBI was used to measure burn out in this study. In the CBI, each set of questions (termed 'domains') is designed to reliably measure different factors, such as personal, work-related and client-related issues that affect burnout. Each domain consists of six or seven questions answered on a 5-point Likert scale. For each domain the scores represent a percentage that correspond to values from no burnout (0%) to very high degrees of burnout (80% - 100% of the score). The purpose of calculating separate percentages for each of the domains is because burnout is multi-faceted and therefore, each domain can be used to describe burnout independently.

This study aims to investigate burnout among professional dog trainers in New Zealand, the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom. The objective is to measure CBI score and explore how age, salary, employment status, and tenure in the industry may influence burnout. This study aims to gather

data to begin to understand how burnout affects dog trainers and use this information to support professionals in the dog training industry.

METHODS

A questionnaire was promoted online via dog training social media groups e.g., 'The Academy for Dog Training', and 'Environmental and Animal Sciences – Unitec', via email to various organisations that employ dog trainers, e.g., Blind Low Vision NZ, and emails to dog training associations that offer membership to professional dog trainers in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, USA, and Canada e.g. APDTNZ. The questionnaire was anonymous and restricted to those over 18 years old.

The questionnaire required the following demographic information: gender, age, qualification, employment status, annual income, and tenure as a dog trainer. The second part of the survey focused on the three areas of burnout identified in the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) of personal, work-related, and client-related factors affecting perception of their job. Participants answered each question based on a 5-point Likert scale from 1-never, or almost never or very low degree of burnout, to 5 – always or experiencing a very high degree of burnout. Two questions required reverse scoring. When totalled, a score of less than 25% corresponds 'to a very low degree' or 'almost never' and includes burnout to a low degree' and 'seldom', between 25-50% corresponds to burn out experienced 'sometimes' or 'somewhat', 50-75% is 'to a high degree' or 'often', and between 75-100% is 'to a very high degree' or 'always'.

The Unitec Research Ethics Committee, Auckland, New Zealand, approved this research (UREC Registration Number: 2022-1022).

Data Analysis

Each question has a low score of 1 and a high score of 5. For Personal and client-related burnout the maximum score is 30 (6 questions x 5), and for work-related burnout the maximum score is 25 (7 questions x 5). Each domain is divided by the total to give a percentage for that domain. Variables such as salary were provided in a range of currencies – these were converted to New Zealand dollars using the currency conversion rates of April 21st, 2025.

A series of Pearson and Spearman correlations were conducted to examine the relationship between employment type, tenure, salary, and age to burnout scores in SPSS (IBM version 22). Employment type was condensed to three categories (self-employed, employed and full time, and part time and casual) for clarity. A Principal Component analysis was also conducted



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

to measure how the questions (items) for each domain accurately assess or fit into each domain using the R® statistical package. For the CBI, items 1 – 6 measure personal burnout, items 7-13 measure work-related burnout, and items 14-19 measure client-related burnout. The analysis was used to measure how well the model was able to fit the data reflecting how well the survey questions addressed the three domains.

RESULTS

Demographic analysis

A total of 437 professional dog trainers from New Zealand, USA, Canada and the UK and completed the questionnaire. Thirty responses were removed due to being incomplete, therefore 407 responses were analysed.

Most participants were female (91.7%, $n = 373/407$) and the average age was 46.5 years, with a range of 18 to 78 years old ([Table 1](#)). The largest age group of participants was between 49 and 59 years old (23.4%) with approximately 20% of respondents filling each age bracket for those over 28 years old. The average age was 46.5 years, the median age was 46, and the maximum age was 78 ([Table 1](#)). Of the participants, 53.3% (217/407) had an undergraduate degree and 18.4% (75/407) had a master's degree as their highest qualification ([Table 2](#)).

In terms of employment type, 14.0% (57/407) were employed workers with an average salary of NZ\$58,796, 12.3% (50/407) were either full or part time with an average salary of NZ\$51,750 and 2.2% (9/407) were casual with an average salary of NZ\$40,241.47). The rest, 71.5% (291/407) were self-employed with an average salary of \$67,153 from their dog training services, but 41.2% (120/291) had additional employment to supplement their income. Of the 357 (out of 407) trainers that shared their country and salary, 38% lived in US and earned an average of \$75,233 compared to 2.8% of trainers in NZ who earned an average of \$40,595. Nearly a quarter of participants, 24.8%, had been a dog trainer for between 2 – 5 years (101/407) and 23.8% for 6 – 10 years (97/407).



