

## Introduction

Crossbreed dogs are hybrids created by intentionally mating two different purebred dogs. Over the past decade, the intentional breeding and commercialization of crossbred dogs, with claims of superior health, ideal temperament, among other traits, has led to a growing industry.

This narrative is causing a rise in scientific interest to understand if crossbred dogs are healthier and whether the public's perception aligns with clinical evidence.

This study aimed to evaluate the public's stance on different topics regarding dog crossbreeding for aesthetic purposes and to identify their selection criteria.

## Objectives

- ✓ Assess the public perception of dog crossbreeding for aesthetic purposes;
- ✓ Evaluate if there is a public need to acquire dogs solely for their aesthetic;
- ✓ Assay if the public would be willing to spend money in crossbred dogs;
- ✓ Identify if there is public awareness of the potential health and behavioral concerns of crossbred dogs.

## Methods

The method of data collection used in this study was a public survey containing 15 questions and was conducted for 11 days.

A total of 167 responses were collected. Respondents ranged from under 18 to over 55 years old. The questionnaire was open to all genders and was made available in two languages to ensure accessibility for a broader audience.

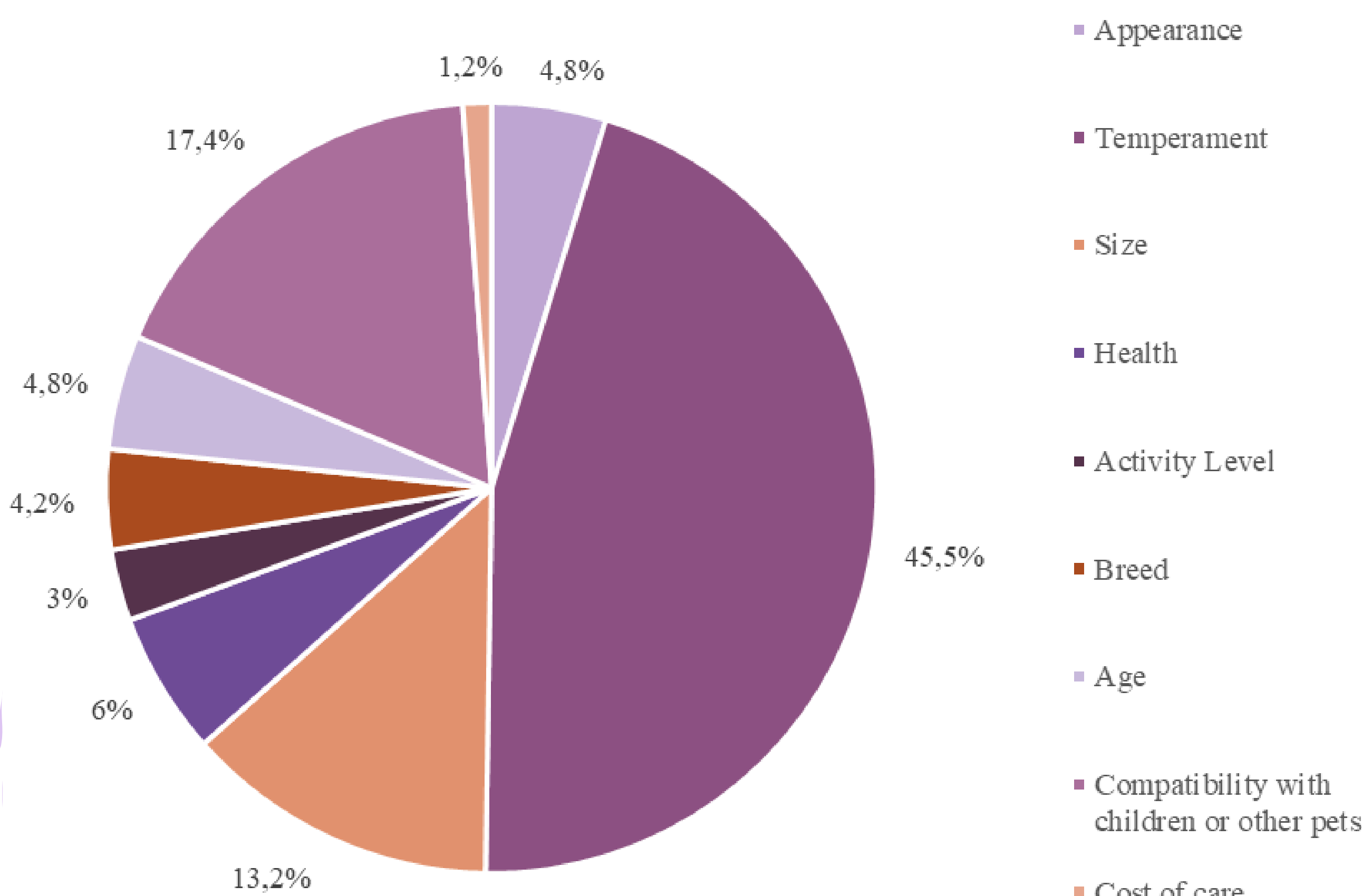
Data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS, namely descriptive and inferential statistics, including the Chi-Square Test of Independence, with a significance level set at  $p < 0,05$ .

