

FREE-RANGING DOGS IN INDIA:

An Empirical Analysis of Human-Animal Interactions

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
SURVEY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	8
SURVEY AND LITERATURE FINDINGS	10
Rabies deaths	10
Free-ranging dogs are not inherently aggressive	11
How free-living dogs impact the communities they live in	12
Impact on crime and community safety	12
Impact on pest control	14
Feeding and religion	14
Harassment of dog feeders	16
MANAGING FREE-RANGING DOG POPULATIONS: WHAT IS THE BEST	19
WAY FORWARD?	
FREE-RANGING DOG NUMBERS IN DELHI: WE NEED A CENSUS	23
DOG BITES – FREE-RANGING DOGS MAY NOT ACCOUNT FOR ALL BITES	14
ATTRIBUTED TO THEM	
CONCLUSION	25
ANNEXURE: SURVEY QUESTIONS	26

Introduction

The debate over free-ranging dog management in Delhi is approaching a critical juncture. On August 11, 2025, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court directed the Delhi–NCR municipal bodies to pick up free-ranging dogs from all areas—including those already sterilized and vaccinated—and to establish shelters to house them within eight weeks.^{viii} This directive was in direct conflict with the existing Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, which explicitly prohibit the relocation of free-ranging dogs, particularly those that have already undergone sterilization and vaccination. The ruling was also issued without hearing submissions from the animal welfare community.

Subsequently, on August 13, 2025, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court convened to assess whether the earlier order should be stayed. During this hearing, animal welfare groups argued that the government's reported figures on dog bites and rabies-related deaths were inflated. They further contended that municipal authorities in Delhi–NCR had failed to properly implement the ABC program and had not developed adequate shelter infrastructure to meaningfully address the issue. After hearing arguments from both sides, Justice Sandeep Mehta noted that several claims presented were anecdotal and emphasized the need for robust, verifiable evidence.^{ix}

This issue brief aims to respond to Justice Mehta's request. It compiles the available data and research on free-ranging dog populations, public health, and municipal management practices. Additionally, it presents findings from a new empirical survey of 1,063 respondents from across 10 cities in India, examining public attitudes toward community dogs, the impact of community dog populations on daily life, and the solutions citizens believe should be prioritized for managing their numbers.

We find that:

- **Although free-ranging dog populations have fluctuated in recent years, the public health impact of ABC is significant. Reported human deaths from rabies have declined from 534 in 2004 to just 54 in 2024 — a 90% reduction—**

demonstrating that vaccination and birth control, rather than removal or eradication, have been instrumental in reducing mortality.

- **The likelihood of dying from a lightning strike in India is higher than the likelihood of dying from rabies.** To place this in context, 162 people died from lightning strikes across twelve states in just two months (March–April 2025). **In addition, in Delhi, there were no reported human deaths from rabies between 2022 and January 2025.**
- **Most free-ranging dogs are not aggressive:** When respondents were asked to describe the general temperament of free-ranging dogs in their neighborhoods, **73.5 percent characterized them as friendly, and 15 percent as timid.** Only 10.8 percent of respondents described the dogs in their locality as aggressive. These findings corroborate several existing research papers that have found that free-ranging dogs in India show extremely low levels of aggression, and typically do not have adverse encounters with humans.
- **Human behavior plays a significant role in shaping the behavior of community dogs.^x** A study found that when people consistently treat free-ranging dogs kindly—by feeding them or interacting with them without hostility—the dogs are more approachable and less likely to perceive humans as a threat. This suggests that the nature of human–dog interactions, rather than the mere presence of free-ranging dogs, is central to understanding and preventing conflict.
- **Free-ranging dogs help keep communities safe and crime-free:** A whopping 91.4 percent of respondents reported that free-ranging dogs function as an effective deterrent against criminal activity. A further 52.21 percent felt that their presence helps keep women and children safe. Moreover, 96 percent of respondents stated that they feel “very safe” in their area because of community dogs.

- **Dogs play a role in pest control:** A majority of respondents (51.6 percent) indicated that community dogs help control rat populations and keep monkeys at bay.
- **Feeding dogs holds deep religious significance amidst respondents that are dog-feeders.** A significant majority of dog feeders (74 percent) indicated that feeding dogs is a key part of their religious practice. This is unsurprising given that dogs play important roles in epics like the Mahabharata, and enjoy close connections with several Indian gods.
- **Most dog feeders do not face harassment. However, those that are harassed face egregious and disturbing forms of harassment, including physical assault, threats of poisoning dogs, and other serious threats like acid attacks.**
- **A significant majority of survey respondents (78 percent) agree that sterilization is the most effective and humane method for managing street dog populations. Moreover, 79 percent of respondents are willing to work together with authorities to ensure the ABC-ARV program is implemented to the fullest extent.**

Our findings debunk many of the myths that have been, and continue to be, perpetuated around free-ranging dogs. Moreover, they give hope for the future of ABC-ARV, provided that the caretakers of free-ranging dogs are formally co-opted into this process.

In this context we recommend:

1. A simple revision to the Animal Bite Reporting Form, adding a field to record whether the biting dog was a pet or a free-ranging dog, would significantly strengthen the evidence base on which public health and urban animal management decisions are made.
2. Reporting on animal bite that prompted administration of rabies vaccine. Many animals, aside from dogs, can transmit the rabies virus. It would be useful to

understand how many bites are attributable to different species, to get a more accurate sense of dog bite numbers.

3. Authorities must take stricter action against those harassing individuals that responsibly feed free-ranging dogs. Doing so would serve as a useful deterrent against such behavior in the future.
4. Going forward, a protocol must be created where municipal departments work in concert with community feeders to implement the ABC rules. The latter are well-versed with dogs and can help catching them for spaying and vaccinations.

This will also help ensure that spayed dogs are returned to the locality where they were picked up from. To address the issue of corruption, the introduction of a vigilance institution may be considered. For instance, community feeders can serve as Lokpals or Lokayuktas for their local municipal corporation, and should be granted access to audit accounts and records of different facets of the ABC rules.

5. Community feeders can be coopted to support census efforts, given that most of them (79 percent) are willing to support ABC efforts. They can create logs or registers of the animals under their care/in their community. Such efforts would go a long way towards having readily available data on dog numbers in different parts of the city.
6. Given that human behavior towards free-ranging dogs plays a key role in shaping their behavior, authorities and community feeders must undertake a concerted effort to educate and sensitize the public about how to interact with these animals to avoid conflict.

Survey Design and Methodology

The purpose of the survey was to understand the public attitudes and sentiment towards community dogs, including feeding behaviour, population-management (sterilization/vaccination), experiences of harassment among people who feed free-ranging dogs, the impact of these dogs on daily life, and the solutions citizens believe should be prioritized for managing their numbers. We conducted face-to-face interviews in September 2025, collecting 1,063 completed surveys from local residents across 10 major Indian cities (Table 1). The geographic spread enables comparison of city-level variation in attitudes and behaviours. The survey used a mix of question formats (single-select, multi-select, open, and binary categorical questions), to capture different aspects of respondent experience and opinion. Respondents were selected on the basis of whether they had stray dogs in their neighborhoods.