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD D CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

Location (n = 407)	N (%)
United States of America	252 (61.9)
New Zealand	43 (10.6)
Australia	32 (7.9)
United Kingdom	32 (7.9)
Canada	26 (6.4)
South Africa	12 (2.9)
Other	10 (2.5)
Gender (n = 407)	
Women	373 (91.7)
Man	20 (4.9)
Non-binary	10 (2.5)
Prefer not to say	4 (1.0)
Age (n = 406)	
18 – 28 yrs	38 (9.4)
29 – 38 yrs	92 (22.7)
39 – 48 yrs	90 (22.2)
49 – 58 yrs	95 (23.4)
59+	91 (22.4)

Table 1. Demographic data of the participants including location, gender, and age. The number of respondents is provided and the percentage of total respondents that answered that question.

The participants were asked what type of training they primarily used: The largest group of 41.3% (168/407) used positive reinforcement techniques (minimising the use of punishment), 25.8% (105/407) used force-free methods (no physical pressure as in force, pain or fear is used to modify behaviour), 25.3% (103/407) used science-based strategies (those that have been empirically studied with provable successes) and 4.2% (17/407) used balanced training (use of mainly positive reinforcement but also corrective techniques that release the dog from discomfort when the desired

behaviour is performed). 14 respondents didn't complete this question. The most common issues trainers were employed to help with were puppy training (81.3%, 331/407), fear-based behavioural issues (79.9%, 325/407) and anxiety (75.0%, 305/407). Half of dog trainers also helped with dog-to-dog aggression (53.6%, 220/407) and dog-to-human aggression (53.6%, 218/407).



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

Qualification (n = 407; multiple answers)	
High School NCEA or equivalent	216 (53.1)
Undergraduate Degree	214 (53.3)
Postgraduate degree	68 (16.7)
Master's	75 (18.4)
PhD	17 (4.2)
Not specified	18 (4.2)
Tenure (n = 407)	
<2 year	28 (6.8)
2-5 years	101 (24.8)
6-10 years	97 (23.8)
11 - 15 years	68 (16.7)
16-20 years	47 (11.6)
>20 years	66 (16.2)

Table 2. Qualification and tenure as a dog trainer. The number of respondents is provided and the percentage of total respondents that answered that question.

Burnout analysis - overview

Across all scores of the categories of the scale, 64.9% of participants (264/407) experienced burnout 'often' or 'to a high degree' and 21.6% (88/407) experienced burnout 'sometimes' or 'somewhat' with 13.3% (54/407) experiencing burnout 'always' or 'to a very high degree'. This means that their scores reflected experiencing burnout between 25% and 100% of the time ([Figure 1](#)). The average score was 57.1% (Median = 56.7%), with a standard deviation of 12.9%. This indicates that based on the normal distribution, that values within 1 standard deviation, that is, 68% of people, have scores between 44.2% and experience burnout 'sometimes; to 70.0%

and the higher end of the value range that reflects 'often' experiencing burnout.

Figure 1 shows that more participants experienced more work-related (14.0%, 57/407) and client-related burnout (13.3%, 54/407) 'seldom' or 'to a low degree' than personal (7.6%, 31/407) burnout. Approximately 50% of participants experienced client-related (49.9%, 203/407) burnout 'sometimes' compared to 42.0% (171/407) having work-related or 24.6% having personal burnout (100/407) 'sometimes'. In comparison, personal burnout was experienced more by participants 'often' (48.6%, 198/407) or 'always' (19.2%, 78/407) compared to work-related (41.0%, 167/407) or client-related (33.7%, 137/407) burnout experienced 'often' but not 'always' with 3.0% (12/407) and 3.2% (13/407) respectively.



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

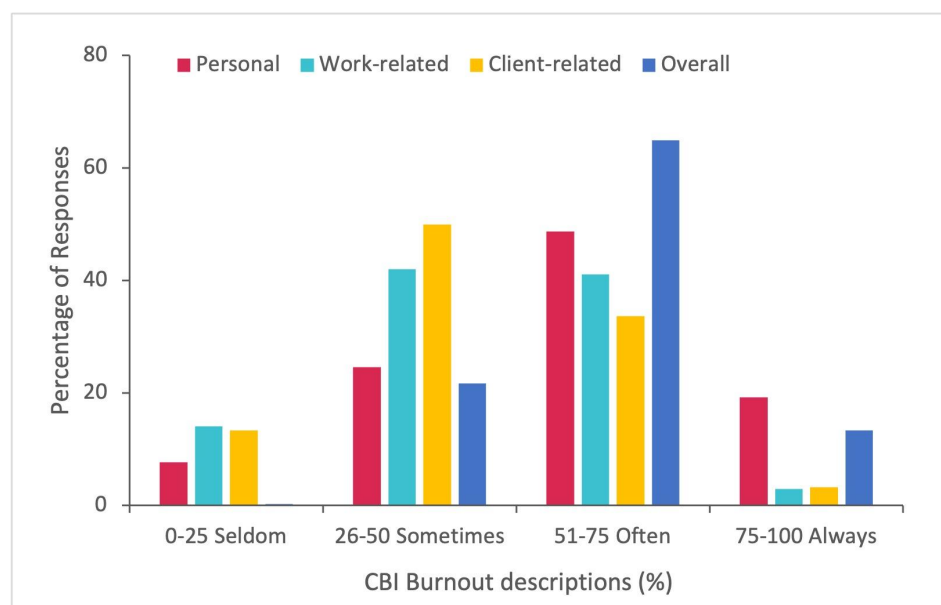


Figure 1. Percentage of respondents selecting burnout rate separated into personal, work-related and client-related factors. Overall percentages are included.