# Public Stance on Dog Crossbreeding: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Selection Preferences

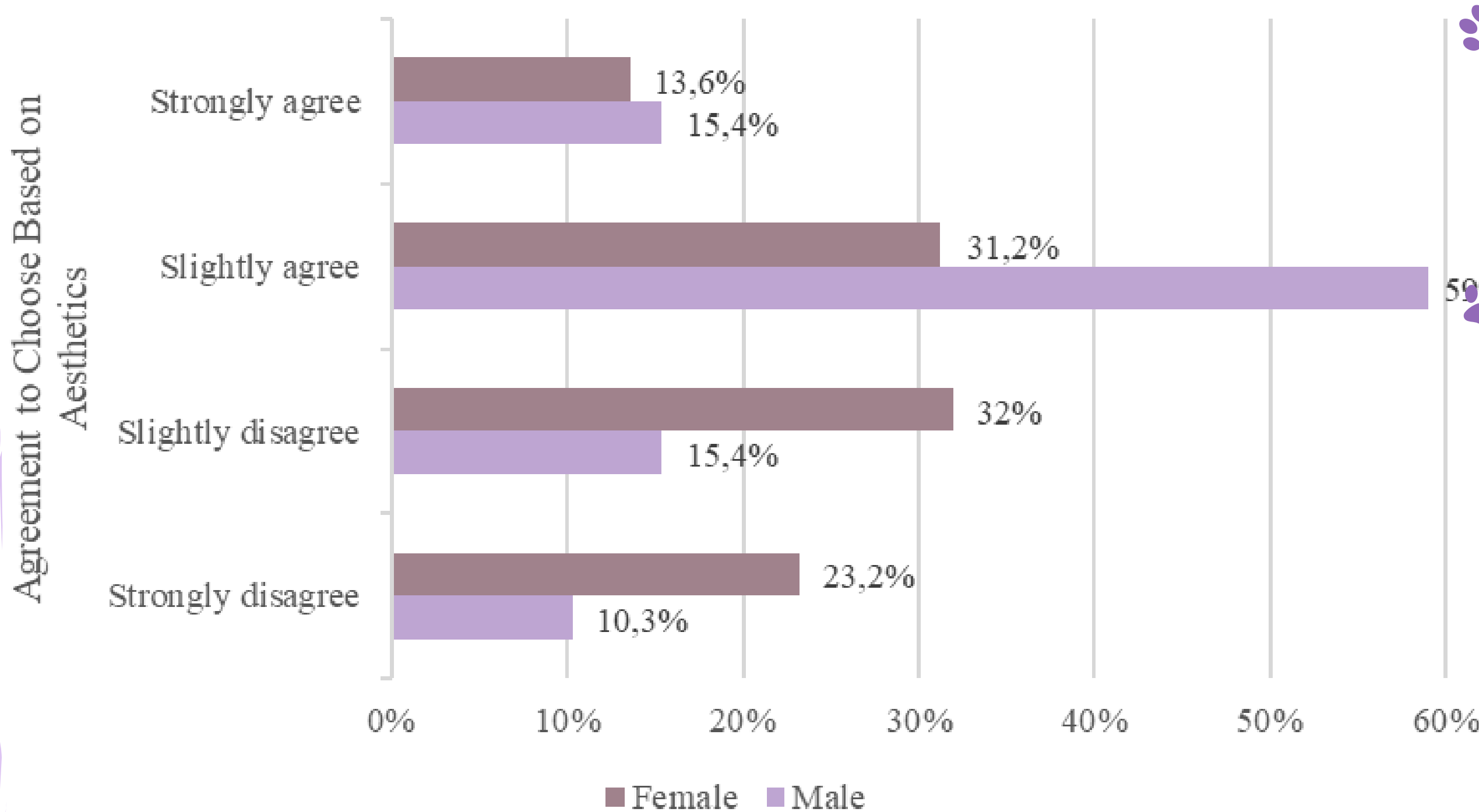
Leonor Gonçalves<sup>1</sup>, Inês Lima<sup>1</sup>, Sara Costa<sup>1</sup> and Tatiana Carvalho<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>MSc in Veterinary Sciences, Egas Moniz School of Health & Science, Campus Universitário, Quinta da Granja, 2829-511 Caparica, Almada, Portugal