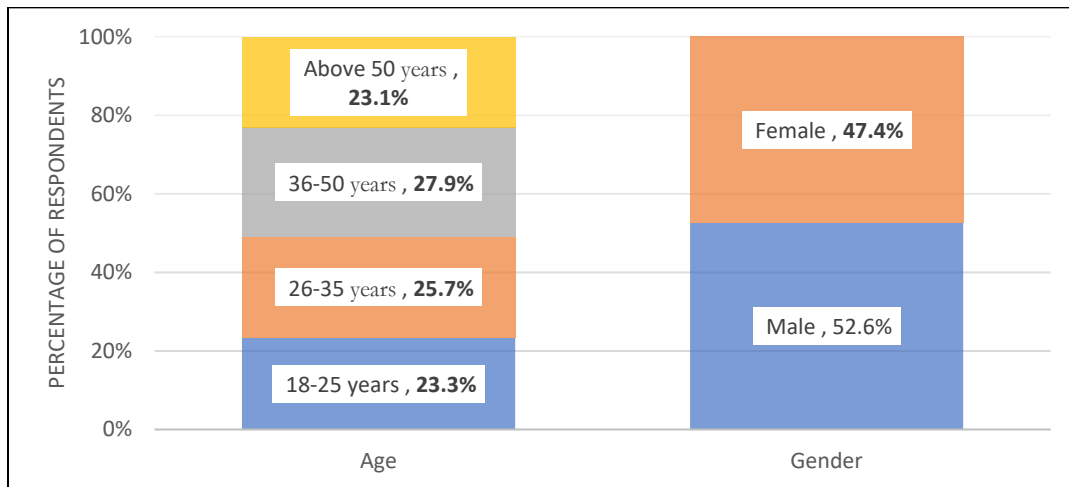
Table 1: Spatial Representation of Survey Respondents

City	Percent
Mumbai	11.7
Lucknow	10.5
Kolkata	10.3
Delhi	10.2
Bhubaneswar	9.9
Ahmedabad	9.7
Jaipur	9.7
Bangalore	9.6
Chennai	9.4
Hyderabad	9.1
Total	100

Note: The survey was conducted in September 2025, covering 1,063 respondents.

The survey represents a heterogeneous demography in terms of age, gender, education level, occupation and income. Respondents were roughly evenly placed across four age groups, with almost one-fourth belonging to the age bracket of 18 to 25 years, 26 to 35 years, 35 to 50 years old, and above 50 years each. Men made up 52.7 percent of the sample, while women comprised the remaining 47.3 percent, producing a near-even gender split (Figure 1).

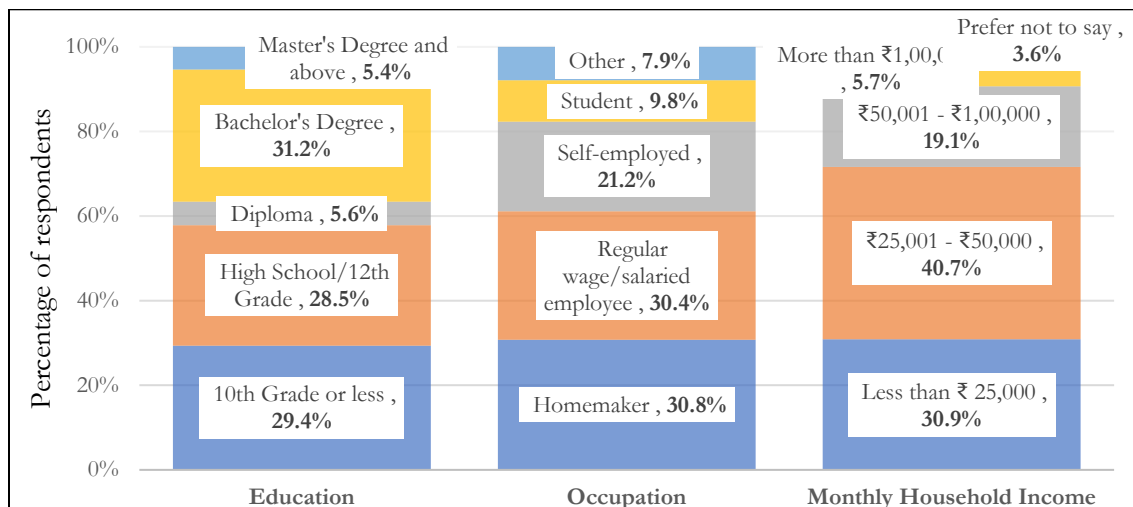
Figure 1: Respondent Profile – Age and Gender Breakdown



Note: The survey was conducted in September 2025, covering 1,063 respondents.

Education, occupation and income levels were similarly diverse, allowing the analysis to examine how attitudes toward free-ranging dogs vary across socioeconomic groups (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Respondent Profile – Education, Employment, and Income



Note: The survey was conducted in September 2025, covering 1,063 respondents.

Survey and Literature Findings

Rabies Deaths

In its submissions before the Supreme Court on 13 August 2025, the Government stated that there were 305 rabies deaths in 2024. This figure is inconsistent with the Government's own official data. Across the three-year period from 2022 to 2025, only 126 rabies-related deaths were recorded nationally. Notably, in Delhi, there were no reported human deaths from rabies between 2022 and January 2025.^{xi}

To place this in context, 162 people died from lightning strikes across twelve states in just two months (March–April 2025).^{xii} **Thus, the likelihood of dying from a lightning strike in India is higher than the likelihood of dying from rabies.**

The total number of rabies deaths requires further qualification. Rabies can be transmitted by any mammal, including cows, monkeys, and mongooses. Current reporting systems do not record which animal was responsible for transmission, meaning it is not possible to determine what proportion of the recorded 126 rabies deaths were attributable specifically to dogs.

Historical accounts (Srinivasan, 2015) show that culling dogs has not reduced rabies incidence. The practice has colonial origins: large-scale elimination of free-living dogs began in the 19th century, at the same time that rabies emerged as a public health concern in England. These eradication campaigns continued well into the post-independence period. Yet more than a century of culling failed to reduce either the free-ranging dog population or the prevalence of rabies, largely because dog populations replenish when territorial gaps are created.^{xiii}

It was in recognition of the failure of culling—and in keeping with World Health Organization guidance—that India adopted sterilization and vaccination under the Animal Birth Control framework.

Although free-ranging dog populations have fluctuated in recent years, the public health impact of ABC is significant. Reported human deaths from rabies have declined from 534 in 2004 to just 54 in 2024 — a 90% reduction — demonstrating that vaccination and birth control, rather than removal or eradication, have been instrumental in reducing mortality.

Free-ranging Dogs Are Not Inherently Aggressive

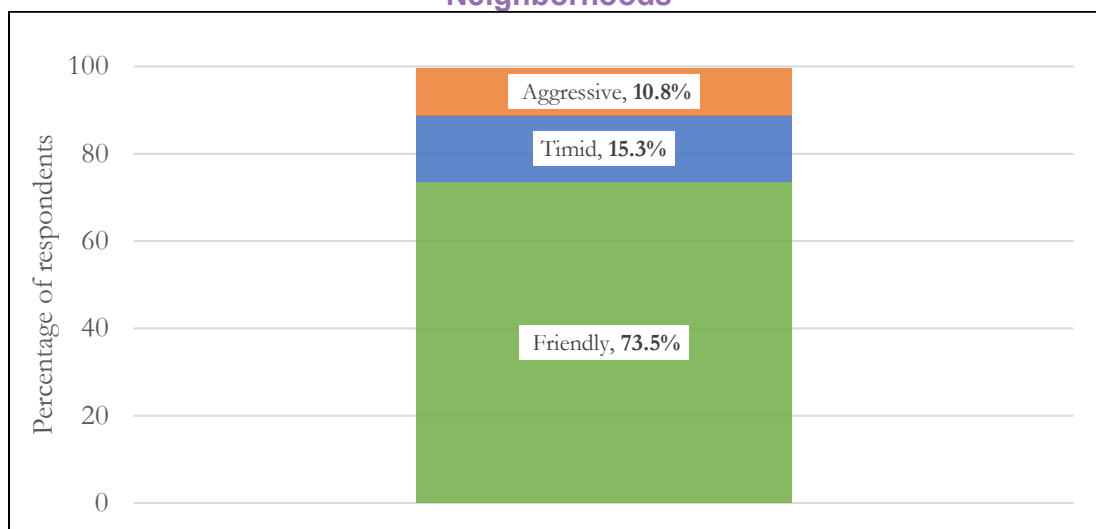
Research from the Dog Lab at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Kolkata, demonstrates that human behavior plays a significant role in shaping the behavior of community dogs.^{xiv} The study found that when people consistently treat free-ranging dogs kindly—by feeding them or interacting with them without hostility—the dogs are more approachable and less likely to perceive humans as a threat. This suggests that the nature of human–dog interactions, rather than the mere presence of free-ranging dogs, is central to understanding and preventing conflict.

