



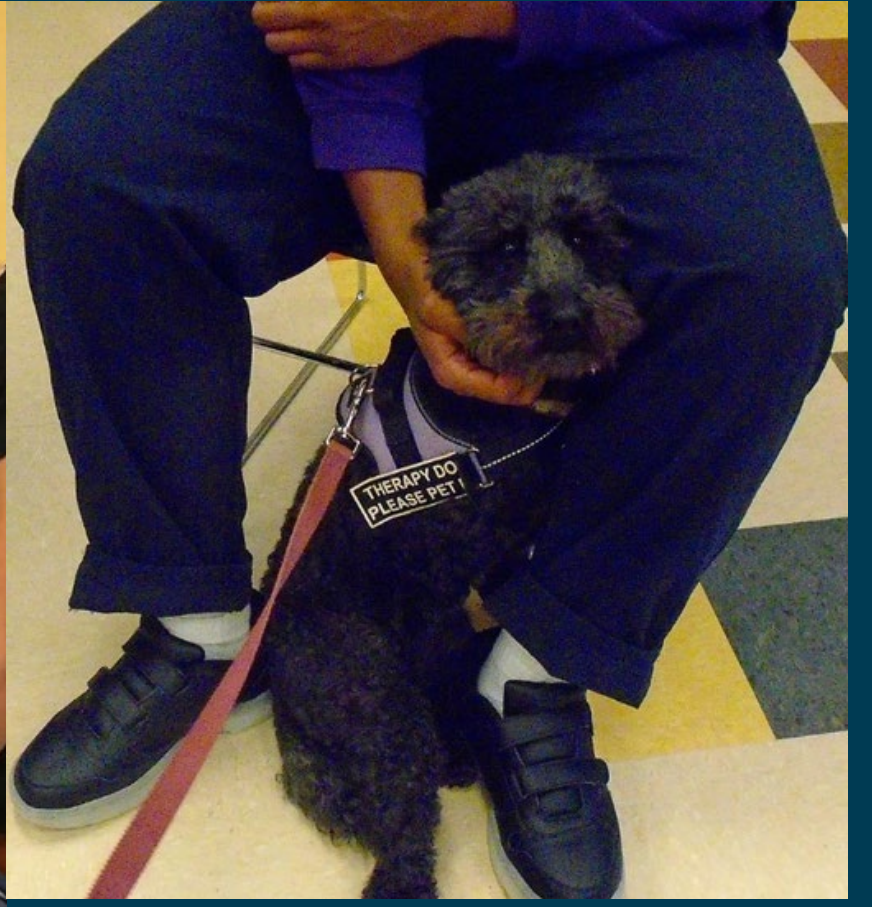
AAAIP

Association of Animal-Assisted
Intervention Professionals

Getting Started in Animal-Assisted Interventions

Selecting Dogs with Therapy Dog Potential

Assessing Aptitude from the Start



Services for
Volunteers



Pet Partners™

Services for
Professionals



AAAIP



AAAIP

Association of Animal-Assisted
Intervention Professionals

Do you have a therapy animal?
Are you seeking a new pet?





