

European veterinary surgeons working in the UK:

The impact of Brexit (baseline survey)

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Institute for Employment Studies

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Executive summary

In the aftermath of the 'Brexit' decision that the UK should leave the European Union (EU), the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to conduct three online surveys over a two-year period to gather the views and intentions of veterinary surgeons (VSs) and veterinary nurses (VNs) registered to practise in the UK, whose nationality is non-UK European¹. This report presents the results of the first survey, which was launched on 2 March 2017 and closed on 29 March 2017. A total of 3,078 responses, almost all from VSs, were received, representing a response rate of 55.3 per cent – an indication of the importance of Brexit to European VSs practising in the UK.

Personal profile of European VSs

- The gender split of respondents was 59 per cent female and 40 per cent male, with one per cent preferring not to say.
- Respondents' ages ranged from 23 to 68, although the majority were at the younger end of the range; the modal (the most common) age was 30.
- Almost all (97%) of respondents identified as White, with only one per cent identifying as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME); the remaining two per cent preferred not to say.
- There is evidence that many European VSs have settled in the UK. Two-thirds of all respondents (67%) have a spouse, civil partner or long-term partner not formalised by marriage or civil partnership; 90 per cent of these said their partner was living in the UK (and of these, 94% had partners who were also working in the UK). In addition, just under one-third of respondents (31%) have dependent children; 92 per cent of these said their children were living in the UK.

¹ Note that, to avoid repetition of the somewhat cumbersome phrase 'non-UK European' throughout the report, the adjective 'European' has been used to describe VSs and VNs whose nationality is non-UK European.

- The year in which respondents qualified ranged from 1971 to 2017; however, the majority (81%) qualified relatively recently, from 2001 onwards.
- When asked about their country of qualification, respondents identified 25 different countries: the most frequent response was Spain (22%), followed by Italy (14%), Poland (10%), Romania (9%), Portugal (7%), Germany (6%) and Ireland (6%).
- Although respondents had come to the UK between 1960 and 2017 (a range of 57 years), most had arrived relatively recently; the majority (62%) had arrived from 2012 onwards, with only ten per cent arriving before 2000.
- When asked why they had decided to come to the UK², the top reasons were '*better career opportunities*' (56%), followed closely by '*to gain experience*' (55%), '*to work abroad*' (53%) and '*better pay and conditions*' (44%).

Job profile of European VSs

Almost all (98%) of respondents were currently working, and of these fewer than two per cent were working outside the veterinary profession; almost all of those either not working or working outside the profession had plans to return to the profession. Most respondents (82%) are now working in their preferred area, although 27 per cent had changed their area of work since first coming to the UK; of these, 44 per cent had worked within the meat industry/official controls sector when they first came to the UK.

- Over three-quarters (78%) are working in clinical veterinary practice, with around two-thirds of these working for small animal/exotic practices.
 - The majority of VSs in clinical practice (70%) gave their role as '*assistant/employee*'. Others were '*locum*' (8%), '*sole principal*' (6%), '*director of a limited company*' (6%), '*consultant*' (4%), '*salaried partner*' (3%), '*joint venture or equity partner*' (3%).
 - VSs trained in Spain accounted for the highest percentage of European VSs in the small animal/exotic and equine practice areas. In mixed practices, VSs trained in Ireland formed the highest percentage; in farm animal/production practices it was VSs trained in Romania; and for both referral/consultancy practices and other first opinion practices it was VSs trained in Italy.
- Twenty-two per cent of VSs (603 respondents) are working within the veterinary profession but outside clinical practice.

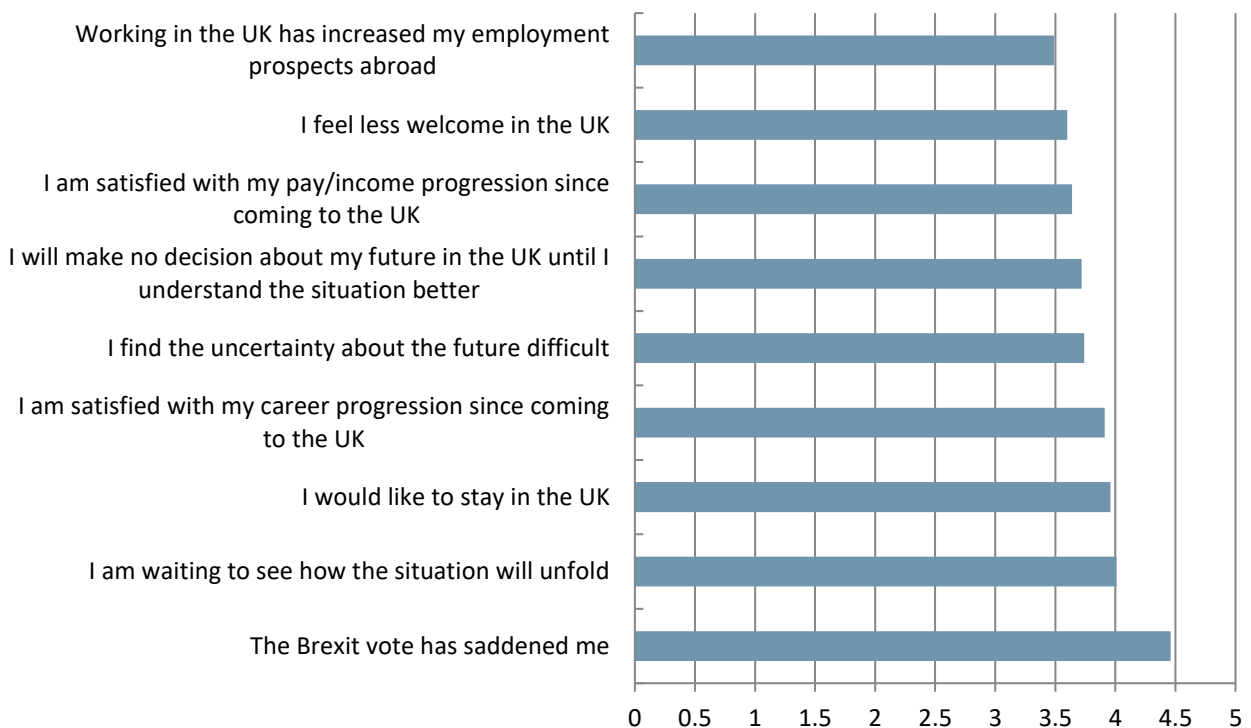
² Note that respondents could select more than one reason.

- Over half of those outside clinical practice are working for the Food Standards Agency (38%) or the Animal and Plant Health Agency (21%). Other commonly-cited areas are veterinary schools (14%) and commerce/industry (11%).
- 48 per cent (288 respondents) who work elsewhere from clinical veterinary practice, including many of those working for the FSA or APHA, said that their work was mainly or entirely within the meat industry/official controls sector. Their most commonly-cited countries of training are: Spain (45%), Romania (18%), Poland (10%), Italy (8%) and Portugal (5%).

The impact of Brexit on individuals

To assess opinions about the actual and potential impact of the Brexit vote on VSs personally, respondents were asked to give their views about 31 attitudinal statements on a scale from ‘strongly disagree’ (scoring 1) to ‘strongly agree’ (scoring 5). Figure 1 presents the average (mean) scores for the nine statements that attracted the highest level of agreement. It is clear that VSs feel that coming to the UK has been beneficial in terms of pay, career progression and experience. However, they are saddened by the Brexit vote, feel less welcome and are finding the uncertainty difficult to cope with. Most however, they are not rushing to make a decision about their future, but are waiting to see how Brexit unfolds; in response to the statement ‘I am actively looking for work outside the UK’, for example, only 18 per cent agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 1: Personal views about the impact of Brexit



An analysis of a random sample of free-text comments provided by VSs shows that the Brexit vote has had a deep impact on some, and is causing a lot of anxiety, as the following statements illustrate:

“Brexit was the first time in 20 years that I felt not welcome and a true immigrant/foreigner”

“I feel insecure now as I am here in the UK for more than 10 years, [we] have permanent jobs here. We set up our life here (we bought house, bringing up our child) and we don't know what future brings”

Despite the impact of the Brexit vote, on the whole European VSs seem to feel that coming to the UK has been worthwhile; when asked whether they would have still come here if they had known that the UK would vote for Brexit, almost twice as many VSs said ‘yes’ (39%) than ‘no’ (21%).