Burnout analysis - Personal burnout

The percentages of participant scores for personal burnout are shown in Figure 2. A chi square test showed significantly different distributions of the number of participants with scores in each bracket for each question [χ^2 (20) = 455.6, $p < 0.001$, Cramér's $V = 0.22$]. Most participants experienced personal burnout 'sometimes' (20.9% - 36.4%) and 'often' (20.4 - 49.4%) and attributed their scores to regular tiredness or being worn out and being physically and emotionally exhausted. Severe burnout appears to be attributed the most to tiredness (24.1%, 98/407). Fewer participants selected negative descriptors for the fatalistic questions ("How often do you think "I

can't take this anymore?" and "How often do you feel weak and susceptible to illness") compared to the other questions.



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

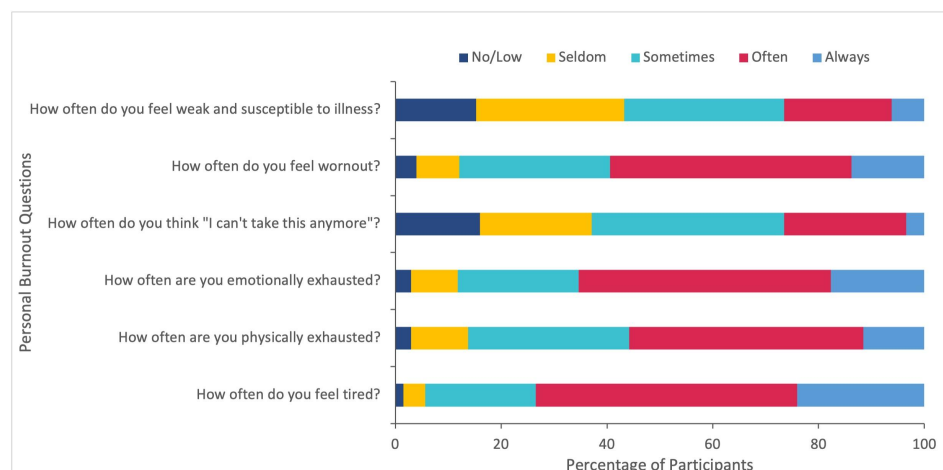


Figure 2. Personal burnout questions and the percentage of participants that reported to experience burnout 'almost never' or 'to a very low degree', 'seldom' or 'to a low degree', 'sometimes' or 'somewhat', 'often' or 'to a high degree', or 'always' or 'to a very high degree'.

Burnout analysis - Work-related burnout

Figure 3 shows the percentage of participants for work-related burnout. A chi square test showed significantly different distributions of for each question [χ^2 (24) = 421.9, $p < 0.001$, Cramér's $V=0.19$]. Most participants reported experiencing personal burnout at work 'sometimes' (approximately 25–45%) and 'often' (approximately 15–40%). Commonly, participants attributed these feelings to general tiredness, frustration, and emotional exhaustion related to their work. The highest levels of frequent burnout ('often') were reported for feeling burnt out because of work and emotional exhaustion.

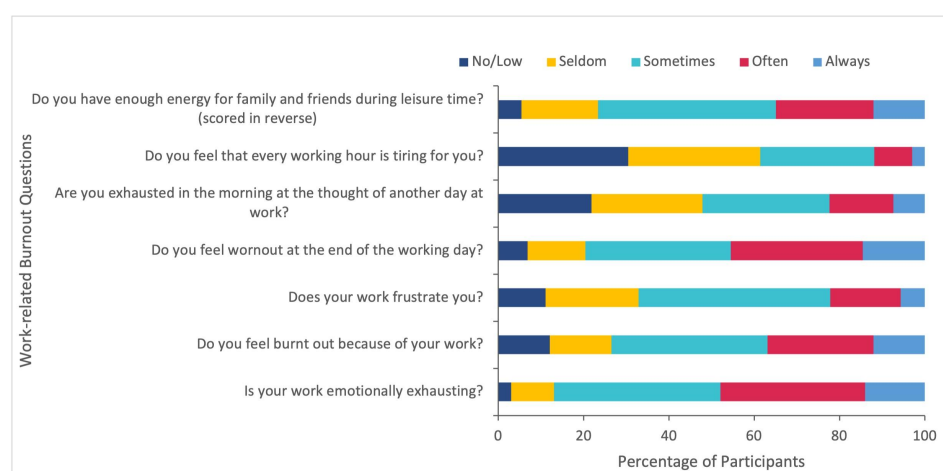


Figure 3. Work-related burnout questions and the percentage of participants that reported to experience burnout 'almost never' or 'to a very low degree', 'seldom' or 'to a low degree', 'sometimes' or 'somewhat', 'often' or 'to a high degree', or 'always' or 'to a very high degree'.