AGENDA

01

General Qualifying Traits

02

Breed and Background

03

Finding & Training a Candidate

04

Questions & Discussion



General Qualifications

Affiliative and social behavior

Appropriate level of engagement and eagerness

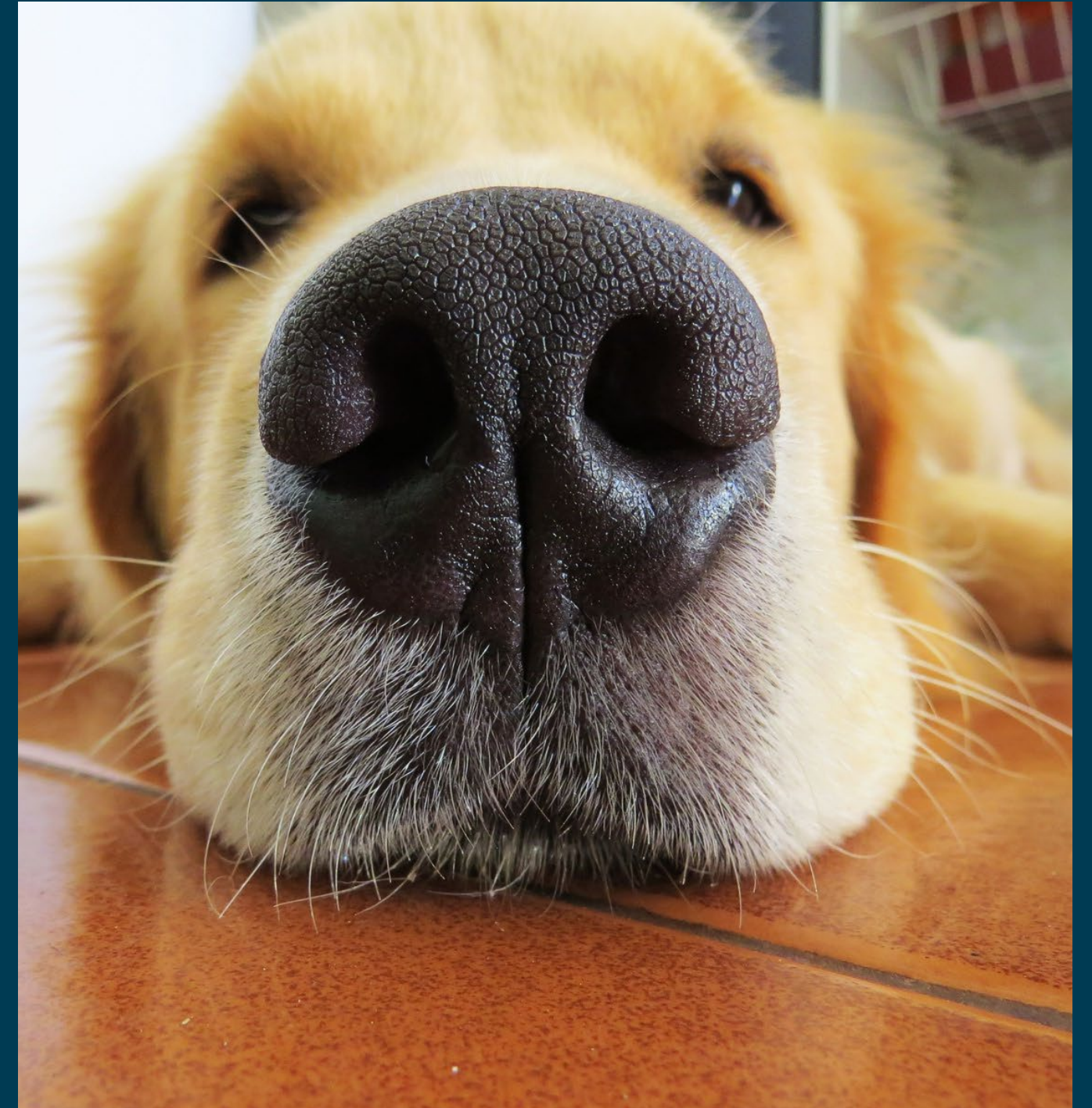
Confidence and resilience

No bite history

Demonstrates basic manners and impulse control

Physically healthy and free from pain

Strong, well-established relationship with handler



Breed-Specific Considerations



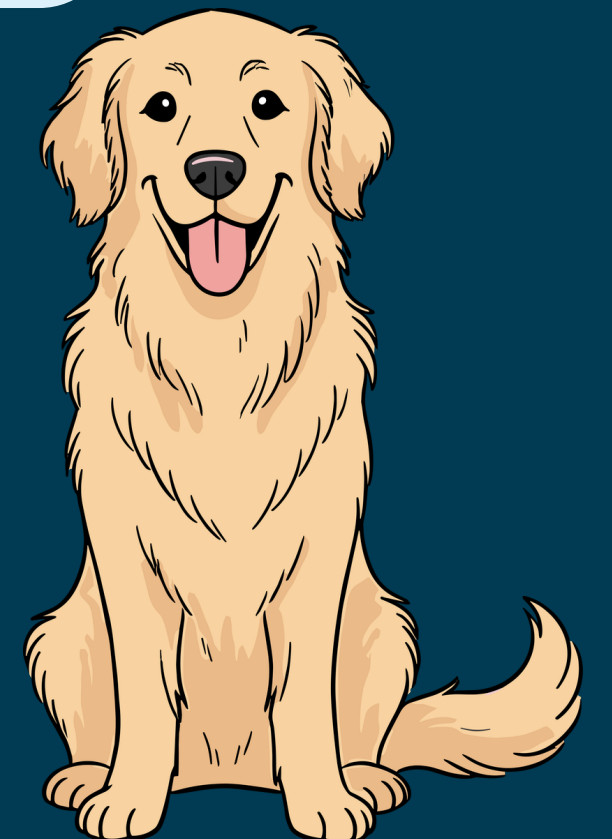
What breed are you interested in?
Have you interacted with this breed before?



How does this breed match your specific therapy animal objectives?