Support from the RCVS

Three-quarters (74%) of respondents said that the RCVS was providing enough support and advice to European VSs and VNs. Some respondents made suggestions about additional support that might be provided; mostly, this centred on lobbying the government to protect the interests of VSs, providing help with citizenship applications and giving legal advice, and providing information and regular updates. However, ten per cent of those who made suggestions felt that there was little or nothing the RCVS could do, especially given the current uncertainty.

The impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession

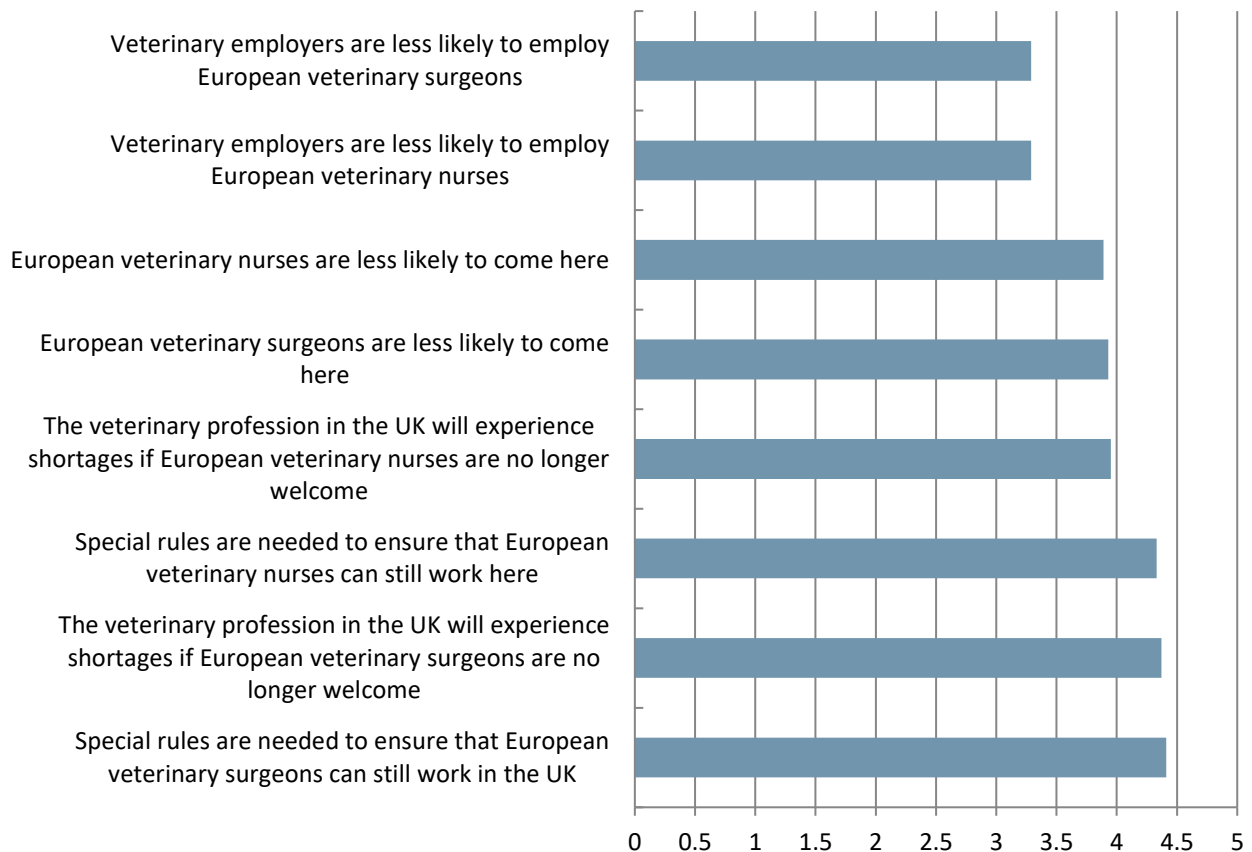
Respondents were also asked to give their views about eight statements relating to the veterinary profession in the UK, using the same five-point attitudinal scale. Figure 2 presents the average (mean) scores for these statements. Respondents are very clear in their belief that Brexit could make a very big impact on the veterinary profession, if European VSs and VNs could no longer work here, due to the likely shortages, and that because of this, special rules are needed; in addition, they think that European VSs and VNs will be less likely to come to the UK to work. Many free-text comments related to the difficulties that the UK will face if European VSs left to work elsewhere:

“The UK does not train enough vets for its own necessities, it will be difficult to carry out some duties if less veterinary resources are available”

“Impact of Brexit on slaughterhouse workforce ... will be immense. These vital jobs are to some extent held in poor esteem by British workers and British vets. Filling these foreseeable

vacancies will be difficult and only possible with higher pay, meaning increasing costs to taxpayers!”

Figure 2: Views about the impact of Brexit on the UK veterinary profession



Conclusions and next steps

Despite the distress and upset caused by the UK’s vote to leave the EU, the prevailing mood seems to be ‘wait and see’. Few VVs are planning on taking immediate action, for example by returning home or seeking work outside the UK, and half have either applied for UK citizenship (9%) or are considering doing so (41%). However, respondents are very firmly of the opinion that the UK veterinary profession will suffer considerably if European VVs and VNs are no longer welcome here. The threat of shortages is not imminent, in that few VVs are planning to leave as soon as possible; the vast majority are waiting to find out what is in store for them, and nearly three-quarters (73%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to stay in the UK.

A separate qualitative report, containing the analysis of around 20 telephone interviews with a sample of VVs who have volunteered to take part, will supplement this survey report.

Two further surveys will be conducted over the next 18 to 24 months, which will track the opinions and intentions of European VSs and VNs over time, as Brexit decisions are made, policies are formed and the options available to non-UK nationals become clearer.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) asked the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to conduct a series of three surveys, over a period of around two years, to gather the views and intentions of veterinary surgeons (VSs) and veterinary nurses (VNs) registered to practise in the UK, whose nationality is non-UK European³. The UK is a net importer of VSs from Europe, with around 6,430 European graduates registered to work in the UK, some 5,000 of whom are actually practising; by contrast, the number of UK graduates working abroad in European countries is small. European VNs registered to practise in the UK (numbering fewer than 100) were also invited to complete the survey.

The RCVS wished to find out more about the views and intentions of European VSs and VNs currently practising in the UK, firstly in the immediate aftermath of the 'Brexit' decision that the UK should leave the European Union (EU), and secondly at intervals over the coming two years as developments unfold during the process of the UK's exit from the EU. This information is required for several reasons:

- To understand the immediate and longer-term impact of UK's exit from the EU on different areas of veterinary work, in particular areas in which large numbers of European VSs currently work.
- To gather evidence for the Government, both in response to requests for information (such as Parliamentary questions) and to bolster any arguments for special treatment with regard to immigration controls.
- To respond to other requests for information, for example, from the media.
- To provide informed advice to European VSs and VNs as they make decisions about their future careers in the light of the Brexit decision.

³ Note that, to avoid repetition of the somewhat cumbersome phrase 'non-UK European' throughout the report, the adjective 'European' has been used to describe VSs and VNs whose nationality is non-UK European.

- To assist the RCVS in drawing up workforce plans.
- To advise veterinary schools about any changes that might be required to the number of places and/or content of the curriculum, to meet future needs.
- To understand the likely impact, if any, of UK's exit on the RCVS's registration income.

1.2 The survey

1.2.1 Process

The questions for the survey were initially drafted by IES researchers, then discussed and agreed with the RCVS project team. The survey was then set up online using the Snap survey tool, and was tested both by IES researchers and the RCVS team before being launched on 2 March 2017.

Every European VS and VN registered with the RCVS to practise in the UK was sent an email invitation to take part in the survey, which was accessed via a link in the email; in total, 5,572 email invitations were sent. Three reminders were sent at intervals to those who had not yet completed and submitted their questionnaires. The survey was closed on 29 March 2017.

1.2.2 Response

Of the 5,572 email invitations, only eight were returned because of a failed delivery; this reduced the sample size slightly to 5,564. A total of 3,078 people responded, of which 206 were partial responses (i.e. the individuals did not finish the survey by clicking on the 'submit' button at the end). The majority of the partial responses contained usable data, however. The overall response rate was therefore 55.3 per cent, reducing to 51.6 per cent if only the completed and submitted returns are included. The vast majority of respondents were VSs; only 19 VNs responded.

