

Characteristics of Chicken Flocks in Four U.S. Cities

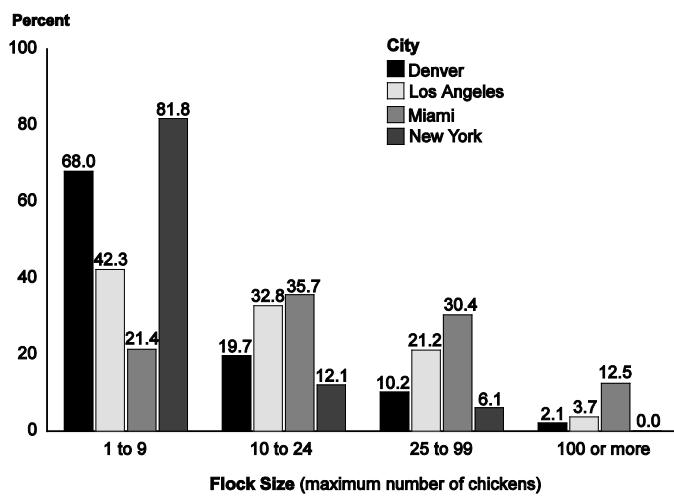
The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Health Monitoring System conducted the Poultry 2010 study. An objective of the study was to characterize urban chicken flocks in four major U.S. cities: Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York City.

To collect data in Denver, Los Angeles, and Miami, feed stores were visited and a questionnaire was administered to customers who owned chickens, lived on less than 1 acre of land, and lived within the respective city's defined boundaries. The questionnaire was available in English and Spanish, and only one questionnaire per household was administered. In New York City, data were collected from members of a chicken-related club, rather than from feed store customers. The study questionnaire was available for completion on the club's Web site and also administered at a presentation to club members. A total of 147, 189, 56, and 33 questionnaires were completed in Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York City, respectively.

Flock size

- The average maximum number of chickens in flocks during the previous 12 months ranged from 7.8 in New York City to 51.1 in Miami.
- Most flocks in Denver and New York City had a maximum flock size of 1 to 9 chickens (68.0 and 81.8 percent, respectively) (figure 1).

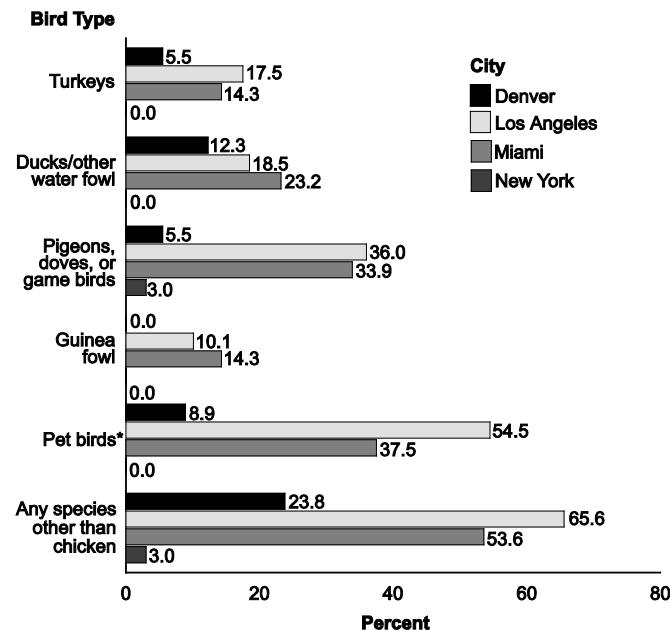
Figure 1. Percentage of Flocks by Flock Size and by City



Bird types

- Over one-half of flocks in Los Angeles and Miami had other species of birds in addition to chickens (65.6 and 53.6 percent, respectively) [figure 2].
- In Denver, 23.8 percent of flocks had at least one other species of bird, and in New York City only 3.0 percent of flocks had other species of birds.

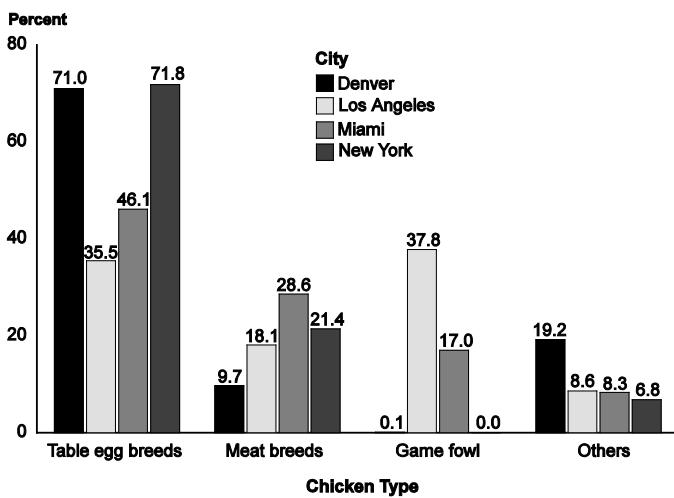
Figure 2. Percentage of Flocks that had the Following Types of Birds in Addition to Chickens, by City



*Breeds not used for food and usually housed in cages in the home, e.g., parrots, cockatiels, parakeets, finches, canaries.

- Overall, table egg breeds (e.g., Leghorn, Plymouth Rock, Rhode Island Red) were the most common type of chickens in urban chicken flocks (figure 3).

Figure 3. Percentage of Chickens by Chicken Type and by City



Chicken housing

- The majority of urban chicken flocks (81.2 percent) were kept at single-family homes. In New York City, nearly one-fourth of flocks (24.2 percent) were located at a community coop and about one-third of flocks (30.3 percent) were located at multifamily dwellings. A community coop is a location where multiple people keep their chickens, similar to and often in a community garden.
- 90.8 percent of flocks were housed in an outdoor pen or poultry house/barn during the previous 3 months.