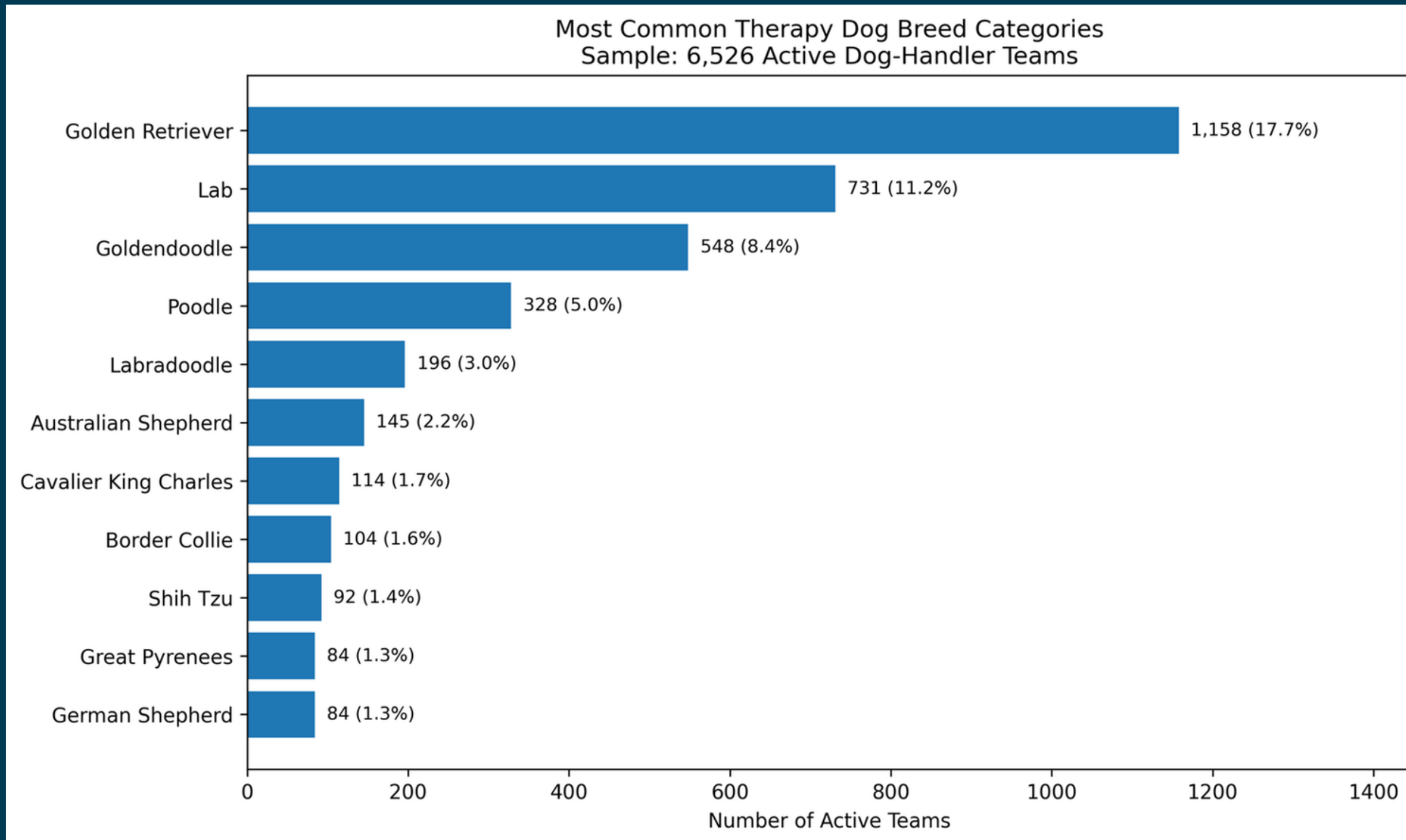


What traits are commonly associated with this breed?