Further evidence from the Dog Lab reinforces this pattern. In observations of 1,941 free-ranging dog encounters, researchers recorded extremely low levels of aggression, both towards humans and other animals.^{xv} These findings challenge the common assumption that free-ranging dogs are inherently aggressive or dangerous.

Complementary research by Srinivasan et al. supports this conclusion. The study found that approximately 82 percent of interactions between people and street dogs are neutral or peaceful.^{xvi} Only 2 percent of interactions resulted in conflict, defined broadly to include barking, chasing, or biting.

Our own survey results align with these findings. **When respondents were asked to describe the general temperament of free-ranging dogs in their neighborhoods, 73.5 percent characterized them as friendly and 15 percent as timid.** Only 10.8 percent of respondents described the dogs in their locality as aggressive. These perceptions suggest that, for a majority of people, coexistence with community dogs is not marked by conflict but by familiarity and ease.

Figure 2A: Perceived Temperament of Free-Ranging Dogs in Respondent Neighborhoods



Note: Data from primary survey of 1063 respondents.

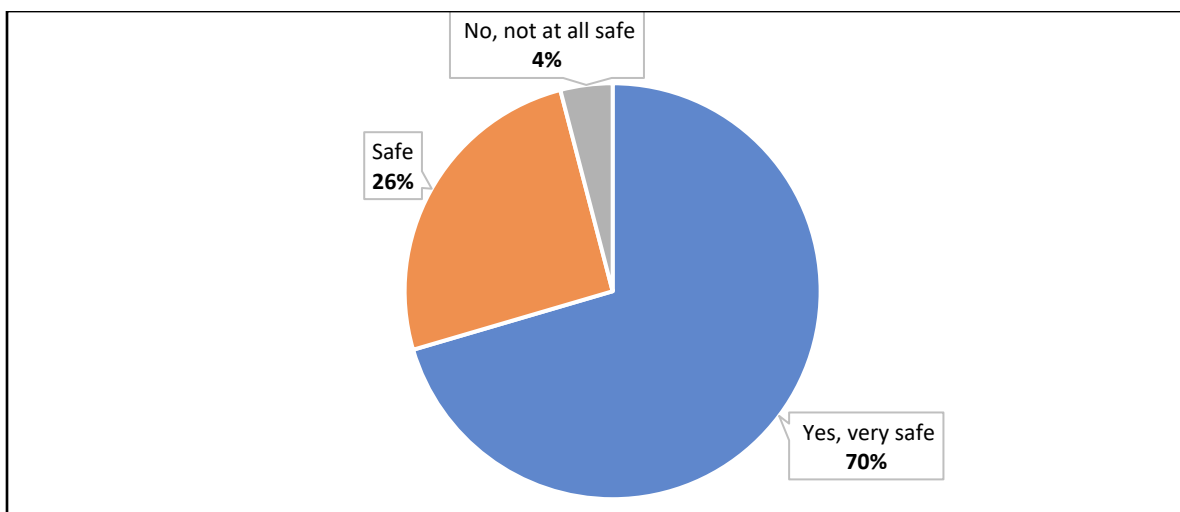
How Free-Living Dogs Impact the Communities they Live In

Impact on Crime and Community Safety

Anecdotal evidence shows that free-ranging dogs play a key role in keeping communities safe and reducing the incidence of crime. For instance, in 2015, Meena Vasudevan, a resident of Agarthiya Nagar in Villivakkam, Chennai, began feeding two free-ranging dogs that had wandered into her neighborhood. Over time, this small group grew to five or six dogs. Residents soon noticed a marked decline in theft, particularly the frequent stealing of motorbike parts that had previously been a persistent issue. They also observed that instances of inebriated men gathering in the area after dark diminished. The community attributed these changes to the dogs' presence, as their territorial awareness and alertness deterred both opportunistic theft and late-night loitering.^{xvii}

Our survey confirms that the experience of the Agarthiya Nagar locality is not an isolated case. A whopping 91.4 percent of respondents reported that free-ranging dogs function as an effective deterrent against criminal activity. A further 52.21 percent felt that their presence helps keep women and children safe. Moreover, 96 percent of respondents stated that they feel “very safe” in their area because of community dogs.

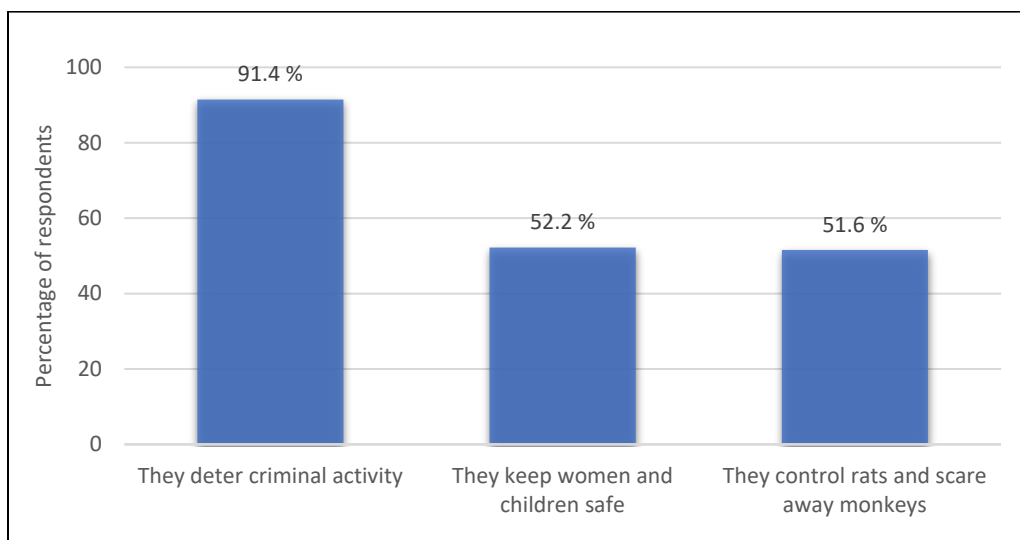
Figure 3: Perception of Personal and Locality Safety Due to the Presence of Free-Ranging Dogs



Note: Data from primary survey of 1063 respondents.

These findings point to the significant role that free-ranging dogs play in maintaining informal neighborhood security. Their removal, as contemplated under recent directives, risks disrupting existing safety dynamics and weakening a form of collective vigilance that residents have come to rely on.

Figure 4: Impact of Community Dogs on the Areas Where they Reside



Note: Data from primary survey of 1063 respondents. For this question, 1.1 percent of respondents reported 'other'.

Impact on Pest Control

Some accounts have suggested that the mass culling of community dogs coincides with increases in rodent populations in areas where such culling occurs. Researchers suggest that free-ranging dogs play an important role in the ecology of cities. They consume organic waste, particularly animal proteins, making them important scavengers. In addition, though they typically do not hunt in urban settings, they have been known to kill rats. Researchers suggest that if dogs were removed, it may result in a rise in the populations of rats, cats, and crows. Another study found that the presence of both cats and dogs serves as an effective deterrent to rodents foraging in an area.

Once again, our survey affirms the position in literature that dogs support pest management in human habitats. A majority of respondents (51.6 percent) believe that community dogs control rat populations and keep monkeys at bay ([Figure 4 above](#)).