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

Burnout analysis - Client-related burnout

Figure 4 shows the percentage of participants for client-related burnout. A chi square test showed significantly different distributions of for each question [χ^2 (20) = 200.7, $p < 0.001$, Cramér's $V=0.14$]. The average score was 57.1% (Median = 57.0%; SD = 12.9) indicating that dog trainers 'seldom' to 'sometimes' experience work-related burnout reflected in questions related to tiredness, difficulty, frustration and energy required when working with clients. More participants felt they 'often' (75% score) "gave more" than they got back when working with clients and there were more responses of 'always' when asking participants if they "wonder how long [they] will be able to continue working with clients?".

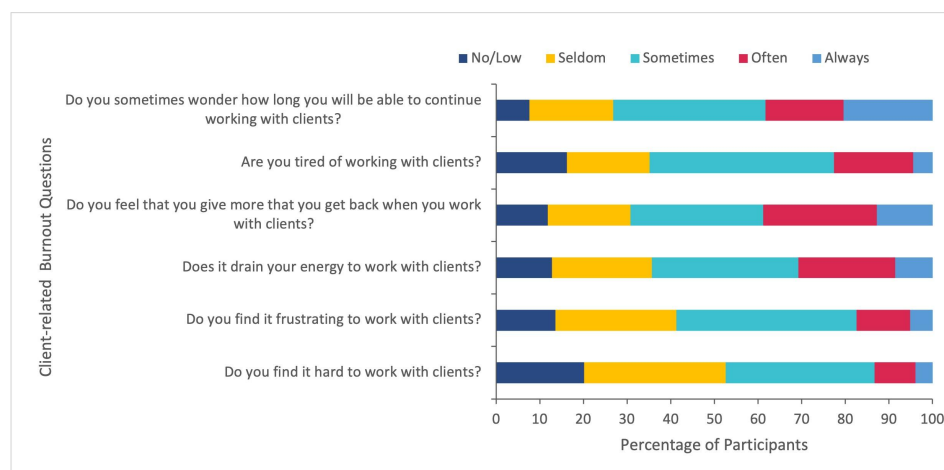


Figure 4. Client-related burnout questions and the percentage of participants that reported to experience burnout 'almost never' or 'to a very low degree', 'seldom' or 'to a low degree', 'sometimes' or 'somewhat', 'often' or 'to a high degree', or 'always' or 'to a very high degree'.

Pearson correlations revealed significant moderately negative relationships between participant age and score ($r_p = -0.376$, $p < 0.001$) and between personal score and age ($r_{sp} = -0.404$, $p < 0.001$), work-related score and age ($r_{sp} = -0.337$, $p < 0.001$), and client-related score and age ($r_{sp} = -0.296$, $p < 0.001$). There was no relationship between salary and score, tenure and score or employment and score.

Due to the weak correlations between score, and variables such as age, salary and employment, a Principal Components Analysis was performed to identify if personal, work-related and client-related burnout were being assessed as independently in the CBI in dog trainers. Suitability for PCA was confirmed by Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 5921.5$, $df = 171$, $p < 0.001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (overall KMO = 0.96), indicating that the correlation matrix was appropriate for factor analysis. The analysis revealed that personal, work-related and client-

related burnout was highly correlated with examination of the scree plot (Figure 5) suggesting that two components accounted for the majority of the variance. The varimax rotation model identified the items fitting to two domains (personal + work-related) and client-related) as opposed to the three distinct burnout types. Items 1, 2, 5, 6 and 13 ($r \geq 0.611$) measured personal burnout, and explained 54.8% of the variance. Items 14, 15, 16, 18 and 19 ($r \geq 0.759$) loaded onto the client-related burnout domain, explaining a further 9.9% of the variance. All the remaining items designed to measure work-related burnout loaded onto both domains (r values between 0.396 and 0.651).