## Main results

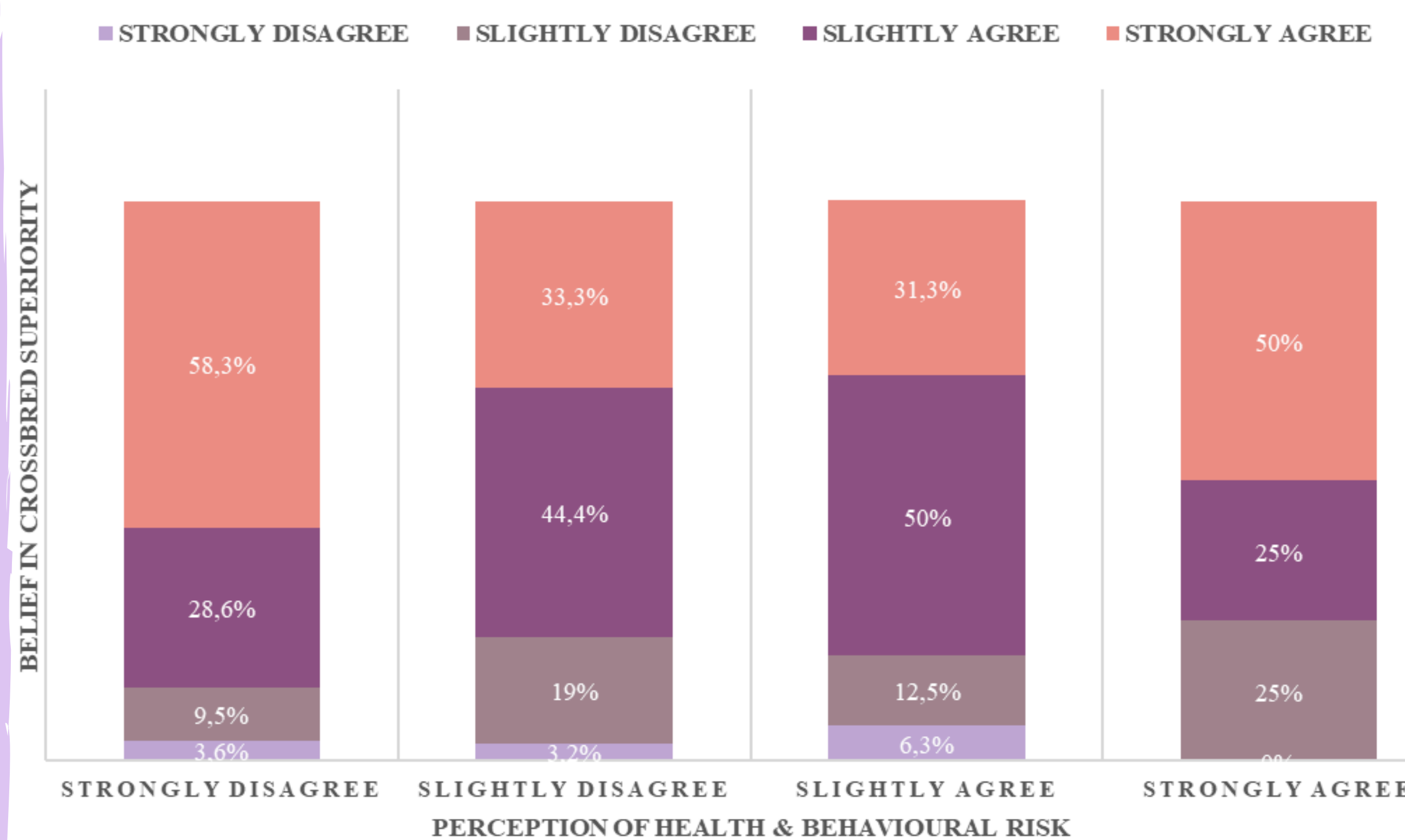
### Public Prioritization of Dog Selection Criteria



### Aesthetic Selection Preference by Gender



### Comparison of Opinions: Crossbreeding Health & Behaviour Impact vs. Crossbreeding Superiority



## Discussion

The majority of the public (65,9%) considered crossbreeding an unethical practice. It was possible to observe that only 4,8% of respondents considered Appearance as the most important trait in a dog, while 45,5% prioritized Temperament. Despite this fact, 51,5% of participants still agreed that they would choose a dog based on its aesthetics, being that a factor that influences their choice.

A statistically significant difference was discovered ( $p=0,029$ ), showing that men are more likely to choose a dog based on aesthetics. While not statistically significant ( $p=0,189$ ), respondents that strongly agree that crossbreds are superior simultaneously strongly disagree that crossbreeding negatively impacts health and behavior. This alludes to a belief connected to a dismissal or lack of awareness of the concerns associated with aesthetic breeding.

Participants with ownership experience showed less willingness to spend money on crossbred dogs, suggesting a level of awareness or practical experience that leads them to value health and behaviour over mere appearance.

## Conclusion

The public presents a conflicted stance on designer crossbreeding: they hold a considerable ethical disapproval and prioritize temperament but are substantially influenced by the aesthetic factor, even when accompanied by an awareness of potential health and behavioural risks. This discrepancy aligns with existing literature regarding owner expectations and the subsequent concrete reality of crossbred dogs.

The results demonstrate the need for future studies to allow a better understanding of findings. Practical implications include initiatives directed towards education and awareness to promote more ethical breeding practices and encourage choices centred on animal welfare, thereby protecting it.