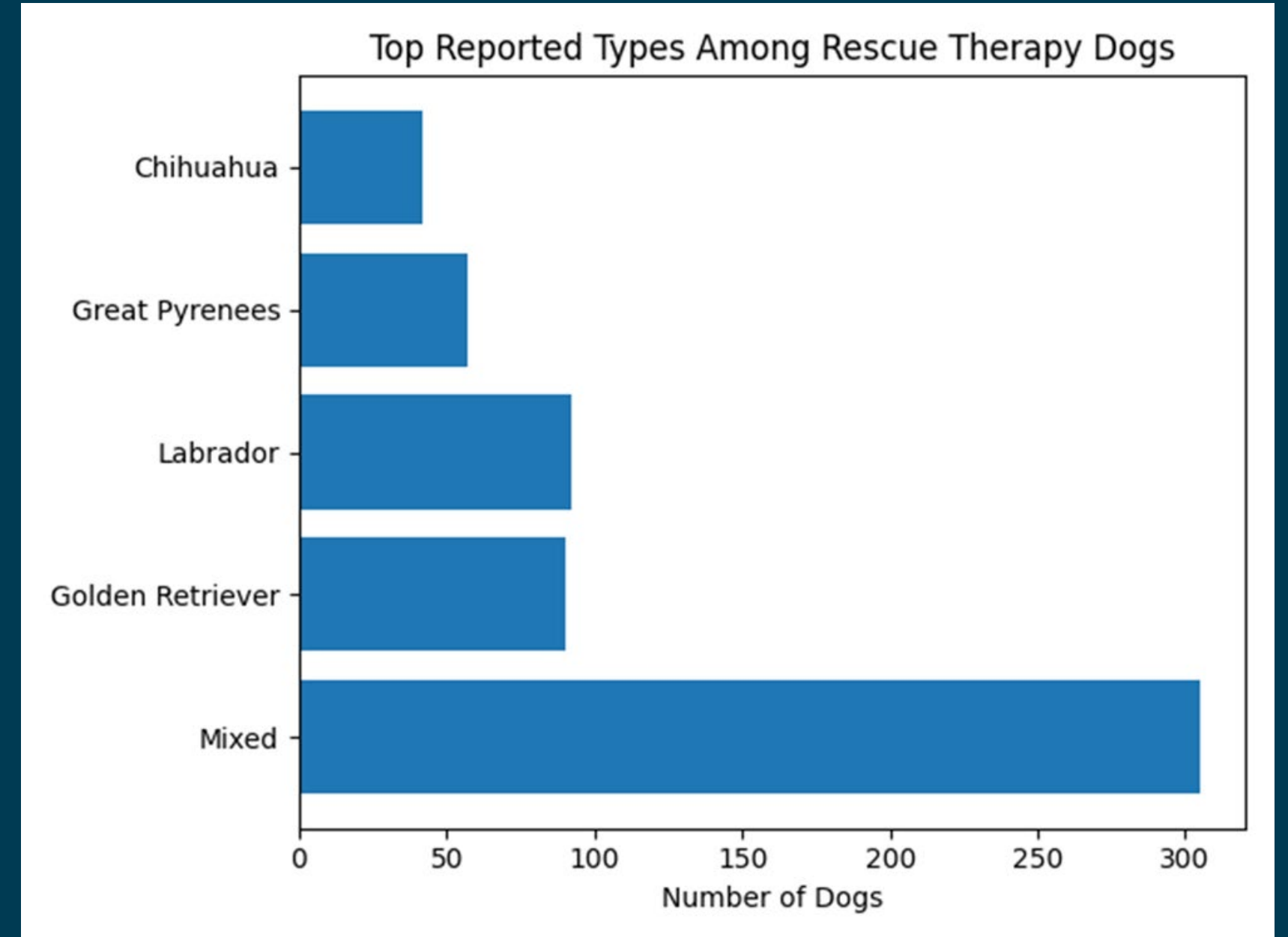
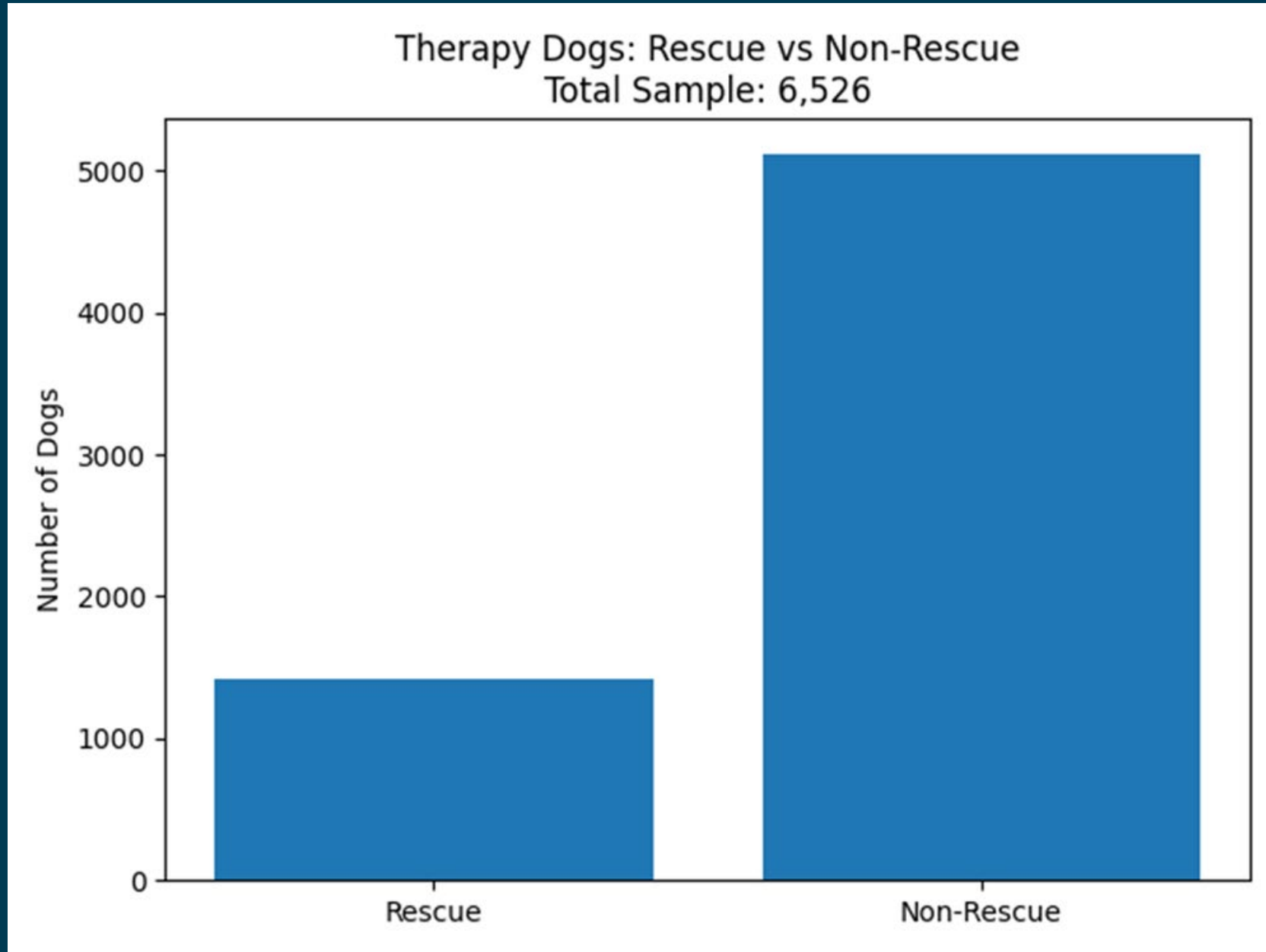
Pet Partners Therapy Dog Population Data