1.2.3 Analysis

The analysis of the survey data was carried out using the statistical software package SPSS. Initial survey headlines were produced for the RCVS, following which the data for VSs were analysed in depth, with a particular focus on any differences in views and intentions using a variety of breakdowns (e.g. area of work, home country, length of time in the UK, age). Due to the small number of VN respondents, detailed analysis was not possible. A summary of VN views and intentions is included in chapter 6 towards the end of this report.

1.3 This report

This report consists of the following chapters:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Personal profile of European veterinary surgeons
- Chapter 3: Job profile of European veterinary surgeons
- Chapter 4: Personal views about the impact of Brexit
- Chapter 5: Views about the impact of Brexit on the UK veterinary profession
- Chapter 6: The views and intentions of European VNs
- Chapter 7: Conclusions and next steps.

1.4 Follow-up qualitative report

This survey report will be supplemented by a qualitative report, which will contain the results of the analysis of telephone interviews with a sample of VSs who had volunteered, via a question in the survey, to take part in an interview. An initial sample of 20 was chosen randomly from the 1,150 respondents who indicated they would be happy to be contacted again, after which the postcodes of these 20 individuals' workplaces was examined to ensure there was a good geographical spread across the UK. As the postcodes of these 20 volunteers all proved to be in England, six additional volunteers (two each from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) were added to the sample. Telephone interviews are taking place during June 2017.

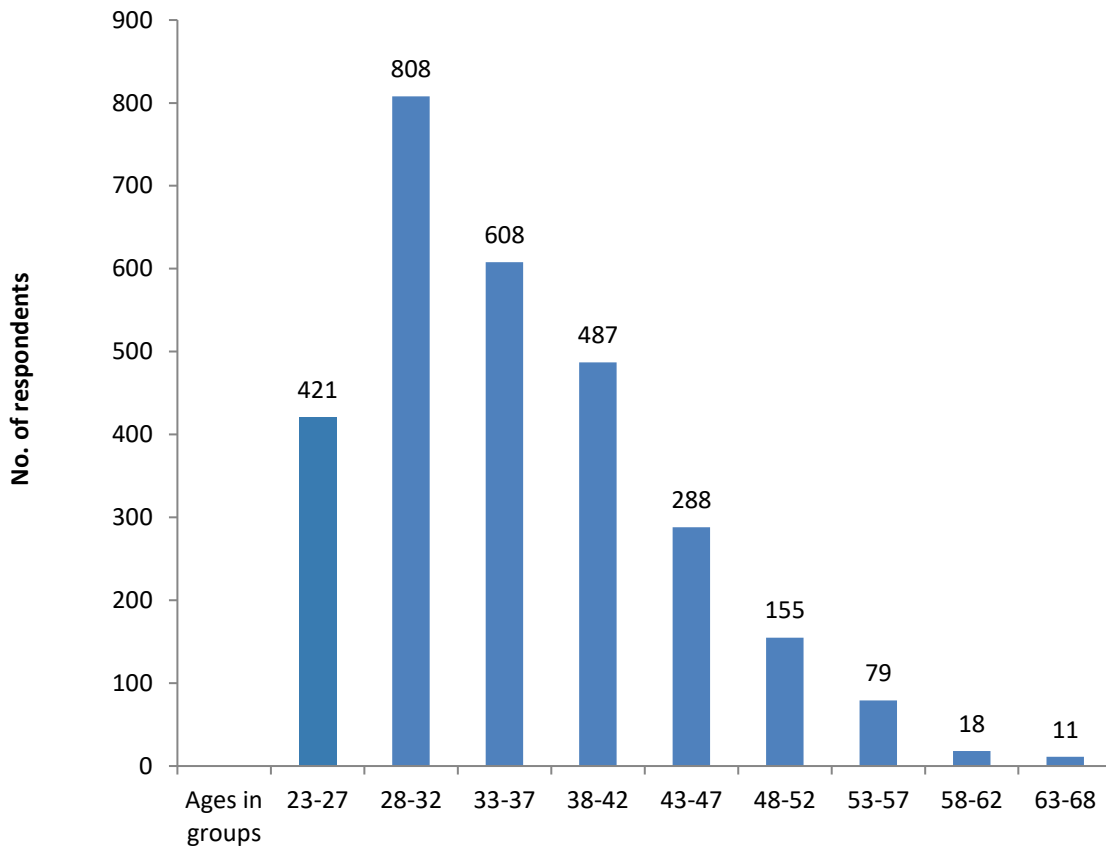
2 Personal profile of European veterinary surgeons

2.1 Gender, age and ethnicity

- The gender split of respondents was 59 per cent female and 40 per cent male, with one per cent preferring not to say.
- Respondents' ages ranged from 23 to 68.
 - The mean average age of respondents was 36 years; however, the modal age (i.e. the most common) was younger, at 30.
 - The mean ages broken down by gender were female 35, male 37; the modal ages were female 30, male 30.
 - Figure 2.1 shows the ages of respondents grouped into five-year bands (23-27 up to 63-68). This shows that the majority (81%) were under 43; and that relatively few (9%) were over 47.
 - Of those aged 23-27, the greatest proportion (24%) qualified in Spain. VSs qualifying in Spain also make up 26 per cent of those age 28-42 and 30 per cent of those age 43-47 and 48-52.
 - In the age group 48-52, 27 per cent of respondents qualified in Germany, constituting the second largest country of qualification in the age group, behind the Spain.
 - Of those age 53-55, those qualifying in Italy made up the largest proportion (24%) followed by Germany (15%).
 - In the oldest age group, 63-68 years, the greatest proportions qualified in Ireland (27%) and Poland (18%).
- Almost all (97%) of respondents identified as White, with only one per cent identifying as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME); most all of these BME respondents gave their ethnicity as 'mixed/multiple ethnic groups'. The remaining two per cent

preferred not to say. The number of BME respondents was too small to allow further analysis.

Figure 2.1: Respondents, grouped by age



2.2 Partners and dependent children

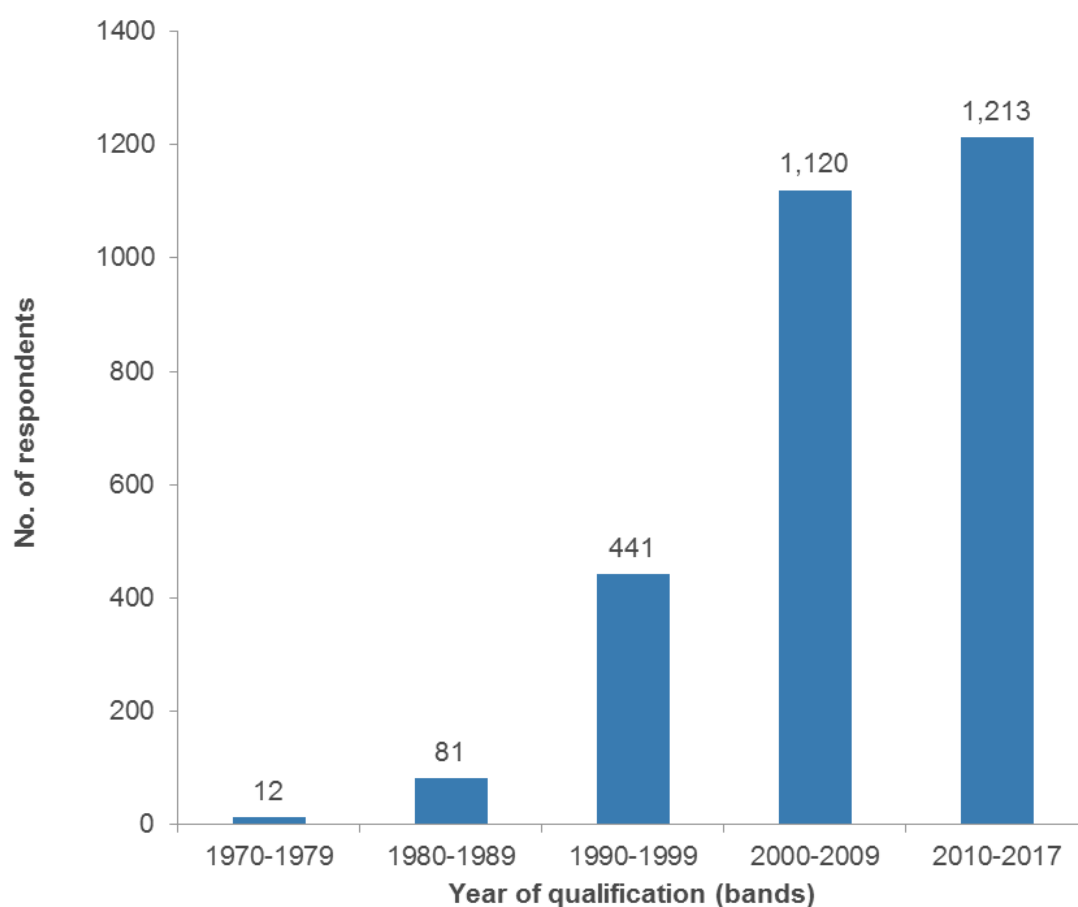
- Two-thirds of all respondents (67%) have a spouse, civil partner or long-term partner not formalised by marriage or civil partnership.
 - Of those with a spouse, civil partner or long-term partner, 90 per cent said their partner was living in the UK
 - Of the remaining ten per cent with a partner not currently living in the UK, 59 per cent had plans for this to happen.
- Of those with a partner living in the UK, 94 per cent said their partner was currently working in the UK.
- Just under one-third of all respondents (31%) have dependent children.
 - Of these, 92 per cent said their children were living in the UK