Feeding and Religion

Free-ranging dogs hold a prominent place in Hindu mythology and religious symbolism. In the *Mahabharata*, a dog follows Yudhishtira on his final ascent up the mountain and ultimately reveals itself as the God of Dharma, testing his devotion to righteousness. When Yudhishtira refuses to enter heaven without his faithful companion, he demonstrates his unwavering commitment to dharma and passes the ultimate trial.^{xviii}

One of the earliest references to dogs in Hinduism is found in the story of [Sarama](#), the “divine female dog,” who was commanded by Indra to recover a herd of cows stolen by the Panis.^{xix} Dogs also appear in association with the god [Dattatreya](#) who is revered for his spiritual wisdom. Dattatreya is said to have attained enlightenment through deep awareness of the natural world—air, sky, earth, and water. He is often depicted with four dogs, each symbolizing a layer of Hindu philosophy and cosmology (for instance, the four Vedas).^{xx}

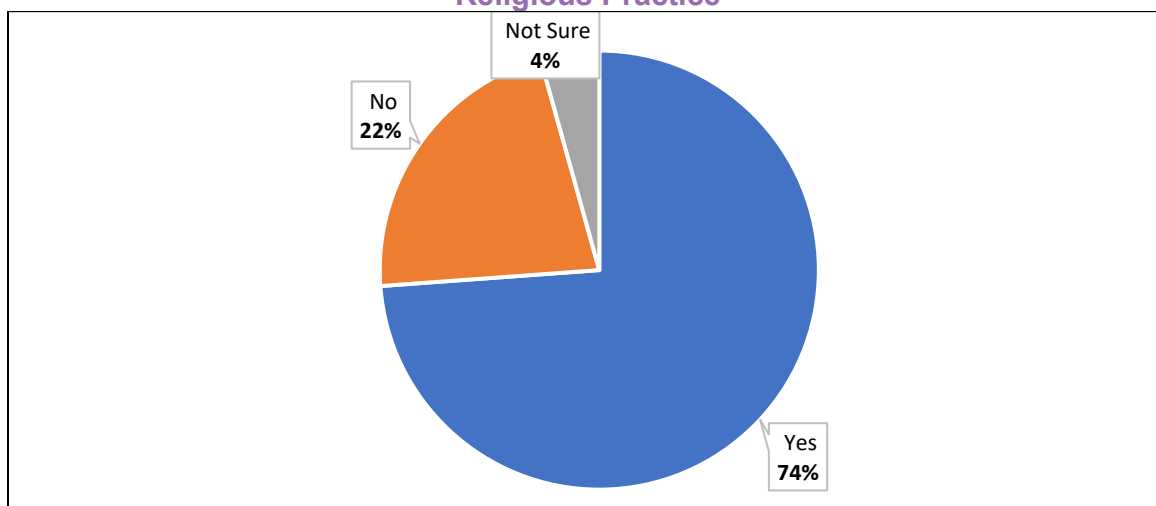
Another powerful canine connection is found in the fierce deity [Kal Bhairava](#), a fearsome manifestation of Shiva whose name means “the terrifying blackness of time.” Though depicted

as dark and frightening, Bhairava is ultimately a guardian, offering protection amid the upheavals of transformation. His loyal dog, serving as his vehicle, amplifies the guardian aspect of Shiva and reinforces his role as the custodian of cosmic order.^{xxi}

Given their entrenched position across different aspects of the Hindu faith, feeding dogs holds deep religious significance amongst respondents that are dog-feeders. Illustratively, a significant majority of dog feeders (74 percent) indicated that feeding dogs is a key part of their religious practice (Figure 5).

It could be argued, then, that any unreasonable restriction placed on the ability of a person to feed a dog is a violation of their fundamental right to practice religion, potentially bringing the August 11th Supreme Court order into the teeth of Article 25 of the Constitution.

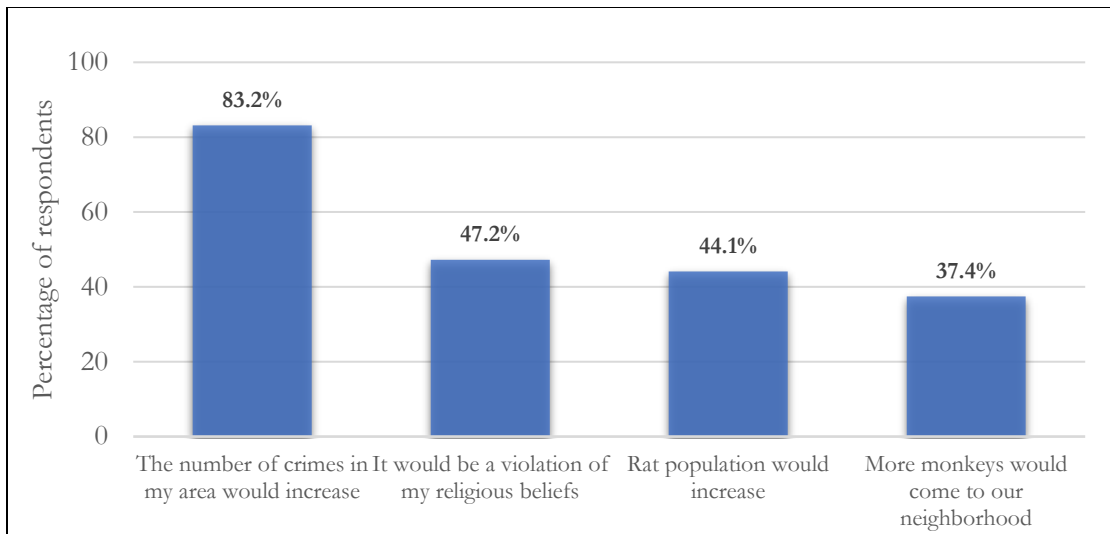
Figure 5: Percentage of Respondents that Feed Free-Ranging Dogs as Part of their Religious Practice



Note: Data from primary survey of 1063 respondents.

Overall, we find that free-ranging dogs play a key role in community safety, pest management, and religious expression for a majority of respondents. Thus, when asked about the possible impacts of removing free-ranging dogs from the streets, 83.2 percent of respondents expected crime to go up, 47.2 percent reported that it would be a violation of their religious beliefs, 44.1 expected rat populations to rise, and 37.4 expected more monkeys to come to their neighborhood (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Perceived Impact of Removing Free-Ranging Dogs from the Neighbourhood

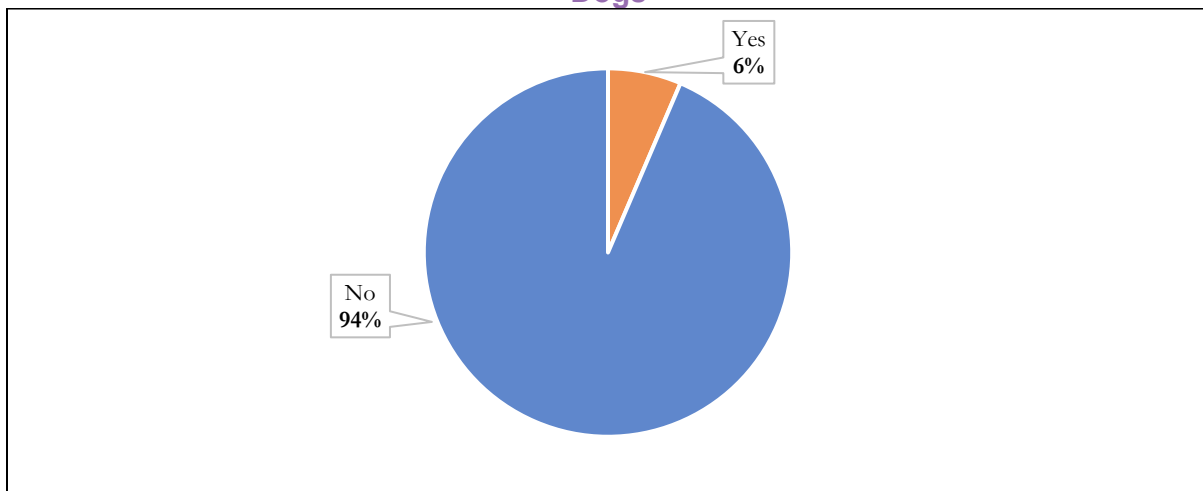


Note: Data from primary survey of 1063 respondents.