(Spring of 2025 Snapshot)



*6.2% of people report their therapy animal to be of a mixed breed, not pictured on this chart.

Rescue Dog Appreciation



About 1 in 5 of every therapy dog at Pet Partners is rescued.

Implications for Selection



- Breed distribution reflects both perceived breed traits and human expectations/preferences
- Using breed as a proxy for suitability may oversimplify behavior and welfare considerations
- Representation of mixed and diverse breeds highlights the importance of individual variability

Age of Active Therapy Dogs

Puppy → Adolescent → Adult → Senior



Avg entry: 6 yrs

This has implications for training timelines, readiness, and expectation -setting for the role.

Common Temperament Tests

- Reaction to meeting new people
- Reaction to handling and petting
- Response to unfamiliar sights and sounds
- Follow/handler engagement test
- Resource guarding assessment
- Dog-to-dog interaction assessment
- Sensitivity to touch (ears, paws, tail, mouth)
- Novel surface test (grates, slick floors, unstable surfaces)
- Toy/play interaction assessment

Finding a Dog Through a Breeder

- Opportunity to meet the puppy's parents
- Appropriate breed-specific health testing
- Puppies raised in a clean, enriched environment
- Puppies remain with littermates until an appropriate age
- Responsible breeding frequency for parent dogs
- Positive references or testimonials from previous buyers



Finding a Dog Through a Rescue



- Consider rescues that place dogs in foster homes
- Share your goals and ideal canine partner with the rescue
- Explore foster-to-adopt opportunities
- Allow time for decompression and adjustment
- Consider genetic testing for optimal understanding

The Training Process



- Prioritize relationship-building first
- Start slowly and build positive experiences
- Make the work enjoyable for the dog
- Practice proactive advocacy from the beginning
- Ensure stakeholder support, planning, and documentation are in place

Working with a Puppy in your Professional Setting

- Insurance coverage may not be available until a dog has completed a formal therapy dog evaluation
- Clearly identify the dog as “in training” during all visits and interactions
- Use informed consent forms so participants understand the dog is still in training