- Of the relatively small number (N = 70) whose children were not currently living in the UK, 61 per cent had plans for this to happen.

2.3 Year, country and university of qualification

The **year** in which respondents qualified ranged from 1971 to 2017; however, Figure 2.2 shows that, in line with the age breakdown, the majority (81%) qualified relatively recently, i.e. from 2001 onwards.

Figure 2.2: Respondents grouped by year of qualification



- Of those who qualified between 1971 and 1980, 50 per cent are from Ireland, and the remaining 50 per cent from eight other different countries.
- Of those qualifying between 1981 and 1990, the most frequently-mentioned countries are: Spain (17%), Italy (14%), Belgium (14%) and Ireland (12%).
- Of those who qualified between 1991 and 2000, one third came from Spain, while the next largest proportion is 19 per cent from Germany.

- Of those qualifying between 2001 and 2010, 21 per cent came from Spain; and 15 per cent from Italy.
- Of those who qualified most recently (2011-2017) 20 per cent are from Spain, 15 per cent from Italy, 12 per cent from Poland and 11 per cent from Romania.

When asked about **country** of qualification, respondents identified 25 different countries.

- The most frequent response (22%) was Spain.
- The next most commonly-cited countries of qualification were Italy (14%), Poland (10%), Romania (9%), Portugal (7%), Germany and Ireland (6% each).
- Countries of qualification accounting for between two and five per cent of respondents were Belgium (4%), Greece (4%), the Netherlands (3%), the UK (3%), Bulgaria (2%), France (2%), Hungary (2%) and Slovakia (2%).
- The following countries accounted for one per cent of respondents each: Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark and Lithuania.
- Finally, less than one per cent of respondents qualified in Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Slovenia and Sweden.

An analysis of country of qualification broken down by age shows that:

- The majority of respondents aged 23-27 years were from one of the following countries: Spain (24%), Poland (12%), Romania (11%), Italy (10%) and Portugal (9%).
- The pattern was fairly similar for those aged 28-32 years: Spain (20%), Italy (16%), Poland (12%), Romania (12%) and Portugal (9%).
- In the 33-37 age group, the most frequently-cited countries were: Italy (17%), Spain (16%), Poland (15%) and Romania (11%).
- In the 38-42 age category 26 per cent were from Spain, 13 per cent from Italy, ten per cent from Poland and nine per cent from Germany.
- The majority of those aged 43-47 years were from: Spain (30%), Germany (14%) and Italy (11%).
- In the 48-52 age group 31 per cent were from Spain, 27 per cent from Germany and 13 per cent from Italy.
- The majority of those aged 53-57 years were from Italy (24%) followed by Germany (15%) and Spain (14%).

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- In the 58-62 age group the picture changes somewhat, in that the most commonly-cited country was Ireland (39%), followed by Italy, the Netherlands and Poland (11% each).
 - The most commonly-cited country in the oldest age group (63-68 years) was also Ireland (27%) followed by Poland (18%).

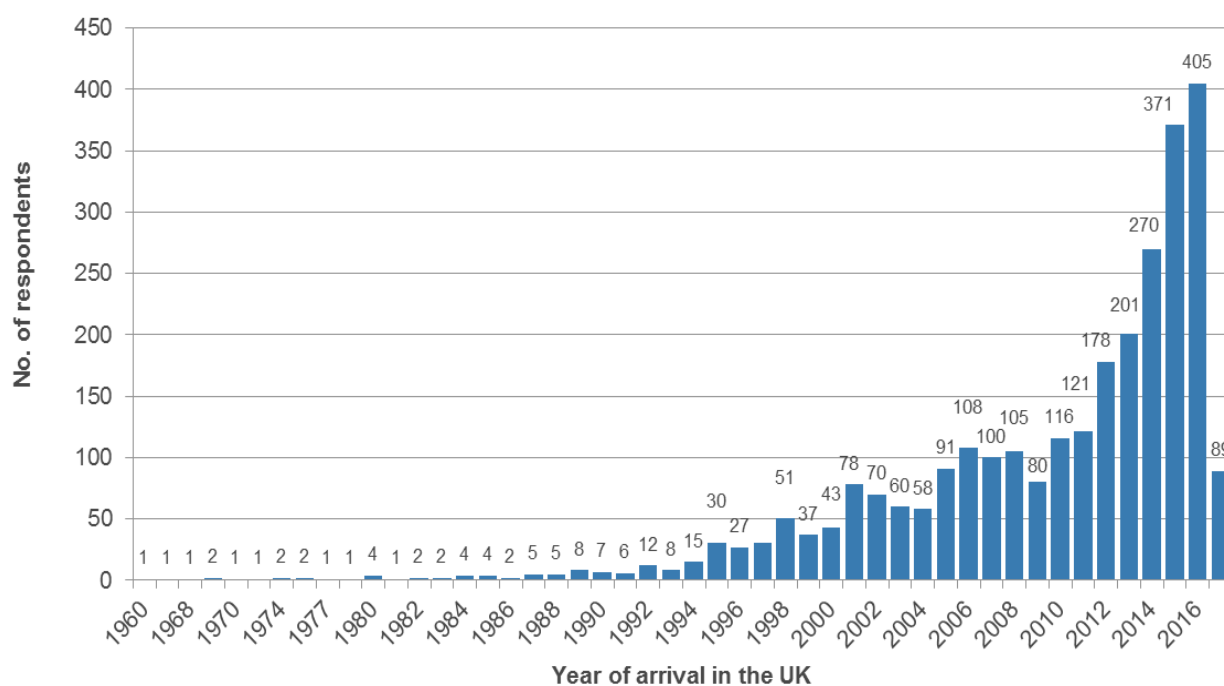
Respondents were also asked about the **university** or veterinary school from which they had qualified. Of the many universities listed, the most frequently-mentioned universities were University College Dublin in Ireland (5%), followed by four per cent from each of Lisbon (Portugal) and Zaragoza (Spain) and whilst three per cent from each of Cordoba (Spain), Madrid (Spain), Thessaloniki (Greece), Bucharest (Romania), Olsztyn (Poland), Ghent (Belgium), Barcelona (Spain), Warsaw (Poland) and Wroclaw (Poland).

When asked if their nationality was the same as the country in which they qualified, most (91%) said yes. Of the relatively small number (N = 247) who had qualified in a different country from their own, almost all (88%) were EU nationals.

2.4 Coming to the UK

Although respondents had come to the UK between 1960 and 2017 (a range of 57 years), most had arrived recently. The majority (62%) had come from 2012 onwards, with only ten per cent coming before 2000. The mean average year of arrival was 2009 while the modal (most common) year of arrival was 2016, closely followed by 2015. Figure 2.3 illustrates the pattern of arriving in the UK.