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

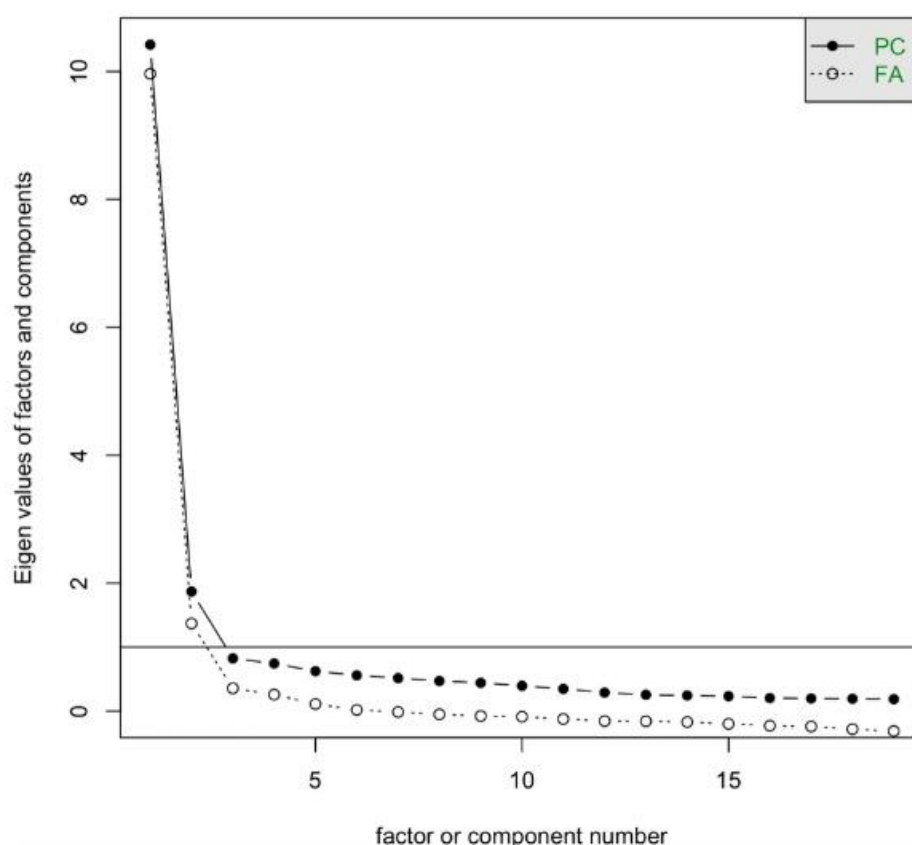


Figure 5. Scree plot from the PCA analysis conducted using R® statistical package.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to measure burnout in dog trainers. The findings indicate that dog trainers, a mostly self-employed group, show high levels of burnout in both their personal and professional lives. The presence of burnout in dog trainers aligns with previous studies that suggest moderate to high levels of burnout in dog trainers (Malone, 2025) and in animal-related occupations (Scotney et al., 2019).



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

The primary focus of this investigation was to measure burnout in professional dog trainers. The participants were mostly women (91%). This is in line with other research of animal sector workers (Englefield et al., 2019; Mastenbroek et al., 2014; Murphy & Daly, 2021; Scotney et al., 2019). According to Markovits & Queen (2009), 85% of books published on dog training and social aspects of dogs were authored by women in 2005, compared to only 30% in 1970. Although, the survey did not sample a robust enough population of dog trainers to make a summation that female dog trainers have more burnout, there is research to suggest that women experience stress due to a lack of time to complete all tasks (Whillans et al., 2021) and women take on more emotional labour in the workplace (McKinsey & Company, 2021), therefore it is likely that burnout experiences in dog trainers that are women is higher than for men.

The results showed a low negative correlation between the total burnout score and the age of the participants, suggesting that burnout decreases as age increases. Although the survey did not capture the same number of younger respondents as those over the age of 28, as did the recent Malone (2025) survey, it might be the case that dog trainers, being primarily self-employed, are not provided with workplace support in the early stages of their careers, compared with other industry professionals such as veterinary nurses. Nevertheless, Marchand et al. (2018) reasoned that younger professionals (those aged 20-35) could be juggling family-work conflicts, part of the personal domain burnout, but which could decline over time, while others have suggested that older dog trainers with more experience would cope with more stress (Leiter & Maslach, 2004; Maslach et al., 2001). However, Ahola et al. (2006) found that in the general population age is not a protective factor against burnout and Malone (2025) noted that more experienced dog trainers might take on more difficult cases increasing potential stress. It is likely then that burnout is related to other circumstances such as personal situation, which will vary widely across all populations, but more likely the nature of the type of employment. As such, any support provided to dog trainers in wellbeing support needs to be adaptable.