Harassment of Dog Feeders

Overall, we find that attitudes towards feeding may be relatively tolerant across most cities as a majority of dog feeders (94 percent) reported that they did not face any harassment for feeding free-ranging dogs (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Percentage of Respondent Dog Feeders that Face Harassment for Feeding Dogs



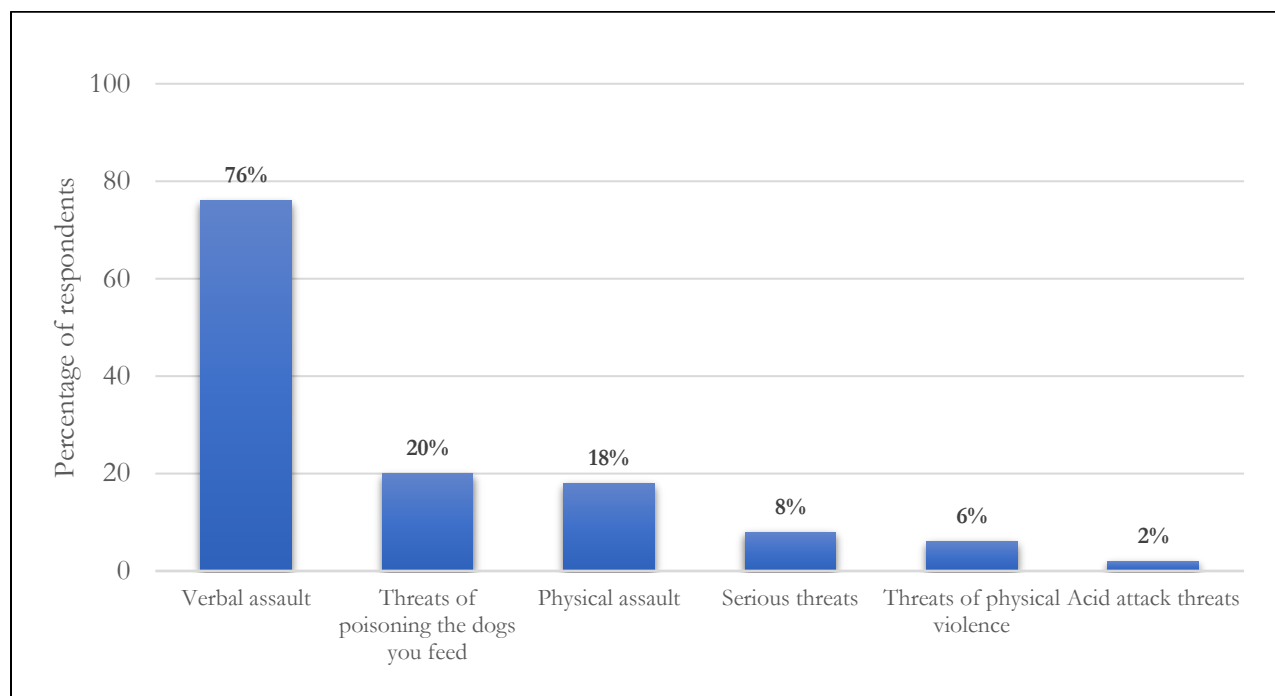
Note: Data from primary survey of 776 respondents.

However, those that are harassed face egregious and disturbing forms of harassment.

When we asked feeders about the kinds of harassment they faced, 76 percent indicated that verbal assault was the primary mode of harassment. However, they also reported that they

receive threats that the dogs they feed will be poisoned (20 percent), or other serious threats (8 percent), including threats of physical violence (6 percent), even acid attacks (2 percent), and 18 percent reported being physically assaulted (Figure 8).

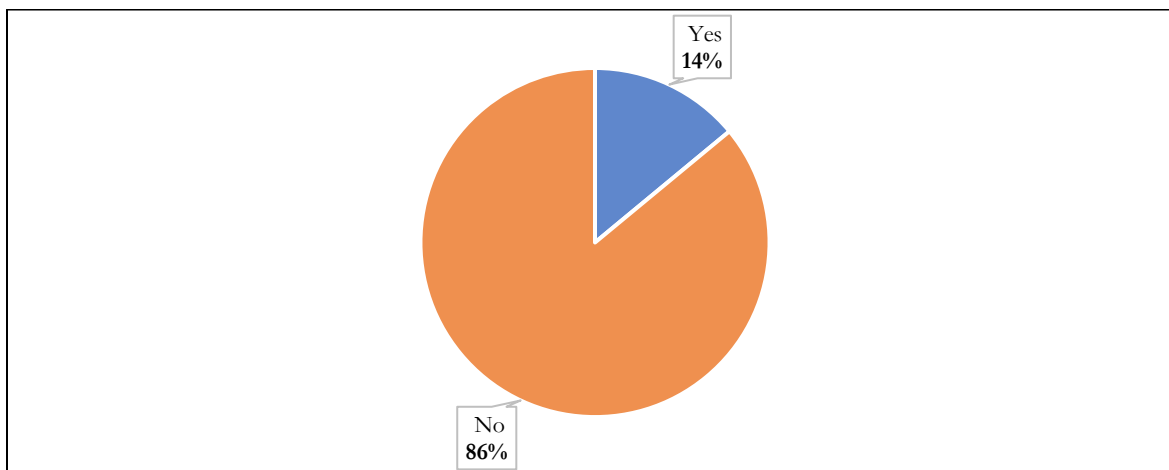
Figure 8: Nature of Harassment Faced by Residents Who Feed Street Dogs



Note: Data from primary survey of 50 respondents.

Of the feeders who are harassed, most (86 percent) do not report such harassment to the police (Figure 9). This may be to avoid escalation, or may be out of fear of retaliation, or because the incident is minor or resolved at the moment of occurrence, or an expectation that reporting such behavior may be an exercise in futility.

Figure 9: Percentage of Respondents that Report Harassment to the Authorities



Note: Data from primary survey of 50 respondents.

Of those that do escalate matters to the police, around 43 percent indicate that complaints are made but no follow up action is taken, and the same proportion indicate that FIRs are registered (Figure 10).

Authorities must take stricter action against those harassing individuals that responsibly feed free-ranging dogs. Doing so would serve as a useful deterrent against such behavior in the future.

Figure 10: Action Taken by Authorities When Harassment Reported by Feeders



Note: Data from primary survey of 50 respondents.

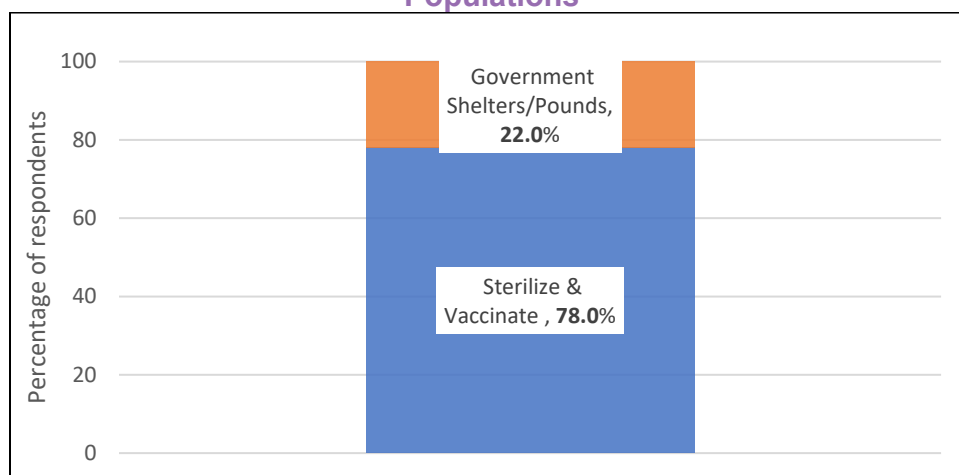
Managing Free-Ranging Dog Populations: What is the Best Way Forward?

As discussed earlier, more than a century of dog culling in India failed to produce any sustained reduction in either street dog populations or human rabies cases. This was primarily because when dogs were removed from a locality, others from surrounding areas quickly moved in to occupy the newly available ecological niche of food and space. In a country as large and fluid as India, administrative boundaries are not meaningful barriers to the natural movement of free-living animals. Consequently, eradication did little to mitigate public health concerns.^{xxii} Recognizing the ineffectiveness of culling—and following guidance from the World Health Organization—India adopted a strategy of sterilization and vaccination under the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules in 2001.^{xxiii}

Evidence from Indian cities demonstrates the positive impact of sustained implementation of the ABC Rules. In Jaipur, a decade of ABC and anti-rabies vaccination (ARV) led to a 28 percent reduction in the street dog population.^{xxiv} In Jodhpur, dog numbers declined or stabilized in areas where the program was consistently carried out.^{xxv} In Chennai, the introduction of ABC-ARV in 1996 coincided with a dramatic decline in human rabies deaths—from 120 in 1996 to just five by the mid-2000s.^{xxvi}

Public sentiment aligns with these outcomes. A significant majority of survey respondents (78 percent) agreed that sterilization is the most effective and humane method for managing street dog populations (Figure 11).