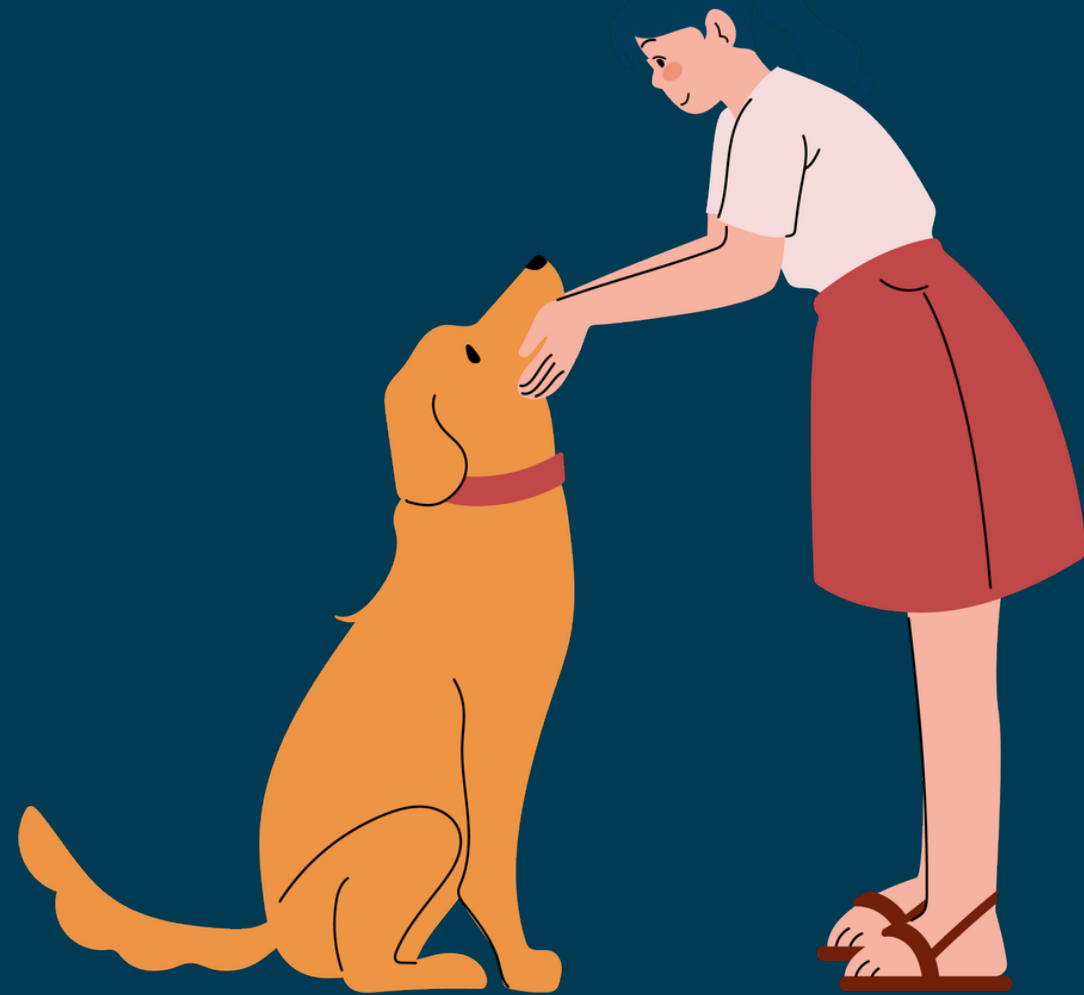
- **Keep visits short and provide frequent opportunities for rest and decompression**
- **Carefully select individuals and environments for early training interactions**
- **Prioritize the dog's comfort, stress signals, and overall welfare throughout the process**

Ensuring Independence & Biodiversity

- Temperament predispositions + training process can lead to hyper-dependence on the handler
- Ensure the dog has regular opportunities to “just be a dog”
- Balance work, rest, play, and independent activities