The results indicate that for dog trainers, salary and employment type were not related to burnout score. Research in veterinarians in Chile found a relationship between high salary and low prevalence of burnout (Weinborn et al., 2019). Adults in Great Britain show high overall wellbeing when personal wealth is high (Office for National Statistics, 2019). Whilst no causation is determined in either study, it could be surmised that being able to cover the cost of basic needs minimises stress and anxiety related to the



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

cost of living. The difference in this study is likely due to the type of employment. More than half of dog trainers (71.5%) in the current study were self-employed with an average income of \$67,000 (NZD) (Median = \$52,260). Being self-employed, they likely have more freedom in their schedule and control of their income than someone employed with strict hours. This is compared to \$71,072 (Median = \$60,485) of employed and full-time dog trainers who earn more than the median wage in Aotearoa New Zealand of \$69,804.80 annually (pre-tax, based on a 40-hour working week; June 2024) (Stats NZ, 2024). By comparison, median wage in other countries with respondents include (converted into NZD) Australia: \$79,380 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2024); Canada: \$88,671 (Government Of Canada, 2024); USA: \$136,370 (Scherer, 2025). In comparison part time or casual workers, earning \$31,198 (Median = \$20,452) are far below the median wage in Aotearoa New Zealand. With notable different average salaries globally, it is likely that country of residence and employment type heavily influence salary with a more accurate and defined measurement of salary needed to identify factors that may affect burnout.

Most dog trainers used positive reinforcement, with fewer using force-free and science-based methods. Further, work-related burnout score in the current study was not independent of personal burnout. Malone (2025) reported that the dog trainers in her study used positive techniques with an overall 'moderate' burnout score and that dealing with more aggressive dogs did not increase burnout as expected. This suggests that the daily work of the dog trainer is not a reliable predictor of burnout. Methods of positive reinforcement, as opposed to punishment and the use of prong collars for example, are now widely used.

The factor analysis identified a blurring of burnout associated with personal and work-related aspects. This suggests that the CBI may not fully capture the complexities of burnout experienced by dog trainers. While the CBI is widely used in organizational contexts, it failed to discriminate between types of stress that appear to be most relevant to dog trainers and the factor of self-employment. Further, the use of Likert scales provides a dataset that is easily computed, but respondents' selections are subjective and may reflect very different experiences and tolerance for stress depending on the individual's baseline (Shou et al., 2022). To more accurately discern how personal and work-related stress impacts dog trainers, the survey could be modified or a new survey developed to better measure the distinct domains of burnout for dog trainers or other self-employed workers.

For this population, there appears to be minimal separation between personal and work-related burnout, possibly because 71.5% of dog trainers



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

were self-employed. These items also loaded on the client-related domain, indicating that stress with clients is inseparable from work-related stress. This likely reflects the nature of the dog trainer role, which is somewhat of a misnomer, as trainers spend more time managing the issues of human clients than the dogs themselves (Malone, 2025). In this analysis, personal burnout and client-related burnout are distinguishable constructs, but work-related burnout is not clearly differentiated. The questions designed to measure work-related burnout may be poorly worded or ambiguous for this population, with personal and work-related exhaustion intertwined and not perceived as separate stressors. We recommend revising the wording of the work-related CBI items, or alternatively, considering that in this context, work-related and personal burnout may reflect the same underlying factors contributing to overall burnout.

One limitation of this study is that the self-reported burnout could introduce bias to the responses. The participants' responses may have been influenced by specific circumstances impacting them that day and not a reflection of how they usually feel. This could have influenced their answers to the questions about burnout. We could also have measured other factors that influence personal stress such as cohabitant status, health and lifestyle. Whilst there was no intent to limit the survey to specific countries, the reach of social media is fallible, and as such, some countries were not represented, thus the scope of the study is indicative, rather than conclusive. Furthermore, countries where English is not the primary language were less likely to participate, due to the survey only being available in English.

The findings of this study have meaningful implications for the dog training industry, especially considering the nature of the role as self-employed. Organisations have processes to identify and measure burnout in their employees based on changes in productivity, or attitude. However, as self-employed individuals, dog trainers have their own oversight and may be unlikely to self-identify when they are experiencing high levels of burnout. Consequently, as the profession of dog training grows in popularity, there is an increasing need for the development of burnout measurement tools that reflect the realities of independent and emotionally intensive work. For example, counselling, mentorship, use of wellbeing or mindfulness tools which can be advertised via related agencies such as Companion Animals New Zealand that offers accreditation to dog trainers in New Zealand. This support could also extend beyond direct mental health support and include teaching skills on how to give feedback clearly, or how to manage small-business finances.



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

CONCLUSION

The study shows that dog trainers experience burnout. This appears to be linked to the nature of their work (being primarily freelance) and a possible blurring of professional and personal boundaries. Survey questions 16 and 17 indicate dog trainers are giving more of themselves (time and energy) than they get in return.

The blurring of personal and professional stressors highlights the need for targeted and flexible measurement of burnout and support for this workforce.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank Campbell James for his editing support.