Respondents were asked to indicate why they had come to the UK, and were presented with a list of options from which to choose. They were asked to select all that applied, and most gave more than one reason. The most frequently-selected reason was '*better career opportunities*' (56%), followed closely by '*to gain experience*' (55%), '*to work abroad*' (53%) and '*better pay and conditions*' (44%). Table 2.1 gives the full breakdown.

Figure 2.3: Year of arrival in the UK

Table 2.1: Reasons for coming to the UK

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
To gain experience	1,577	56
Better career opportunities	1,608	57
To work abroad	1,529	54
Better pay and conditions	1,247	44
To learn English	682	24
Lack of work in home country	674	24
I like British culture	674	24
I like the British way of life	645	23
To study/further study	567	20
Family/friends in the UK	502	18
Marriage/partner	282	10
Stayed here after studying	76	3
Other	170	6

- Those who '*wanted to work abroad*' are predominantly in younger age categories 28-32 (29%) and 33-37 years (21%). Those in the 28-32 age group constituted the highest proportion of respondents in every category, forming 25-35 per cent in each, showing

their numerous reasons for coming to work in the UK. The response rate by those in the oldest age group was considerably lower than younger veterinary surgeons and showed no specific pattern of behaviour.

- With regards to gender, men and women were very evenly matched in their responses. Those that showed the most divergence were *'marriage/partner'* which 13 per cent of women chose in contrast to just six per cent of men. Men were also more likely to state *'liking British culture'* (28%) in contrast to 21 per cent of women. Finally, women were less likely than men to select *'learning English'* than men (22% compared to 28% of men).
- A desire to *'gain experience'* was notably high amongst those who qualified in Eastern European countries; Latvia (80%), Slovakia (77%), Czech Republic (76%), Poland (75%) and Estonia (72%).
- *'Lack of work in home country'* was commonly-cited by those who qualified in Slovenia (56%) followed by Italy (34%), Croatia (33%) and Ireland (also 33%).
- *'Better pay and conditions'* was an important factor for those from Eastern and Southern Europe: Lithuania (61%), Portugal (also 61%) followed by Poland (60%) and Croatia (58%).
- Ninety-two per cent of respondents from Croatia gave *'better career opportunities'* as a reason for coming to the UK, as did 75 per cent from Portugal and 70 per cent from the Czech Republic.
- The *'desire to learn English'* was generally low, but featured for those from Latvia (50%), Lithuania (44%) and Spain (43%).
- *'Liking the British way of life'* was not a strong reason overall, although notably 67 per cent of Croatian respondents gave this reason, followed by 39 per cent of Polish respondents.
- Croatians similarly responded most positively (58%) to *'liking British culture'*, followed by those from Austria (40%).
- *'Having family or friends in the UK'* was not a significant factor for most (scoring less than 25% of respondents overall) but was important for those from Latvia (40%).
- *'Marriage or a partner'* was not a significant reason for most (generally less than 20% of respondents from each country) although it was important for those from some northern Europe countries: Sweden (67%), Finland (33%) and Denmark (32%).

2.4.1 Intended length of stay

Respondents were asked about their planned length of stay when they first came to the UK, and were presented with options from which to select. The biggest group of respondents (40%) had intended to stay in the UK for more than five years; however, 27 per cent had been unsure or undecided. Table 2.2 gives the full breakdown.

Table 2.2: Intended length of stay on first coming to the UK

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Stay for more than five years	1,140	40.1
Stay for between two and five years	500	17.6
Stay for a year or two	327	11.5
Stay for up to a year	110	3.9
Unsure/undecided	768	27.0
Total	2,845	100.0

- Of those who arrived in the UK since 2011, 45 per cent had intended to stay for more than five years while a further 25 per cent were undecided. The pattern is similar for those who arrived between 2001 and 2010: 34 per cent had intended to stay for more than five years and 29 per cent were undecided.
- Intentions of those arriving between 1991 and 2000 were more evenly spread with approximately 25 per cent for each of intending to stay more than five years, and intending to stay for a year or two. By contrast, 50 per cent of the small number who arrived between 1961 and 1980 had intended to stay for more than five years.
- In every 'year of arrival' group, around one-quarter to one-third were unsure/undecided.
- Looking at intentions by age group, intention to stay for more than five years was the most popular option in every age group.
- When looking at intentions with regards to gender, men were more likely than women to have intended to stay for more than five years (45% compared to 37%); while women were more likely than men to have been undecided (28% compared to 24%).

3 Job profile of European veterinary surgeons

3.1 Job details

The majority of respondents (87%) were working full-time, 11 per cent were working part-time, less than two per cent were not working, and less than one per cent were working on a voluntary basis.

- Of the small number (N = 44) who stated that they were currently not working, 30 per cent were on a career break, 25 per cent were unemployed and 30 per cent gave another reason, most commonly related to maternity/pregnancy leave or child care.
- Almost all respondents who were working (over 98%) said they were working within the veterinary profession; less than two per cent (N = 42) were working in a role that did not require them to use their veterinary qualification.
- Of the 86 respondents who are currently either not working, or working outside the veterinary profession, 92 per cent said they planned to return to working in the veterinary profession in the next five years.
- Of those working within the veterinary profession, over three-quarters (78%) were working in clinical veterinary practice. Section 3.2 describes the work of these respondents, while section 3.3 describes the work of VSs who work within the veterinary profession, but outside clinical practice.

3.2 VSs working within clinical practice

Almost all VSs working within clinical veterinary practice (99%, N = 2,122) were working as a VS rather than in another practice role. The majority of VSs (70%) gave their role as 'assistant/employee'. Other roles were 'locum' (8%), 'sole principal' (6%), 'director of a limited company' (6%), 'consultant' (4%), 'salaried partner' (3%), 'joint venture or equity partner' (3%).

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- The three most likely countries in which sole principals said they had trained are Poland (20%), Spain (18%) and Romania (16%). Sixty-eight per cent of sole principals had arrived in the UK since 2011.
 - Directors of limited companies are most likely to have trained in Germany (15%), Italy (13%), Poland (12%) and Belgium (11%). Forty-eight per cent of directors of limited companies had arrived in the UK between 2001 and 2010.
 - Joint venture or equity partners are most likely to have trained in Spain (37%), and fifty-four per cent had arrived in the UK between 2001 and 2010.
 - Salaried partners are most likely to have trained in Spain (26%), Italy (18%) and Romanian (15%). Seventy-eight per cent of salaried partners had arrived in the UK since 2011.
 - Assistants/employees are more evenly spread across countries, with those most commonly-cited being Spain (18%), Italy (15%) and Poland (11%). Seventy-one per cent of assistants/employees had arrived in the UK since 2011.
 - The most commonly-cited country of training of consultants is Italy (33%). Fifty-six per cent of consultants had arrived in the UK since 2011; and a further 40 per cent between 2001 and 2010.
 - The country of training of locums is varied, with the most commonly-mentioned being Poland (17%), Italy (13%) and Spain (13%). Sixty per cent of locums had arrived in the UK since 2011, and a further 34 per cent between 2001 and 2010.
 - Of those who said they were a locum or consultant (N = 253), 53 per cent said they worked for more than one practice. Of these, 128 responded to a question asking them how many practices they worked for altogether. Forty-five per cent worked for between one and three practices and 31 per cent for between four and six practices, with the rest saying they worked for more than six practices.

When asked about main practice area, the most common area of practice was 'small animal/exotic' (65%). Table 3.1 gives the full breakdown. It should be noted that some respondents selected more than one area of practice, taking the total number of responses to 2,401; the percentage calculation is based on these 2,401 responses rather than the 2,122 respondents.

- Of the 73 respondents who selected 'Other', 71 specified their area of work. Answers were highly diverse but the following categories produced multiple responses: emergency and out of hours (20), charity (9), university (9), wildlife (7), TB tester (5), holistic therapies (2) and poultry (2).

