

Survey Says Couples Choosing Dogs, Not Kids

A survey of British couples reveals many are choosing pets amid economic turmoil.

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Couples in Britain are making plans to start a family by taking a new cat or dog into their homes, not a baby, according to a new survey. The preference for a pet instead of a child indicates a desire to save money during a tough economic climate, said the company behind the survey.

Petplan, a U.K.-based pet insurance provider, conducted the survey, which found that nearly 60 percent of people said they would put off starting a family during the current economic downturn. However, 25 percent would invest in a pet instead.

The decision to put family life on hold in favor of looking after a four-legged friend was equally divided between men and women.

The 10 most popular child "substitutes," according to the survey are: Dog Cat Rabbit Guinea Pig Rat Hamster Mouse Gerbil Reptile Bird

A total of 3,000 pet owners responded to the survey. "It seems that pets of all shapes and sizes are now being considered a perfectly sensible alternative to starting a family for cash-strapped couples," a Petplan spokesperson said in a statement. "We know that many owners develop very strong emotional ties to their pets that are often treated as part of the family. But we do urge all would-be pet owners to understand that pet ownership does come with responsibilities, just like parenthood."