Matching a Dog to the Right Environment

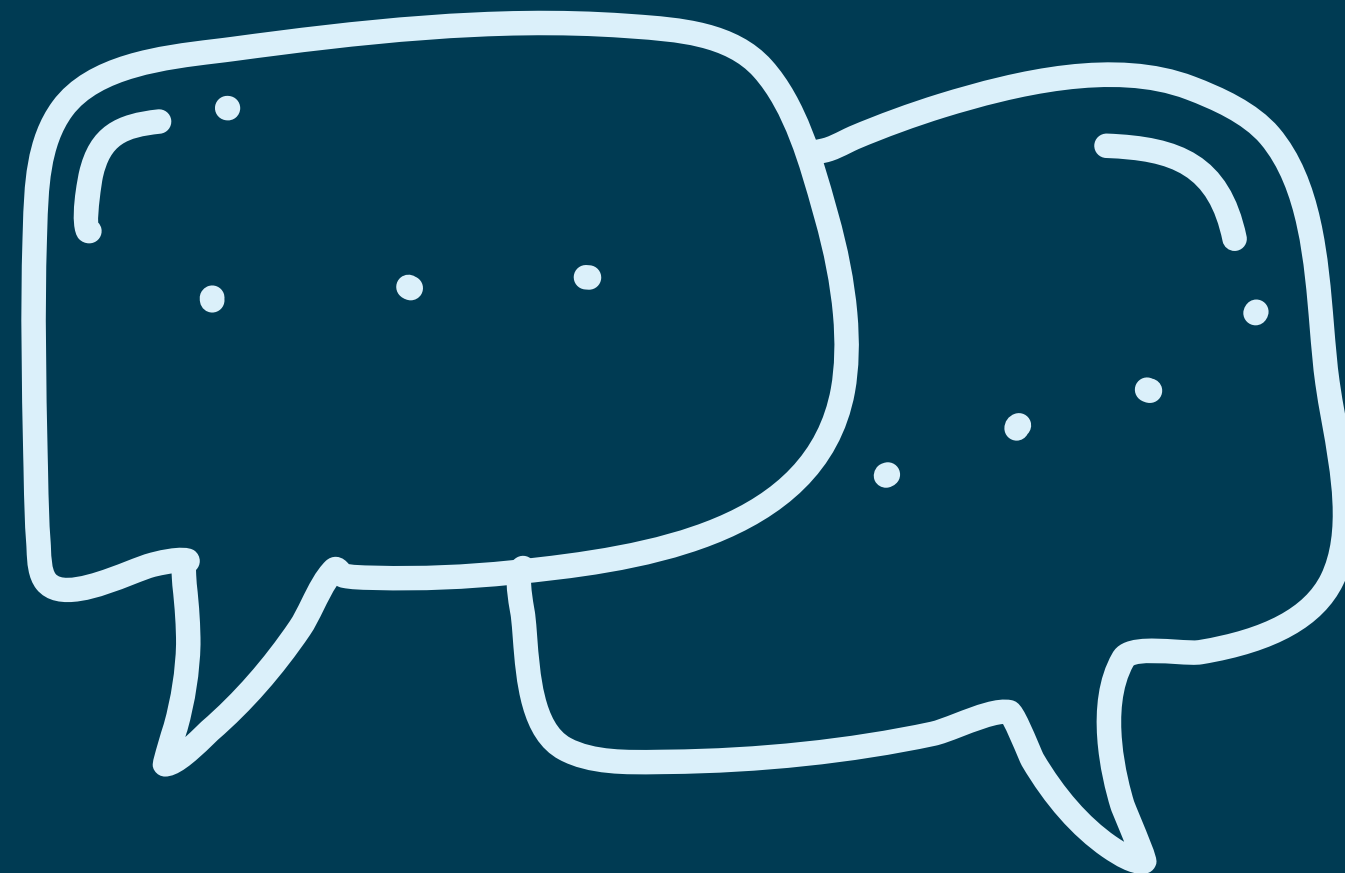


- Consider client population factors: age, medical status, energy level, and ability to follow directions
- Evaluate the specific tasks the dog will be expected to perform
- Assess your own compatibility with the breed and individual dog
- Long-term success depends on a strong fit between handler, dog, and work environment

Dogs who end
up NOT
showing
therapy dog
potential are
wonderful
dogs, too!



Q/A DISCUSSION



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