Table 3.1: Main practice area of VSs working in clinical veterinary practice

Type of clinical practice	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Small animal/exotic practice	1,559	65
Referral/consultancy practice	366	15
Mixed practice	125	5
Equine practice	123	5
Farm/production animal practice	104	4
Other first opinion practice	51	2
Other	73	3

For each area of veterinary practice, the top five countries of training contributing the greatest proportion of VSs are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: The top five countries of training for each type of practice

	Mixed	Small animal/ Exotic	Equine	Farm animal/ Production	Other first opinion	Referral/ consultancy	Other
1	Ireland (16%)	Spain (17.8%)	Spain (27.6%)	Romania (21.2%)	Italy (19.6%)	Italy (24.9%)	Germany (17.8%)
2	Italy (10.4%)	Poland (13.9%)	Italy (16.3%)	Spain (18.3%)	Spain (19.6%)	Spain (18.3%)	Spain (17.8%)
3	UK (10.4%)	Italy (13.8%)	Ireland (9.8%)	Belgium (9.6%)	Poland (9.8%)	Portugal (10.1%)	Italy (13.7%)
4	Germany (9.6%)	Romania (8.5%)	Germany (8.1%)	Italy (9.6%)	Romania (9.8%)	Germany (9.3%)	Poland (13.7%)
5	Spain (9.6%)	Portugal (7%)	Hungary (7.3%)	Netherlands (8.6%)	Belgium (7.8%)	France (6%) Poland (6%)	Portugal (5.5%) Romania (5.5%)

This table shows the contribution that VSs trained in different EU countries play; the table also shows that VSs from Spain and Italy are found in every category of practice.

Table 3.3 shows the gender breakdown in the different types of clinical practice. Male respondents are in a majority in only one area: farm/production animal practice.

Table 3.3: Gender breakdown by type of clinical practice

Type of clinical practice	% male respondents	% female respondents
Mixed practice	46	54
Small animal/exotic practice	34	66
Equine practice	39	61
Farm/production animal practice	67	31
Other first opinion practice	37	63
Referral/consultancy practice	46	54
Other	34	62

3.3 VSs working elsewhere from clinical veterinary practice

Of those working within the veterinary profession but outside clinical practice (N = 603), over half are working for the Food Standards Agency (38%) or the Animal and Plant Health Agency (21%).

Table 3.4 gives the full breakdown of veterinary workplaces outside clinical practice.

Table 3.4: Veterinary workplaces outside clinical practice

Workplace	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Food Standards Agency (FSA)	229	38
Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)	127	21
Veterinary school	86	14
Commerce/industry	67	11
Other UK Government department/agency, including Defra	36	6
Other university/educational establishment	26	4
Portal	17	3
Local Government	13	2
Charity/trust	10	2
Research Council	7	1
Home Office	2	<1
Other	45	8
Total N	603	100

- The 45 respondents who selected 'Other' gave in a variety of organisations/roles: Government Agencies in Scotland and Northern Ireland (e.g. DAERA and FSS), laboratories, independent research institutes, the pharmaceutical industry, and as contractors, chiropractors, pathologists, physiotherapists and acupuncturists.
- 57 per cent are male and 41 per cent are female, and the greatest proportion (23%) is found in the 33 to 37 age group.
- 44 per cent qualified between 2001 and 2010.
- 54 per cent had arrived in the UK since 2011.
- Most qualified in Spain (45%), Romania (18%) and Poland (10%).

-
- Forty-eight per cent (N = 288) of respondents working elsewhere from clinical veterinary practice said that their work was mainly or entirely within the meat industry/official controls sector. Their countries of training are: Spain (45%), Romania (18%), Poland (10%), Italy (8%), Portugal (5%), Greece (4%), Bulgaria (3%) and Slovakia (3%), ten other countries (4%).

3.4 All VSs: preferred roles and changes in role

All VSs working within the profession were asked if their current role was their preferred role.

- Most (82%) said that it was.
- Of the 18 per cent (N = 398) who said their current role was not their preferred role:
 - 71 per cent currently work in clinical veterinary practice, with three-quarters of these (74%) working in a small animal/exotic practice. The other types of practice are: referral/consultancy (18%), equine (6%), mixed (6%) and farm/animal production (5%). The breakdown of their current roles within the practice is: assistant/employee 73 per cent, locum 12 per cent, sole principal seven per cent, and other roles (director, salaried partner and consultant) three per cent.
 - Of the 29 per cent working in a different area, 62 per cent work for the FSA and 19 per cent for the APHA. Seventy per cent of those working outside clinical practice said their current role was within the meat industry/official controls sector.
 - 72 per cent of those not working in their preferred role had arrived in the UK since 2011. Their most likely countries of training were Spain (25%), Italy (17%) and Romania (12%).
 - The preferred role and/or place of work of those not currently in their preferred role are broken down in Table 3.5. Note that respondents could give more than one answer, so the percentages do not add up to 100.

All VSs working within the profession were asked if they had changed their area of work since coming to the UK. The majority (73%) had not.

- Of those who had changed their area of work (N = 733):
 - 36 per cent had worked for the FSA when they first came to the UK, and 35 per cent had worked as a VS in a clinical practice.
 - 44 per cent had worked within the meat industry/official controls sector when they first came to the UK. Of these, 49 per cent had trained in Spain. Other countries of

training were Italy (12%), Romania (10%), Poland (9%), Portugal (8%), Slovakia (3%) and Lithuania (2%).

Table 3.5: Preferred role and/or place of work

Role and/or place of work	No. of respondents	% of respondents
For those currently in clinical practice: as a VS, but in a different position within the practice	192	48
For those currently outside clinical practice: as a VS (in any position)	86	22
Veterinary school	68	17
APHA	64	16
Other UK government department/agency including Defra	58	15
Research Council	36	9
Commerce/industry	32	8
Charity/trust	33	8
FSA	26	7
In clinical practice, but not as a VS e.g. practice manager, business manager, VN	26	6
Local government	25	6
Home Office	16	4
Portal	10	3
Within the meat industry/official controls sector (for those currently outside this sector)	11	3
Outside the meat industry/official controls sector (for those currently within this sector)	6	2
Other	51	13

4 Personal views about the impact of Brexit

Respondents were asked to give their views about a variety of aspects of their working and personal lives, by responding to attitudinal statements on a five-point scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. These statements are of three types: positively-worded (to which agreement indicates a positive view); negatively-worded (to which agreement indicates a negative view); and neutrally-worded. These are presented separately in the three sub-sections below. Both the percentage spread of responses, and the mean average score (out of 5) are given for each statement.

4.1 Positively-worded statements

Table 4.1: Personal impact of the Brexit vote – positively-worded statements

Statement	N	% strongly disagree	% disagree	% neither agree nor disagree	% agree	% strongly agree	Mean
I would like to stay in the UK	2,682	3	6	19	39	34	3.96
I am satisfied with my career progression since coming to the UK	2,689	2	6	12	57	23	3.91
I am satisfied with my pay/income progression since coming to the UK	2,678	3	13	13	55	15	3.64
Working in the UK has increased my employment prospects abroad	2,626	3	10	35	39	13	3.49
Nothing much has changed for me	2,674	11	24	19	35	11	3.10
I am optimistic about my future	2,681	11	30	23	28	9	2.96
My employer is more supportive now	2,608	8	20	59	11	2	2.81
My colleagues are more supportive now	2,644	8	22	61	8	1	2.72
People I meet in the course of my work are friendlier towards me	2,634	8	28	58	5	1	2.62

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of European VEs would definitely like to stay in the UK. Given that most are positive about their pay, income progression and career progression since coming to the UK, this is hardly surprising. However, on balance they agree that working in the UK has increased their employment prospects abroad, suggesting that it might not be difficult for them to find work elsewhere, for example in another EU country, as the implications of the Brexit vote unfold.

Overall, they are not optimistic about their future and, on balance, do not feel more supported by their employer or their colleagues, and do not feel that people they meet during the course of their work are friendlier.

4.1.1 Analysis by age

Overall, those in the two youngest and two oldest age groups were most likely to respond positively to the statements. Those most optimistic about their future were aged 58-62 years (60% agreed or strongly agreed) followed by the youngest aged 23-27 (48% agreed or strongly agreed).

- In response to the *'Nothing much has changed for me'* statement, 73 per cent of 58 to 62 year olds agreed or strongly agreed, as did 51 per cent of 63 to 68-year-.
- Those in the oldest age groups were also the most emphatic in their desire to stay in the UK. Of those aged 63-68, 100 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement; the next most positive age group were 53-57-year-olds (87%).
- The oldest respondents (aged 63-68) were the most positive that *'My colleagues are more supportive now'*, with 22 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing.
- Those in the two youngest age groups were most likely to respond positively to *'I am satisfied with my career progression since coming to the UK'*. Of 23-27-year-olds, 84 per cent agreed or strongly agreed, as did 81 per cent of 28-32-year-olds.
- Those in the two youngest age groups were most likely to respond positively to *'Working in the UK has increased my employment prospects abroad'*. Of 23-27-year-olds, 60 per cent agreed or strongly agreed, as did 60 per cent of 28-32-year-olds.

