

Why aren't some dogs walked regularly?

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A new study from the University of Liverpool in collaboration with The University of Western Australia has examined why some people feel motivated to walk their dogs regularly and others don't.

There are more than 8 million dogs in households across the UK. Unfortunately not all of them are taken for regular walks.

The study, led by Dr Carri Westgarth from the University's Institute of Infection and Global Health, examined the demographic and [behavioural factors](#) that contribute towards owners reporting having a strong sense of encouragement and motivation to walk provided by their dogs, which the team call 'the Lassie effect'.

Encouragement and motivation

As part of the study data was collected from 629 dog owners participating in the RESIDE study, a 10-year study of 1813 residents in Perth, Western Australia.

The results of two survey outcomes, 'Dog encouragement to walk' (how often dog encouraged me to go walking in last month) and 'Dog motivation to walk' (Having a dog makes me walk more), were analysed to identify both positive and negative factors associated with them.

Dog and owner factors

Explaining her findings Dr Westgarth said: "There are both dog and

owner factors that are associated with an owner's sense of encouragement and motivation to walk the dog, which in turn has been found to be associated with increased dog walking behaviour.

"We now know that owners feel more motivated to walk larger [dogs](#), and if they believe that walking keeps the dog healthy. A strong relationship or attachment to the dog and reporting feeling that their dog enjoys walks is also motivating to owners.

"They are less motivated to take their dog out if they perceive that it is too old or sick, or if other family members usually walk the dog instead. These factors may be targeted in future interventions to increase and maintain [physical activity levels](#) of both people and pets."

The results of the study have been published in *BMC Public Health* this week.

More information: C. Westgarth et al. Understanding how dogs encourage and motivate walking: cross-sectional findings from RESIDE, *BMC Public Health* (2016). [DOI: 10.1186/s12889-016-3660-2](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-3660-2)

Provided by University of Liverpool

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