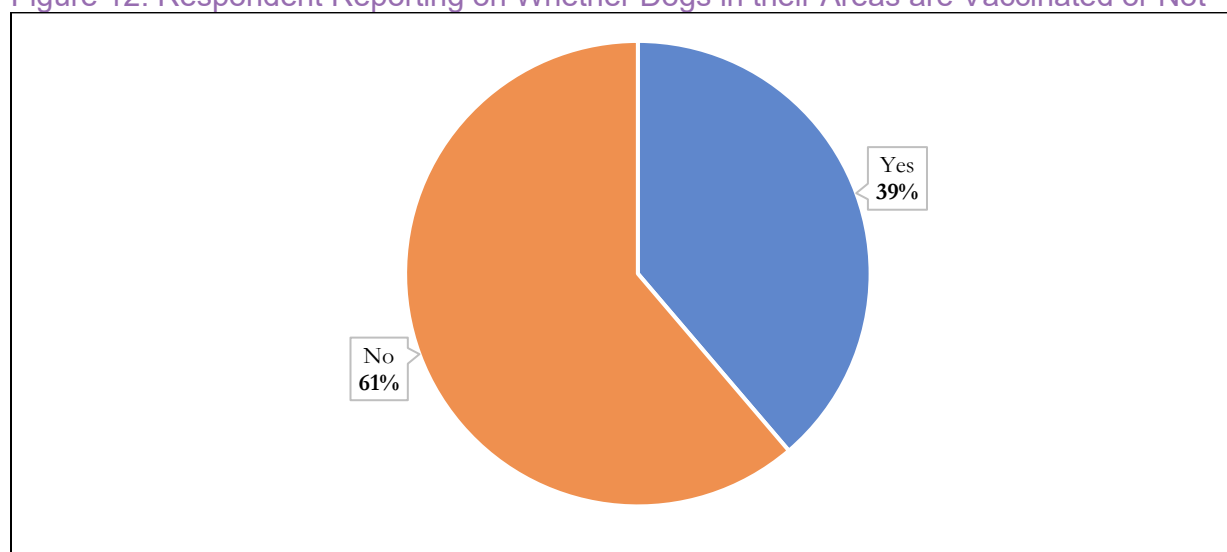
Figure 11: Respondent Opinion on Best Way to Manage Free-ranging Dog Populations



Note: Data from primary survey of 1063 respondents.

However, the ABC-ARV program has suffered from uneven implementation across the country. A majority of respondents (61 percent) indicated that the dogs in their areas were not sterilized (Figure 12).

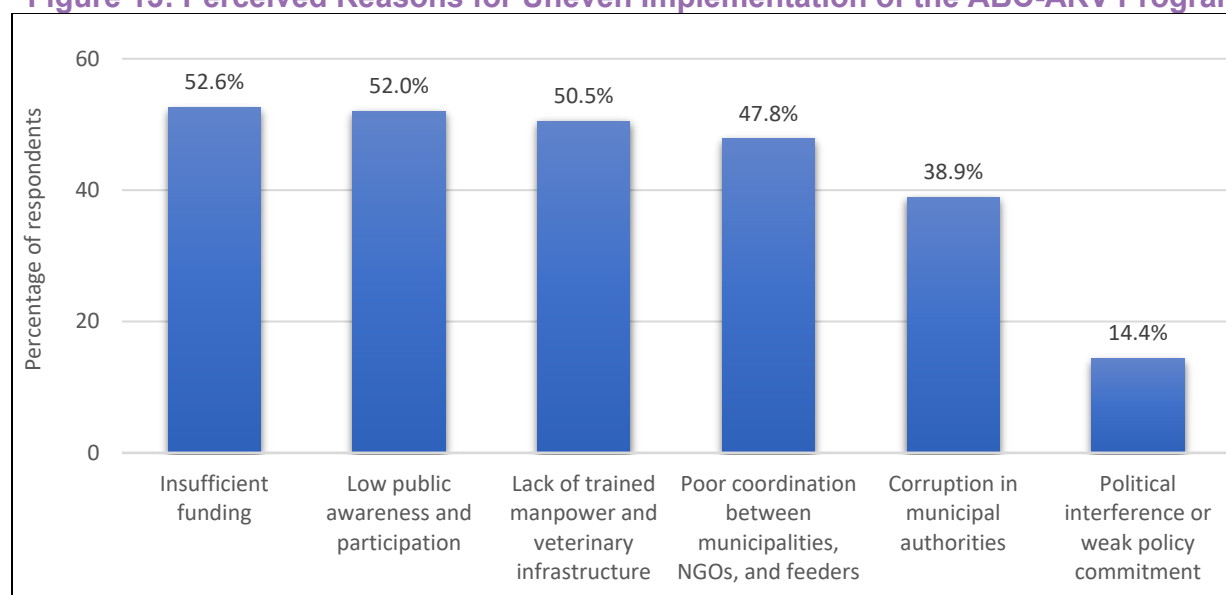
Figure 12: Respondent Reporting on Whether Dogs in their Areas are Vaccinated or Not



Note: Data from primary survey of 1063 respondents.

Respondents cited inadequate resources (52.59 percent), low public awareness and participation (52.02 percent), and a shortage of trained personnel and veterinary infrastructure (50.52 percent) as key barriers to the successful implementation of ABC programs (Figure 7). Nearly half (47.8 percent) also attributed the failure of ABC in their cities to insufficient action by municipal authorities (Figure 13).

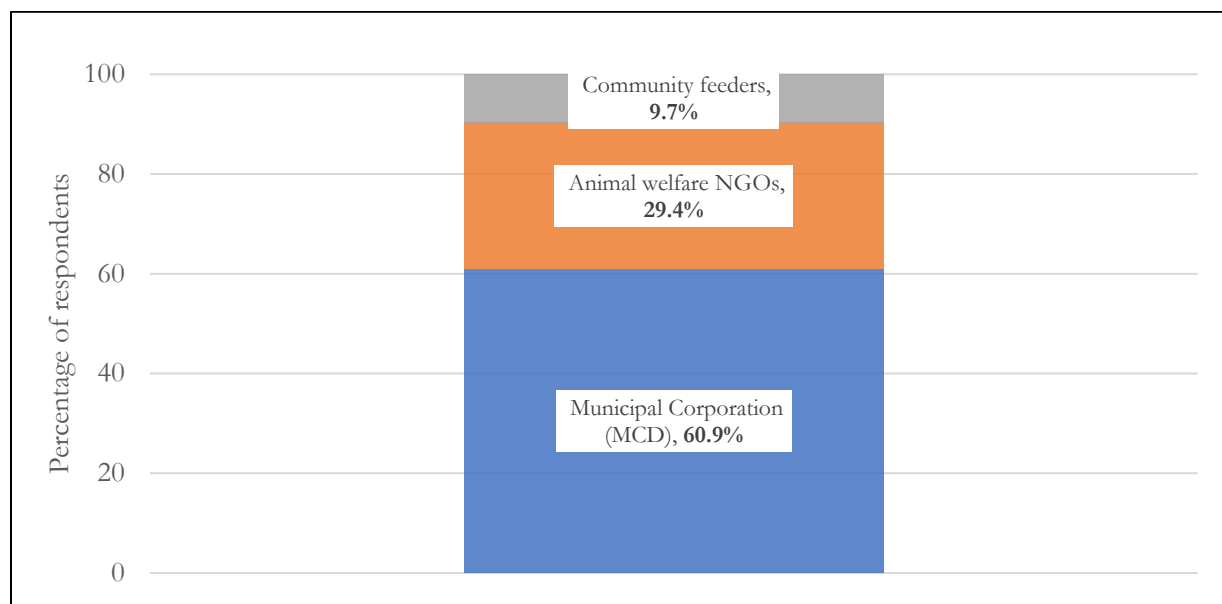
Figure 13: Perceived Reasons for Uneven Implementation of the ABC-ARV Program



Note: Data from primary survey of 1063 respondents.