4.1.2 Gender

Differences between the responses of men and women were few. The area that did produce a difference is:

- Women were more likely to agree or strongly agree with *'I would like to stay in the UK'* than men, in that 24 per cent of women *agreed* as opposed to 15 per cent of men; and 20 per cent of women *strongly agreed* as opposed to 14 per cent of men.

4.1.3 Date of arrival in the UK

As with gender, there were few notable differences in attitude based on length of time living in the UK.

- Those who arrived in the UK most recently (2001-2010 and 2011-2017) were the most likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement '*Working in the UK has increased my employment prospects abroad*' (14% and 35% respectively).
- Those who arrived in the UK most recently (2011-2017) were also most likely to agree or strongly agree with '*My employer is more supportive now*' (10%).

4.1.4 Role

Those who agreed most strongly with the statement '*I would like to stay in the UK*' were joint venture or equity partners and salaried partners (48%).

4.2 Negatively-worded statements

Table 4.2 suggests that the Brexit vote has had a considerable impact on European VSs in different areas of their personal and working life. In particular, they have been very saddened by the Brexit vote, are finding the uncertainty difficult, and feel less welcome; on balance, they are somewhat fearful about the future, with 44 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing with this sentiment. However, opinion is fairly evenly divided around being more likely to leave the UK and about job security, and all statements received a score below the midpoint, indicating that more VSs disagree than agree with these negatively-expressed views.

With regard to the veterinary workforce in the UK, it would appear that there is unlikely to be an immediate shortage of VSs, as only 18 per cent agree or strongly agree that they are actively looking for work outside the UK. However, 32 per cent are considering a move back home, while 40 per cent think they are now more likely to leave the UK. This is in line with the finding that fewer than 100 of the VSs surveyed were planning to leave the UK as soon as possible (see chapter 2, section 2.4).

Table 4.2: Personal impact of Brexit – negatively-worded statements

Statement	N	% strongly disagree	% disagree	% neither agree nor disagree	% agree	% strongly agree	Mean
The Brexit vote has saddened me	2,705	3	2	8	21	66	4.46
I find the uncertainty about the	2,682	4	10	19	42	25	3.74

Statement	N	% strongly disagree	% disagree	% neither agree nor disagree	% agree	% strongly agree	Mean
future difficult							
I feel less welcome in the UK	2,691	7	14	16	39	25	3.60
I am fearful about the future	2,674	11	20	25	32	12	3.13
My job security has reduced	2,670	12	23	25	31	9	3.01
I am more likely to leave the UK	2,663	13	22	26	30	10	3.00
A lot has changed for me	2,665	10	23	43	18	7	2.89
I feel pessimistic about my future	2,673	13	28	31	21	7	2.81
I am considering a move back home	2,673	18	25	26	23	9	2.81
Fewer development opportunities are open to me	2,637	12	28	40	17	4	2.72
My opportunities for promotion/advancement are more limited	2,630	12	29	38	17	5	2.72
I am more stressed at work	2,665	16	31	29	19	5	2.67
I have observed prejudice at work since the vote	2,640	25	33	20	17	5	2.45
People I meet in the course of my work are less friendly towards me now	2,647	20	34	36	8	2	2.37
I am actively looking for work outside the UK	2,657	26	35	21	12	6	2.36
My skills are less valued	2,660	21	38	28	10	3	2.34
I have personally experienced prejudice at work since the vote	2,649	27	35	23	12	4	2.33
My colleagues are less supportive now	2,636	23	34	38	4	1	2.27
My employer is less supportive now	2,625	24	35	38	3	1	2.24

4.2.1 Age

- Those in the two oldest age groups (58-62 and 63-68) were most likely to disagree or strongly disagree with '*I find the uncertainty about the future difficult*' (44% and 33%).

- Those in the two oldest age groups (58-62 and 63-68) were most likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement '*Fewer development opportunities are open to me*' (36% and 22% respectively).
- Those in the middle age groups (43-47, 48-52 and 53-57) were most likely to agree or strongly agree with '*A lot has changed for me*' (35%, 29% and 37% respectively).
- Those aged 38-42 and 43-47 were most likely to have experienced prejudice at work, in that 20 per cent and 16 per cent respectively agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.
- Those in the two oldest age groups (58-62 and 63-68) were most likely to agree or strongly agree with '*My colleagues are less supportive now*' (14% and 11% respectively).

4.2.2 Gender

Differences according to gender were negligible. In general, women were more slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree with statements linked to emotional response such as '*the Brexit vote has saddened me*', '*I am more fearful about the future*' and '*I feel less welcome in the UK*', whilst men were more likely to agree or strongly agree with statements relating to practical implications and impacts such as '*My skills are less valued*' and '*there are fewer development opportunities for me*' and '*a lot has changed for me*'.

Statements with a more notable difference were: men were slightly more likely to '*be actively looking for work outside the UK*' than women (21% agreed or strongly agreed compared to 15%); to have '*experienced prejudice in the workplace*' (19% of men compared to 15% of women); and to have '*observed prejudice in the workplace*' (27% of men compared to 19% of women).

4.2.3 Date of arrival in the UK

Those who arrived in the UK between 1991 and 2000, and 2001 and 2010, tended to agree and strongly agree the most with the negatively-worded statements. Specifically, those arriving between 1991 and 2000 were most fearful about the future (58% agreeing or strongly agreeing), the most likely to consider leaving the UK (48% agreeing or strongly agreeing) and feel the most stressed at work (33% agreeing or strongly agreeing).

The more recently people arrived in the UK, the less welcome they now feel. Of those arriving since 2011, 61 per cent agree or strongly agree with '*I feel less welcome in the UK*', compared to 25 per cent of those who arrived between 1970 and 1979.

Those who arrived in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s were most saddened by the Brexit vote. The percentage who agreed or strongly agreed was 91 per cent (1980-1989) and 93 per cent (1991-1999).

4.2.4 VSs who are actively looking for work outside the UK

The response of the 465 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *'I am actively looking for work outside the UK'* have been analysed further to explore whether any patterns are apparent. The points below suggest that there is no particular profile of VS currently actively looking for work outside the UK, in that these VSs are spread across different areas of work, have a similar age breakdown to the whole sample, and were trained in a variety of countries.

- This group of respondents was made up of 47 per cent males and 53 per cent females. They ranged in age from 24 to 68 years with the most common age (mode) being 30 and the average mean age being 37.
- They had qualified in 23 different countries with the most commonly-cited being Spain (31%), followed by Italy (16%), Germany (9%), Romania (7%) and Poland and Portugal (6% each). Ninety-one per cent of respondents had qualified in the country of their nationality.
- Ninety-nine per cent of these respondents are currently working within the veterinary profession. Of these, 71 per cent are working in clinical veterinary practice and the remaining 29 per cent in a different area. Of those working within clinical veterinary practice (N = 25) the majority (67%) are working as an assistant/employee, 12 per cent as a locum, six per cent as a director of a limited company, six per cent as a consultant, four per cent as a sole principal, three per cent as a salaried partner, and two per cent as a joint venture or equity partner.
- Of those working in clinical veterinary practice (N = 325), 69 per cent work in a small animal/exotic practice, 25 per cent in a referral or consultancy practice, seven per cent in an equine practice, six per cent in a mixed practice, four per cent in a farm/production practice, three per cent in another first opinion practice and four per cent in other areas of practice.
- Of those not currently working in clinical veterinary practice (N = 134), 34 per cent work for the FSA, 23 per cent for the APHA, 20 per cent for a veterinary school, seven per cent for another UK government department, six per cent in commerce or industry, five per cent for another educational establishment, with the remaining 11 per cent working in five different areas.
 - Forty-six per cent of this group stated that their work is mainly or entirely within the meat industry/official controls sector.
- There is some dissonance in responses to the statements *'I am actively looking for work outside the UK'* and *'I am more likely to leave the UK'*. Twenty per cent of respondents to the first statement agreed or strongly agreed while forty per cent of respondents

agreed or strongly agreed with the second; but only four per cent of respondents strongly agreed with both statements and only seven per cent agreed with both statements.