Chicken health

- Producers reported that they had observed external parasites in 9.3 percent of flocks during the previous 12 months. Diarrhea and respiratory problems were observed in 9.3 and 7.4 percent of flocks, respectively. Only 1.9 percent of flocks were observed to have signs of neurological illness, such as falling over, weakness, or trembling.
- One of 10 flocks (9.9 percent) had a veterinarian look at its chicken(s) for any reason during the previous 12 months.
- The percentage of flocks that received treatments, medications, or vaccines/shots during the previous 12 months ranged from 15.8 percent of flocks in Denver to 43.6 percent of flocks in Los Angeles.

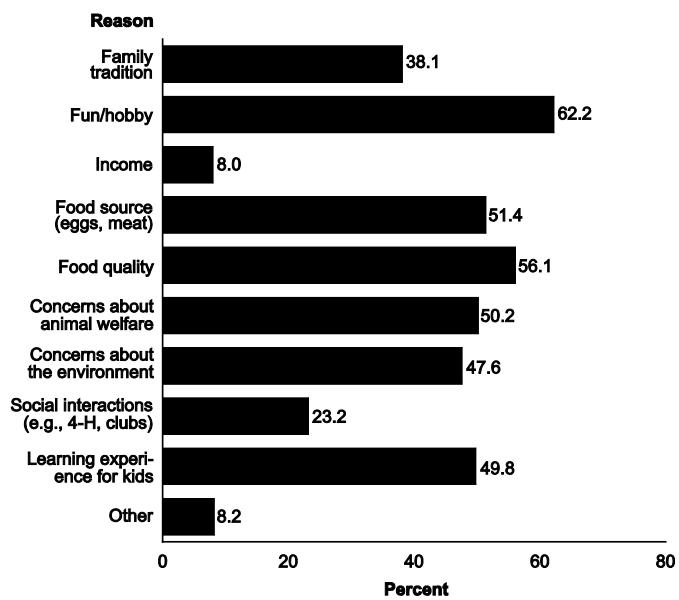
Slaughter and death loss

- Only 8.0 percent of flocks slaughtered or sold chickens for slaughter for human consumption during the previous 12 months. Flocks with 25 or more chickens were more likely to have chickens slaughtered than smaller flocks.
- Nearly 3 of 10 flocks (29.3 percent) had any chicken deaths (excluding slaughtered chickens) during the previous 12 months.
- Predators accounted for 44.0 percent all chicken deaths (excluding slaughtered chickens) during the previous 12 months.

Reasons for having chickens

- Fun/hobby and food quality (e.g., freshness, health) were cited as very or extremely important reasons for having chickens by 62.2 and 56.1 percent of flocks, respectively (figure 4).
- About 5 of 10 flocks in Los Angeles and Miami (52.2 and 45.5 percent, respectively) ranked family tradition as a very or extremely important reason to have chickens, compared with about 2 of 10 flocks in Denver and New York City (21.8 and 19.4 percent, respectively).

Figure 4. Percentage of Flocks that Rated the Following Reasons for Having Chickens as Very or Extremely Important*

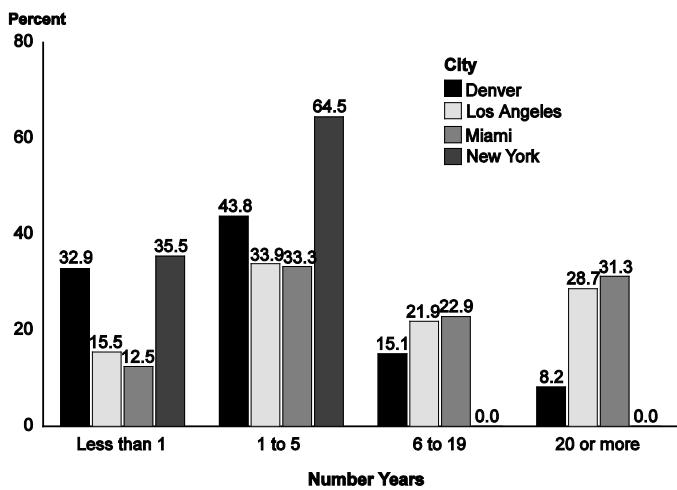


*4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5.

Characteristics of urban chicken owners

- A higher percentage of respondents in Los Angeles and Miami completed the study questionnaire in Spanish (68.8 and 41.1 percent, respectively) compared with respondents in Denver and New York City (3.5 and 0.0 percent, respectively).
- For 9.5 percent of all flocks, the respondents or their family members belonged to an avian or poultry association (including 4-H, FFA).
- On over one-half of flocks in Los Angeles and Miami, the respondent or their family members had been raising chickens for 6 or more years. Respondents had been raising chickens for 5 years or less in three-fourths of flocks in Denver and in all flocks in New York City (figure 5).

Figure 5. Percentage of Flocks by Number of Years the Family had been Raising Chickens, and by City



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Summary

Urban-chicken owners differed across cities in a number of ways. Chicken owners in Los Angeles and Miami were more likely to complete the study questionnaire in Spanish, have a longer history of raising chickens, and have larger flock sizes than owners in Denver and New York City. They were also more likely to have chicken breeds other than table-egg breeds and to have birds other than chickens. Family tradition was a more important reason to raise chickens for owners in Los Angeles and Miami compared with owners in Denver and New York City, while food source and food quality were more important to owners in Denver and New York City.