Respondents also affirmed that animal welfare NGOs and community feeders are attempting to pick up the slack. Of those that indicated that the dogs in their areas were sterilized, around 40 percent reported that they were taken for sterilization either by feeders or animal welfare NGOs (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Respondent Reporting on Which Stakeholder Took the Initiative to have Dogs in their Area Sterilized



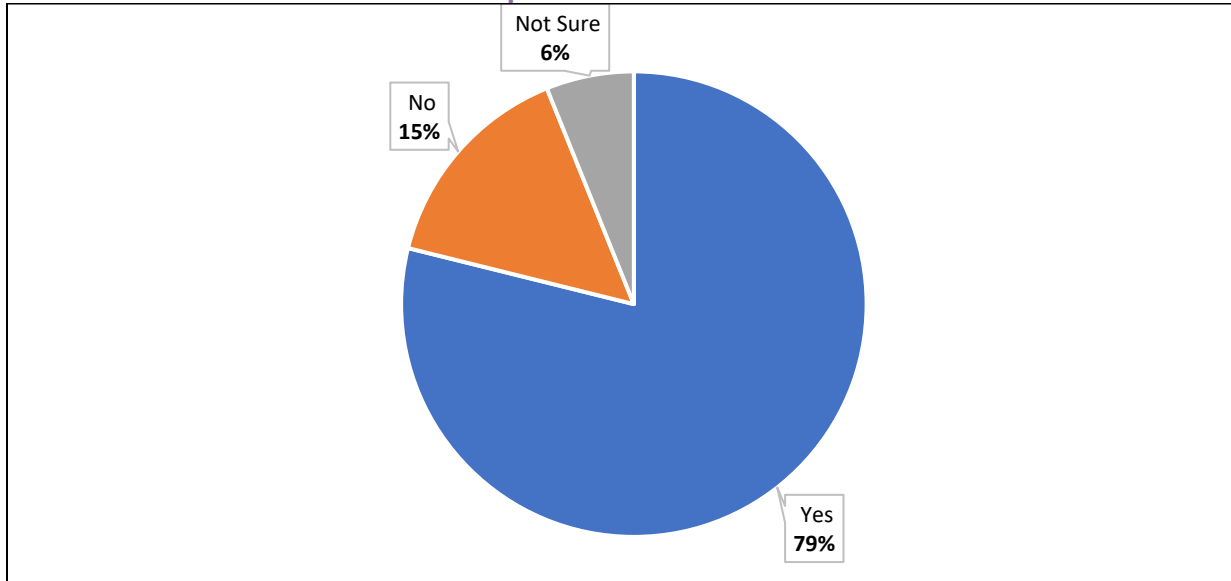
Note: Data from primary survey of 1063 respondents. However, for this question, the total number of respondents is 412, as it is a follow-up question for those who reported that the strays in their area are sterilized and vaccinated.

Despite a seeming disenchantment with municipal authorities, however, it seems that most respondents (79 percent) are motivated and willing to work with them to help make ABC a success in their city (Figure 15).

These findings suggest that the core policy framework is sound, but its success depends on consistent implementation. Going forward, a protocol must be created where municipal departments work in concert with community feeders to implement the ABC rules. The latter are well-versed with dogs and can help catching them for spaying and vaccinations.

This will also help ensure that spayed dogs are returned to the locality where they were picked up from. To address the issue of corruption, the introduction of a vigilance institution may be considered. For instance, community feeders can serve as Lokpals or Lokayuktas for their local municipal corporation, and should be granted access to audit accounts and records of different facets of the ABC rules.

Figure 15: Percentage of Feeders Willing to Cooperate with Municipal Bodies to Implement ABC Rules



Note: Data from primary survey of 1063 respondents.

Free-Ranging Dog Numbers in Delhi: We Need a Census

There are several figures floating around about the number of free-ranging dogs in the Delhi-NCR region, ranging from 300,000 to 1 million. Without a concrete figure, it is impossible for municipal authorities to plan for the creation of capacity for either shelters or sterilization for these animals. A census is essential to the success of an Animal Birth Control Program. It allows officials to plan sterilizations, and tackle vulnerable areas, or areas with larger populations first. In the absence of a census, it is very challenging to systematically implement ABC.

Reports indicate that a planned census has been stalled for three years, due to a paucity of funds. In addition, it is not clear what kind of methodology the urban local bodies intend to deploy to carry out the census. The last free-ranging dog census was carried out by the erstwhile South Municipal Corporation of Delhi in 2016. It covered four zones (South, West, Central and West) and found 189,285 dogs. The rationale cited by officials for not following up this exercise with a holistic census was the lack of availability of expert agencies to see it through.

Here again, community feeders can be coopted to support census efforts, given that most of them are willing to support ABC efforts (Figure 7). They can create logs or registers of the animals under their care/in their community. Such efforts would go a long way towards having readily available data on dog numbers in different parts of the city.

Dog Bites – Free-ranging Dogs May Not Account for All Bites Attributed to Them

According to official government data, approximately 3.7 million people in India were bitten by dogs in 2024. This figure, however, requires important clarification before it can be used to guide policy. To begin with, there is a risk of misreporting, as bites from other animals are at times recorded as dog bites in medical records. More significantly, the current Animal Bite Reporting Form used in hospitals does not distinguish between bites caused by pet dogs and those caused by free-ranging or community dogs. As a result, the available data cannot tell us which population of dogs is primarily responsible for the reported incidents.

Existing research suggests that a substantial share of bites may actually be attributable to pet dogs. In the United States, where free-ranging dogs are virtually absent, an estimated 4.5 million dog bites occur annually—higher than India’s reported number—indicating that the presence of free-ranging dogs is not the sole determinant of bite incidence. Comparable patterns appear in India. A 2017 study conducted in Tamil Nadu found that out of 44 recorded dog bite cases among 688 surveyed individuals, 41 were caused by pet dogs.^{xxvii} Similarly, a 2022–23 survey across 15 states reported a dog bite incidence of 4.7 per 1,000 people, which is less than a third of the rate observed in Cheshire County, England (15 per 1,000), a region with high rates of pet ownership but negligible free-ranging dog populations.^{xxviii}

These findings highlight the need for greater granularity in India’s dog bite data. Without distinguishing between pet and free-ranging dog bites, policy responses risk being misdirected—potentially leading to interventions that are costly, ineffective, or detrimental to community animal welfare. A simple revision to the Animal Bite Reporting Form, adding a field to record whether the biting dog was a pet or a free-ranging dog, would significantly

strengthen the evidence base on which public health and urban animal management decisions are made.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this brief demonstrates that the question of free-ranging dog management cannot be reduced to a debate about removal versus tolerance. Street dogs are neither a public health threat in themselves nor an unwanted presence in urban spaces. Rather, they are long-standing co-inhabitants of our cities who play meaningful roles in community life: as protectors, as scavengers, and as companions. The challenges that do exist—dog bites, localized conflict, and uneven population distribution—are real, but they stem not from the mere presence of community dogs, but from gaps in municipal planning, waste management systems, and effective implementation of the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules.

India shares a deep and ancient relationship with dogs, one that is woven into our history, our religions, and our everyday lives. To protect our community dogs is to honor that legacy, uphold constitutional values of compassion, and recognize our responsibility toward beings who have walked beside us through the arc of human civilization. A humane, well-governed ABC program—rooted in data, community participation, and administrative commitment—is not simply an animal welfare policy. It is a reaffirmation of who we are and the kind of society we choose to build: one that is empathetic, informed, and just.