REFERENCES

- Ahola, K., Honkonen, T., Isometsä, E., Kalimo, R., Nykyri, E., Koskinen, S., Aromaa, A., & Lönnqvist, J. (2006). Burnout in the general population: Results from the Finnish Health 2000 Study. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 41(1), 11–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S00127-005-0011-5/METRICS>
- Andrukonis, A., Hall, N. J., & Protopopova, A. (n.d.). The Impact of Caring and Killing on Physiological and Psychometric Measures of Stress in Animal Shelter Employees: A Pilot Study. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17249196>
- Animal Medicines Australia. (2022). Pets in Australia: A national survey of pets and people.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (n.d.). Population clock and pyramid. Retrieved June 12, 2025, from <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/population-clock-pyramid>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (n.d.). Employee earnings, August 2024 Australian Bureau of Statistics. Available at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release> (Accessed: 11 September 2025).
- Black, A. F., Winefield, H. R., & Chur-Hansen, A. (2011). Occupational stress in veterinary nurses: Roles of the work environment and own companion animal. *Anthrozoos*, 24(2), 191–202. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175303711X12998632257503>
- Borritz, M., Rugulies, R., Villadsen, E., Mikkelsen, O. A., Kristensen, T. S., & Bjorner, J. B. (2006). Burnout among employees in human service work: Design and baseline findings of the PUMA study. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 34(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14034940510032275>
- Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers. (n.d.). Certification. <https://www.ccpdt.org/certification/>
- Channawar, S. (2023). A Study on The Cause and Effect of Burnout. *History Research*, 29(6). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376480650_A_Study_on_The_Cause_and_Effect_of_Burnout



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

- Chung, T. ho, Park, C., Kwon, Y. man, & Yeon, S. chan. (2016). Prevalence of canine behavior problems related to dog-human relationship in South Korea— A pilot study. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, 11, 26–30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JVEB.2015.10.003>
- Companion Animals New Zealand. (2024). Dogs as Good Citizens: Understanding how to apply learning theory for effective and humane dog training. <https://www.companionanimals.nz/articles/dogs-as-good-citizens-understanding-how-to-apply-learning-theory-for-effective-and-humane-dog-training>
- Companion Animals NZ. (2020). Companion Animals in New Zealand 2020. <https://www.companionanimals.nz/2020-report>
- Companion Animals NZ. (2024). NZ Pet Data Report 2024. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d1bf13a3f8e880001289eeb/t/67c5362c18b9881a1fec4b5d/1740977787548/CANZ+2024+Pet+Data+Report-compressed.pdf>
- da Silva CR, Gomes AAD, Dos Santos-Doni TR, Antonelli AC, Vieira RFDC, da Silva ARS. Suicide in veterinary medicine: A literature review. *Vet World*. 2023 Jun;16(6): 1266-1276. doi: 10.14202/vetworld.2023.1266-1276
- Englefield, B., Candy, S., Starling, M., & McGreevy, P. (2019). The demography and practice of australians caring for native wildlife and the psychological, physical and financial effects of rescue, rehabilitation and release of wildlife on the welfare of carers. *Animals*, 9(12). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani9121127>
- Gray, A. (2020). Impending dog behaviour crisis following Covid-19 lockdown. In *Veterinary Record* (Vol. 187, Issue 8). <https://doi.org/10.1136/vr.m3892>
- Government Of Canada, S.C. (2024) Average offered hourly wage and average hourly wage by province and territory, third quarter of 2024. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/241216/mc-a001-eng.htm> (Accessed: 11 September 2025).
- Harvey, L. C., & Cameron, K. E. (2020). Stress and compassion fatigue in veterinary nurses in New Zealand. *The Veterinary Nurse*, 11(1), 42–46. <https://doi.org/10.12968/vetn.2020.11.1.42>
- Hiby, E. F., Rooney, N. J., & Bradshaw, J. W. S. (2004). Dog training methods: their use, effectiveness and interaction with behaviour and welfare. *Animal Welfare*, 13(1), 63–69. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0962728600026683>
- International Association of Canine Professionals. (n.d.). Certifications. <https://iacpdogs.org/certifications>
- Izdebski Z, Kozakiewicz A, Białorudzki M, Dec-Pietrowska J, Mazur J. Occupational Burnout in Healthcare Workers, Stress and Other Symptoms of Work Overload during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Poland. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2023 Jan 30;20(3):2428. doi: 10.3390/ijerph20032428
- Malone, A. (2025). Behind the Leash: Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, and Occupational Strain in Dog Trainers. *Behavioral Sciences* 2025, Vol. 15, Page 798, 15(6), 798. <https://doi.org/10.3390/BS15060798>
- Marchand, A., Blanc, M. E., & Beauregard, N. (2018). Do age and gender contribute to workers' burnout symptoms? *Occupational Medicine*, 68(6). <https://doi.org/10.1093/OCCMED/KQY088>
- Markovits, A. S., & Queen, R. (2009). Women and the world of dog rescue: A case study of the state of Michigan. *Society and Animals*, 17(4). <https://doi.org/10.1163/106311109X12474622855147>



