

The English Bulldog has been a recognisable British dog breed for over a century but has risen again in popularity over the past decade. However, its distinctive and extreme body shape (conformation) has been linked to several serious health conditions over the past century.

The Kennel Club has revised breed standards several times to encourage more moderate conformation in the breed but many English Bulldogs kept as pets continue to show extreme body conformation. This study aimed to compare the health of English Bulldogs in the overall UK dog population to dogs not of this breed. Health concerns continue to be a major welfare issue for the English Bulldog.



Number of dogs in study

Average age of dogs in the study

Proportion of study dogs aged 8 years or above

2,662

English Bulldogs

22,039

Dogs that were not English Bulldog

2.7 years

English Bulldogs

4.4 years

Dogs that were not English Bulldog

9.7%

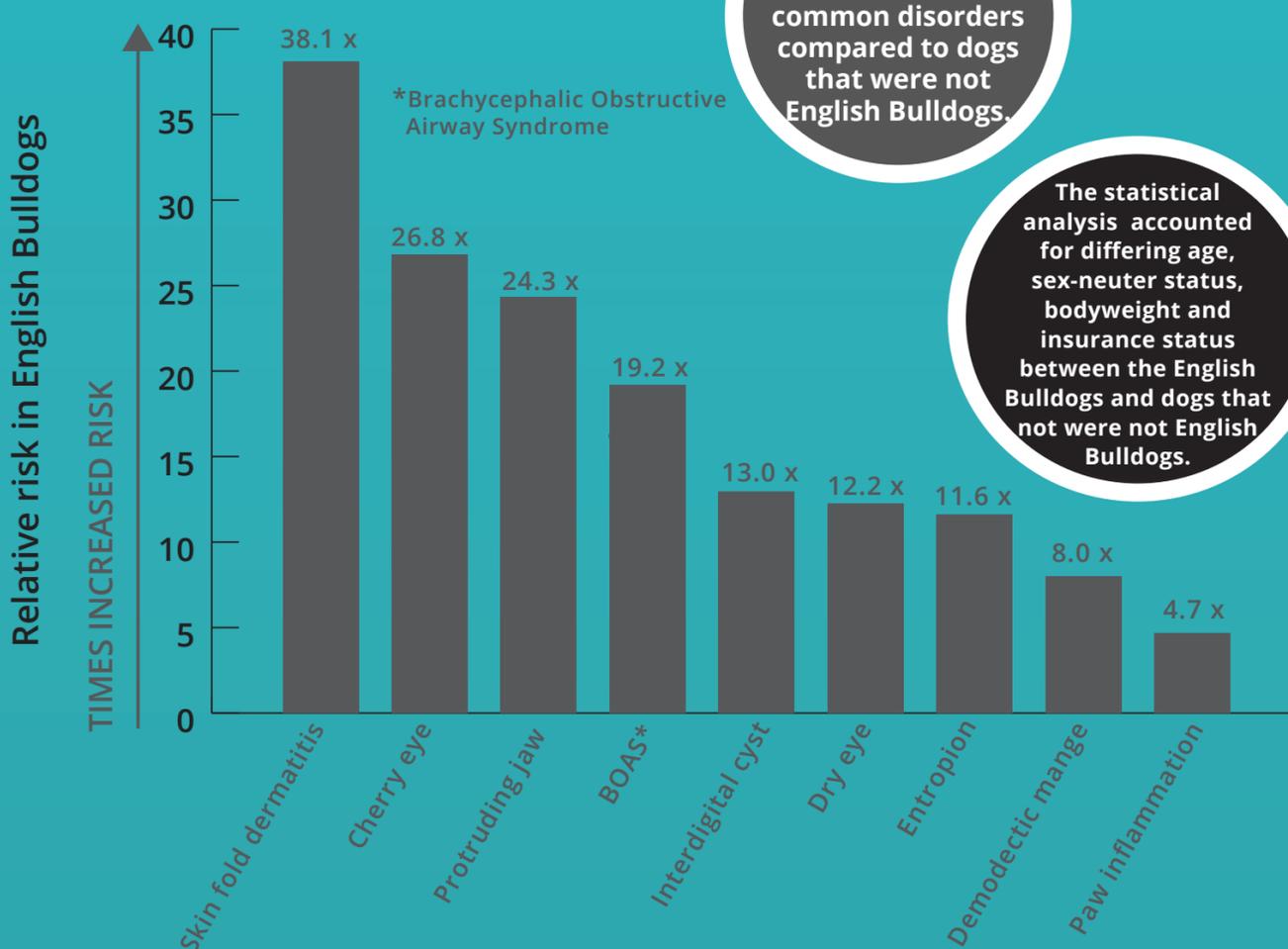
English Bulldogs

25.4%

Dogs that were not English Bulldog

Disorder Predispositions

A predisposition describes any disorder with increased risk in English Bulldogs compared with dogs that were not English Bulldogs. Awareness of predispositions helps owners to know what key disorders to look out for.