Annexure: Survey Questions

1. Which city are you currently residing in?

Mention your city _____

2. Please specify your age below. (Years completed on the last birthday) (Single select)

- a. 18-25
- b. 26-35
- c. 36-50
- d. Above 50

3. What gender do you identify as? (Single select)

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Non-binary
- d. Prefer not to say

4. What is your highest level of education? (Single select)

- a. 10th Grade or less
- b. High School/12th Grade
- c. Diploma
- d. Bachelor's Degree
- e. Master's Degree and above

5. What is your occupation? (Single select)

- a. Student
- b. Homemaker
- c. Regular wage/salaried employee
- d. Seeking work
- e. Self-employed /Freelancer

6. What is your average monthly household income? (in Indian Rupee thousands) (Single select)

- a. Less than ₹25,000
- b. ₹25,001 - ₹50,000
- c. ₹50,001 - ₹1,00,000
- d. ₹1,00,001 - ₹2,00,000
- e. More than ₹2,00,000

- f. Prefer not to say

Community Impact

- 7. What effect does you think street dogs have on your neighborhood?**
- 8. Do you feel safe in your area because of street dogs?**
 - a. Yes, very safe
 - b. Moderately safe
 - c. No, not at all safe
- 9. Do you believe it is necessary to reduce street dog populations? (Single select)**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
- 10. (If yes in previous question) In your opinion, what is the best way to manage street dog populations? (Single select)**
 - a. Sterilize & Vaccinate (Catch and operate dogs so they can't have puppies, then release them.)
 - b. Government Shelters/Pounds
 - c. Other, please specify:
- 11. In your opinion, what is coming in the way of effective stray dog population management? (select all that apply)**
 - a. Corruption in municipal authorities
 - b. Insufficient funding and resources for sterilization/vaccination programs
 - c. Lack of trained manpower and veterinary infrastructure
 - d. Poor coordination between municipal authorities, NGOs, and local communities
 - e. Low public awareness and participation in stray dog management efforts
 - f. Political interference or lack of long-term policy commitment
 - g. Other, please specify:
- 12. If street dogs were removed from your area, what do you think the impact would be? (Select all that apply)**
 - a. The number of crimes in my area would increase
 - b. Rat population would increase
 - c. More monkeys would come to our neighborhood
 - d. It would be a violation of my religious beliefs (for example, some people believe feeding or protecting dogs is part of their faith)
 - e. Other, please specify:

13. How would you describe the personality of stray dogs in your locality?

- a. Timid
- b. Aggressive
- c. Friendly
- d. Other:

Community Feeders

14. Do you routinely feed street dogs in your area?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Only continue with further questions in this section if the answer to Q18 is Yes

15. Do you experience any harassment because you feed dogs?

- a. Yes
- b. No

16. If yes in previous question, what kind of harassment do you face? (select all that apply)

- a. Serious threats, including a threat to life
- b. Threats of physical violence
- c. Threats of poisoning/killing the dogs you feed
- d. Acid attack threats
- e. Verbal assault (Neighbors shouting or abusing you)
- f. Physical assault (attempting, or threatening physical harm or unwanted physical contact)
- g. Other:

17. Have you ever reported such threats to the police?

- a. Yes
- b. No, I did nothing

18. If selected Q21 = a in previous question, what action did the police take on the basis of your complaint?

- a. Registered a FIR
- b. Registered complaint, but no follow-up from them
- c. Other

19. Are the strays in your area sterilized and vaccinated?

- a. Yes
- b. No

20. If yes, who took the initiative to have these dogs sterilized (i.e. took them to a vet or the MCD vet clinic or an NGO vet clinic to have them sterilized and vaccinated or called for them to be taken for these purposes)?

- a. Community feeders like you
- b. Animal welfare NGOs
- c. Municipalities
- d. Other:

21. Do you believe that feeding dogs is a key part of your religious practice (for example, some people believe feeding or protecting dogs is part of their faith)?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

22. Would you be willing to work together/cooperate with municipalities to help ensure the Animal Birth Control Program is successfully implemented in your city?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ Summarised from <https://www.discovermagazine.com/dogs-have-co-evolved-with-humans-like-no-other-species-42978>
- ⁱⁱ Paraphrased from <https://www.discovermagazine.com/dogs-have-co-evolved-with-humans-like-no-other-species-42978>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/from-army-to-office-the-amazing-work-roles-of-dogs/army-dogs/slideshow/121485023.cms?from=mdr>
- ^{iv} <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/from-army-to-office-the-amazing-work-roles-of-dogs/army-dogs/slideshow/121485023.cms?from=mdr>
- ^v https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382067941_Evaluation_of_the_Effectiveness_of_Search_and_Rescue_Dogs_in_Finding_Survivors_During_Disasters_The_Case_of_Serbia_Croatia_and_Slovenia#:~:text=The%20study's%20findings%20indicate%20that%20SAR%20dogs,conditions%20*%20Coordination%20between%20handlers%20and%20dogs
- ^{vi} <https://www.statnews.com/2017/02/04/dogs-advancing-cancer-treatment-humans/>
- ^{vii} <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/from-army-to-office-the-amazing-work-roles-of-dogs/army-dogs/slideshow/121485023.cms?from=mdr>
- ^{viii} <https://www.scoobserver.in/journal/stray-dogs-menace-making-sense-of-the-supreme-courts-intervention/>
- ^{ix} <https://www.scoobserver.in/journal/stray-dogs-menace-making-sense-of-the-supreme-courts-intervention/>
- ^x <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/wildlife-biodiversity/human-flux-affects-stray-dog-behaviour-in-india-iiser-study-72307>
- ^{xi} <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2117342>
- ^{xii} <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/natural-disasters/over-160-killed-by-lightning-in-march-april-2025-184-surge-from-last-year#:~:text=Over%20160%20killed%20by%20lightning,184%25%20surge%20from%20last%20year&text=At%20least%20162%20people%20were,March%202024%20and%20April%202024.>
- ^{xiii} Summarised from <https://thewire.in/health/killing-off-indias-dogs-is-not-the-way-to-get-rid-of-its-rabies-problem>
- ^{xiv} <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/wildlife-biodiversity/human-flux-affects-stray-dog-behaviour-in-india-iiser-study-72307>
- ^{xv} <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/street-dogs-lazy-not-aggressive/article5863643.ece>
- ^{xvi} <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/human-street-dog-encounters-in-india-peaceful-research-finds-amid-supreme-court-order/article69929742.ece>
- ^{xvii} Summarised from <https://thebetterindia.com/170191/chennai-night-theft-stray-dog-protection/>
- ^{xviii} <https://www.storyandreligion.div.ed.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/King-Yudhisthira-and-His-Dog.pdf>
- ^{xix} <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/soul-search/what-was-the-name-of-the-worlds-first-dog-as-per-rig-veda/photostory/124444320.cms>
- ^{xx} <https://www.dattapeetham.org/page/view/symbolism-of-lord-dattatreya>
- ^{xxi} <https://scroll.in/article/1024462/can-you-take-a-dog-to-a-temple-devdutt-pattanaik-on-the-role-of-dogs-in-hindu-mythology#:~:text=The%20world%20over%2C%20dogs%20are,that%20Shiva%20created%20their%20world.>
- ^{xxii} Summarised from <https://science.thewire.in/health/killing-off-indias-dogs-is-not-the-way-to-get-rid-of-its-rabies-problem/>
- ^{xxiii} Summarized from <https://science.thewire.in/health/killing-off-indias-dogs-is-not-the-way-to-get-rid-of-its-rabies-problem/>
- ^{xxiv} <https://www.strays.in/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Rabies-with-ABC-Control-in-Jaipur.pdf>
- ^{xxv} <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20696487/>
- ^{xxvi} <https://thewire.in/health/killing-off-indias-dogs-is-not-the-way-to-get-rid-of-its-rabies-problem>
- ^{xxvii} https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303711756_An_epidemiological_study_of_animal_bites_among_rural_population_in_Tamil_Nadu_India
- ^{xxviii} <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/human-street-dog-encounters-in-india-peaceful-research-finds-amid-supreme-court-order/article69929742.ece>

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