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: Recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World Psychiatry*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20311>
- Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(Volume 52, 2001), 397–422. <https://doi.org/10.1146/ANNUREV.PSYCH.52.1.397/CITE/REFWORKS>
- Mastenbroek, N. J. J. M., Demerouti, E., Van Beukelen, P., Muijtjens, A. M. M., Scherpbier, A. J. J. A., & Jaarsma, A. D. C. (2014). Measuring potential predictors of burnout and engagement among young veterinary professionals; Construction of a customised questionnaire (the Vet-DRQ). *Veterinary Record*, 174(7). <https://doi.org/10.1136/vr.101761>
- McKinsey & Company. (2021). Women in the Workplace. https://wiw-report.s3.amazonaws.com/Women_in_the_Workplace_2021.pdf
- Moore, I. C., Coe, J. B., Adams, C. L., Conlon, P. D., & Sargeant, J. M. (2014). The role of veterinary team effectiveness in job satisfaction and burnout in companion animal veterinary clinics. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 245(5). <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.245.5.513>
- Murphy, R., & Daly, S. L. (2021). Psychological distress among non-human animal rescue workers: An exploratory study. In *Society and Animals* (Vol. 4, Issue 2). <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-BJA10028>
- Office for National Statistics. (n.d.). Population estimates. Retrieved June 12, 2025, from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>
- Office for National Statistics. (2019, May 15). Personal and economic well-being. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/personalandeconomicwellbeingintheuk/whatmattersmosttoourlifesatisfaction>
- Patronek, G. J., Bradley, J., & Arps, E. (2022). Saving normal: A new look at behavioral incompatibilities and dog relinquishment to shelters. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, 49, 36–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JVEB.2021.11.007>
- Schaufeli, W., & Enzmann, D. (2020). The Burnout Companion to Study and Practice: A Critical Analysis. In *The Burnout Companion to Study and Practice: A Critical Analysis*. <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003062745>
- Scherer, M.K. and Z. (2025) Income in the United States: 2024, Census.gov. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2025/demo/p60-286.html> (Accessed: 11 September 2025).
- Scotney, R. L., McLaughlin, D., & Keates, H. L. (2019). An investigation of the prevalence of compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction and burnout in those working in animal-related occupations using the Professional Quality of Life (ProQoL) Scale. *The Veterinary Nurse*, 10(5). <https://doi.org/10.12968/vetn.2019.10.5.276>
- Shou, Y., Sellbom, M., & Chen, H. F. (2022). Fundamentals of Measurement in Clinical Psychology. In G. J. G. Asmundson (Ed.), *Comprehensive Clinical Psychology*, Second Edition (2nd ed., Vol. 4, pp. 13–35). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-818697-8.00110-2>
- Skyner, L. J., Cameron, K. E., Dale, A., & Walker, J. K. (2020). The need for a national accreditation programme for professionals working in the field of animal training and behavioural modification in new zealand. *Animals*, 10(7), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ANI10071111>



Pet Behaviour Science
2026, Vol. 21, 1 - 19
doi:10.21071/pbs.vi21.18364



UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA

Laura Harvey^{1,*}

Kelly McFarlane¹

Kristie Cameron¹

Soanca, A. (2025). Pet Ownership in the U.S. (2025): How Many Pets Are in Each State & How Ownership is Changing. <https://www.petradar.org/en/articles/pet-ownership-in-the-us-2025-how-many-pets-are-in-each-state-how-ownership-is-changing>

Stats NZ. (2024, August 21). Labour market statistics (income): June 2024 quarter . <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/labour-market-statistics-income-june-2024-quarter/>

Vieira de Castro AC, Fuchs D, Morello GM, Pastur S, de Sousa L, Olsson IAS (2020) Does training method matter? Evidence for the negative impact of aversive-based methods on companion dog welfare. PLoS ONE 15(12): e0225023. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0225023>

Waters, A. (2021). A very different year for puppy purchases. In Veterinary Record (Vol. 188, Issue 5). <https://doi.org/10.1002/vetr.251>

Weinborn, R. M., Bruna, B. J., Calventus, J., & Sepúlveda, G. A. (2019). Burnout syndrome prevalence in veterinarians working in Chile. Austral Journal of Veterinary Sciences, 51(2). <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0719-81322019000200091>

Whillans, A. V., Yoon, J., Turek, A., & Donnelly, G. E. (2021). Extension request avoidance predicts greater time stress among women. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 118(45). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2105622118>

WHO. (2019). Burn-out an “occupational phenomenon”: International Classification of Diseases. <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>

Williamson, V., Murphy, D., & Greenberg, N. (2022). Experiences and impact of moral injury in U.K. veterinary professional wellbeing. European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2022.2051351>;SUBPAGE:STRING:FULL

Yu, Y., Wilson, B., Masters, S., van Rooy, D., & McGreevy, P. D. (2021). Mortality Resulting from Undesirable Behaviours in Dogs Aged Three Years and under Attending Primary-Care Veterinary Practices in Australia. Animals 2021, Vol. 11, Page 493, 11(2), 493. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ANI11020493>