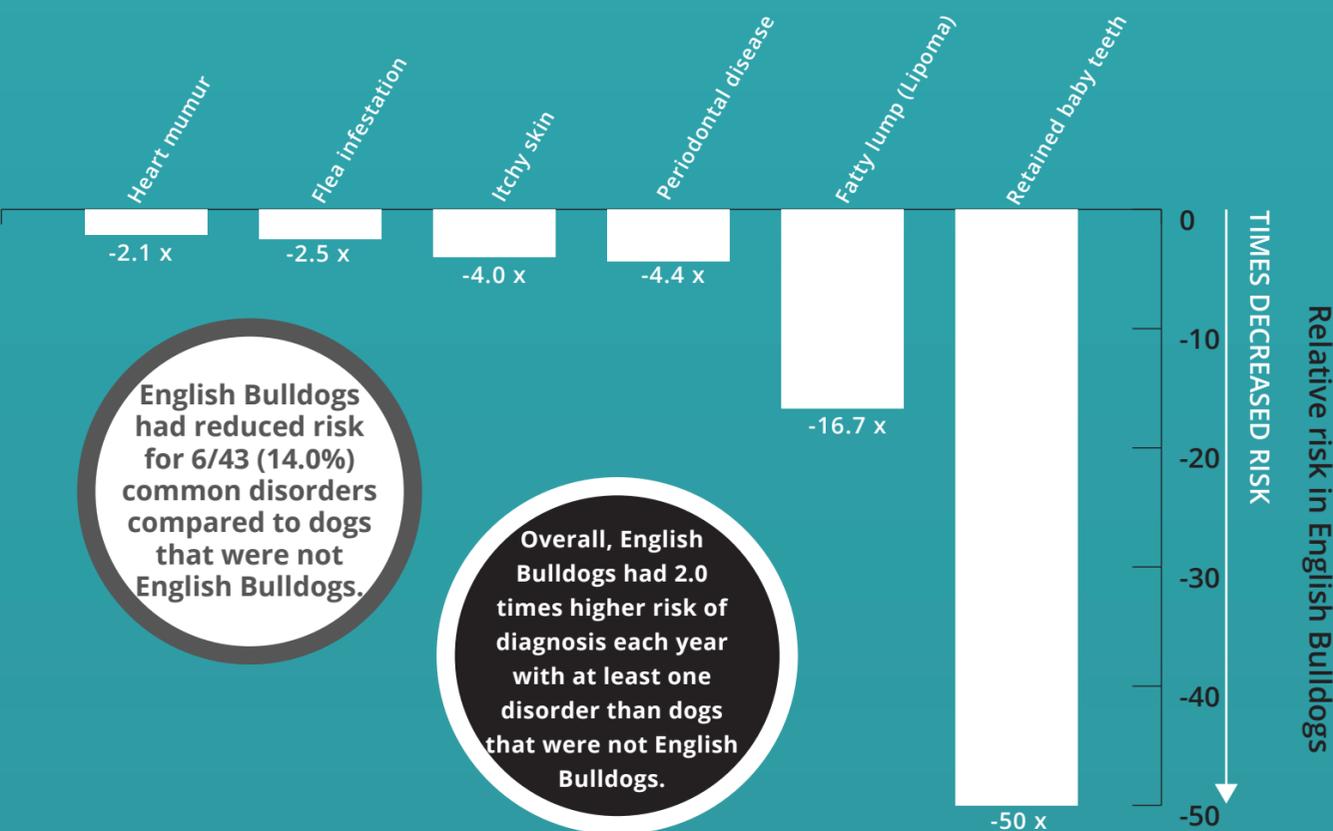


English Bulldogs had increased risk for 24/43 (55.8%) common disorders compared to dogs that were not English Bulldogs.

The statistical analysis accounted for differing age, sex-neuter status, bodyweight and insurance status between the English Bulldogs and dogs that were not English Bulldogs.

Disorder Protections

A protection describes a disorder with reduced risk in English Bulldogs compared with dogs that were not English Bulldogs.



English Bulldogs had reduced risk for 6/43 (14.0%) common disorders compared to dogs that were not English Bulldogs.

Overall, English Bulldogs had 2.0 times higher risk of diagnosis each year with at least one disorder than dogs that were not English Bulldogs.

CONCLUSIONS:

In terms of their health and shortened lifespan, English Bulldogs are not a "typical dog".

The current population of pet English Bulldogs in the UK show a similar spectrum of health issues to Bulldogs from a century ago.

Many of the predisposed health problems identified in English Bulldogs are linked to their extreme body shape.

Until pet English Bulldogs show a healthier moderate conformation, the general advice to the public remains to "stop and think before buying a flat-faced dog."

[CLICK TO READ THE FULL STUDY](#)

O'Neill et al. (2022) "English Bulldogs in the UK: a VetCompass study of their disorder predispositions and protections" Canine Medicine and Genetics

RVC VetCompass <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass> carries out welfare research based on anonymised clinical information shared from over 30% of UK veterinary practices. We are very grateful to the owners and veterinary professionals who contribute to VetCompass research.