4.3 ‘Wait and see’

Finally, Table 4.3 suggests that most European VSs are waiting to see what will happen before taking any action. Some have not let the vote get in the way of major life decisions, although a significant minority (43%) agree or strongly agree that this is the case for them. With regard to possible applications for UK citizenship, only nine per cent said yes, they had applied, while 50 per cent said no; however, the remaining 41 per cent said they were considering it. It will be interesting to see if, over time, those who are considering applying actually go ahead and do so.

Table 4.3: Personal impact of Brexit – neutrally-worded statements

Statement	N	% strongly disagree	% disagree	% neither agree nor disagree	% agree	% strongly agree	Mean
I am waiting to see how the situation will unfold	2,679	2	4	14	49	30	4.01
I will make no decision about my future in the UK until I understand the situation better	2,660	5	11	17	41	26	3.72
I have put major ‘life decisions’ on hold since the vote	2,651	11	24	22	23	20	3.16

There were no distinct patterns of behaviour based on age, gender or role. With regard to year of arrival in the UK, those who arrived between 1971 and 1980 and 1981 to 1990 were most likely to disagree or strongly disagree with ‘*I will make no decision about my future in the UK until I understand the situation better*’ and ‘*I have put major ‘life decisions’ on hold since the vote*’.

4.4 Has the Brexit vote changed original intentions?

Section 2.4.1 reported that 40 per cent of respondents had intended to stay in the UK for more than five years when they arrived, 27 per cent had been unsure/ undecided, eighteen per cent had intended to stay for between two and five years, 12 per cent for a year or two and four per cent for up to a year. When asked if their plans had changed as a consequence of Brexit, 28 per cent (N = 793) said ‘yes’. These respondents’ original intentions have been mapped against how their plans have changed as a result of the vote.

- Thirty-four per cent of these respondents (N = 272) had originally intended to stay in the UK for more than five years. As a result of the vote 77 per cent of them have changed their minds and are now unsure/undecided, 13 per cent intend to stay for less time than previously planned and one per cent for longer than originally intended.
- Twenty-eight per cent of respondents (N = 218) were originally unsure/undecided as to their plans when they came to the UK. Of these, 67 per cent are still unsure/undecided as a result of the Brexit vote with four per cent now choosing to leave as soon as possible.
- Twenty per cent of respondents (N = 161) had originally intended to stay for between two and five years. As a result of the Brexit vote 59 per cent are now unsure/undecided, 23 per cent now intend to stay for less time than previously planned and ten per cent intend to leave as soon as possible.
- Fourteen per cent of respondents (N = 107) had originally intended to stay in the UK for a year or two. Of these, 54 per cent are now unsure/undecided, 17 per cent want to leave as soon as possible and 16 per cent are now intending to stay for less time than previously planned.
- Four per cent of respondents (N = 33) had originally intended to stay for up to a year. As a result of the Brexit vote, 52 per cent are now unsure/undecided, 24 per cent intend to leave as soon as possible and 18 per cent intend to stay for less time than previously planned.
- When assessing responses by age, across all groups, and regardless of their original intentions, uncertainty and indecision over future plans had risen sharply and was the prevailing feeling.
- When analysed by year of arrival in the UK:
 - Of those who arrived in the 1980s, half were originally unsure how long they would stay in the UK. As a result of the Brexit vote, respondents are now evenly split between being unsure/undecided and intending to leave the UK as soon as possible.
 - Of those who arrived in the 1990s, 31 per cent intended to stay for a year or two and 25 per cent had intended to stay for more than five years. As a result of the vote, over 70 per cent are now unsure/undecided on the future, regardless of their original intention.
 - Of those who arrived from 2001 to 2010, 30 per cent had originally intended to stay for more than five years and 34 per cent were unsure/undecided. Now, 64 per cent are unsure/undecided and 20 per cent intend to leave as soon as possible.

- For those who arrived after 2010, 39 per cent intended to stay for more than five years and 25 per cent for between two and five years. As a result of the Brexit vote, 68 per cent are unsure/undecided and 19 per cent intend to stay for less time than originally planned.
- When analysed by country of training, across all countries, whatever the original intention had been, the majority (between 50 and 80%) are now unsure/undecided as to their future plans.
- Notably, 23 per cent of those trained in of Slovakia and 16 per cent of those trained in Spain said they now intended to leave as soon as possible. Those who intend to stay for less time than previously intended are those trained in the Czech Republic (31%), Ireland (27%) and Spain (15%).

4.5 If you had known...

The final personal question asked of VSs was *'If you had known that the UK would vote for Brexit, would you still have come here?'* Although opinions were divided, almost twice as many VSs said 'yes' (39%) than 'no' (21%), with the remaining 40 per cent being 'unsure'. This suggests that many VSs, despite the vote and consequent uncertainty, still feel that it has been worthwhile to come to the UK. Further analysis showed no clear patterns in terms of the way in which VSs had responded, apart from those in the younger age groups (especially 26 to 32) being more likely than average to say they would still have come to the UK.

5 Views about the impact of Brexit on the UK veterinary profession

5.1 What will happen to the profession?

A set of statements, using a five-point scale from '*strongly disagree*' to '*strongly agree*', asked VVs to consider the impact of Brexit on the UK veterinary profession as a whole. These statements are given in Table 5.1, together with the percentage of respondents who responded under each of the five points of the scale, and an average (mean) score. The higher the mean score, the greater the agreement to the statement.

Table 5.1 indicates that VVs are very definitely of the opinion that Brexit will bring about shortages within the profession in the UK if European VVs, and to a lesser extent European VNs, are no longer welcome. Related to this belief is a strong view that special rules are needed to allow both European VVs and VNs to continue working here. There is also a clear belief that European VVs and VNs will be less likely to come to the UK. However, there is much less certainty that veterinary employers are less likely to employ European VVs and VNs as a result of the Brexit vote, with the mean score for these two statements being not far above the mid-point.

Analysing the responses by aspects such as gender, age and area of work showed no clear differences in views. However, an analysis by country of training indicated that VVs from Austria, Germany and (to a slightly lesser degree) Spain, were consistently particularly likely to agree or strongly agree to these statements; and VVs from Ireland and Bulgaria were consistently most likely to be among the small percentages who disagree or strongly disagree with the statements.

Table 5.1: European VSs' views about the impact on the veterinary profession of Brexit

Statement	N	% strongly disagree	% disagree	% neither agree nor disagree	% agree	% strongly agree	Mean
Special rules are needed to ensure that European veterinary surgeons can still work in the UK	2,733	2	3	9	26	61	4.41
The veterinary profession in the UK will experience shortages if European veterinary surgeons are no longer welcome	2,732	1	3	9	34	54	4.37
Special rules are needed to ensure that European veterinary nurses can still work here	2,681	2	3	13	25	57	4.33
The veterinary profession in the UK will experience shortages if European veterinary nurses are no longer welcome	2,671	1	6	25	32	35	3.95
European veterinary surgeons are less likely to come here	2,744	1	7	14	52	25	3.93
European veterinary nurses are less likely to come here	2,682	2	5	20	48	25	3.89
Veterinary employers are less likely to employ European veterinary nurses	2,668	4	18	35	32	11	3.29
Veterinary employers are less likely to employ European veterinary surgeons	2,717	4	20	30	35	11	3.29

5.2 Is the RCVS supportive?

Encouragingly, three-quarters (74%) of respondents said 'yes', the RCVS was giving sufficient support and advice to European VSs and VNs. The 26 per cent who said 'no' were asked to say, in a free text box, what further support and advice should be provided; the analysis of the 463 responses that were given are in section 5.2.1 below.

Women marginally felt the RCVS was more supportive than men (76% in contrast to 72%) while the youngest and oldest age groups found the RCVS to be more supportive than those in the middle age bands.

Table 5.2: RCVS is giving sufficient support and advice to European VSs and VNs

Age band	Yes %	No %
23-27	86	14
28-32	79	21
33-37	68	32
38-42	71	29
43-47	70	30
48-52	64	36
53-57	67	33
58-62	77	24
63-67	78	22

With regard to the year of arrival, those who have been in the UK the longest (1961-1970) were 100 per cent happy. Those arriving most recently (since 2011) were the next most satisfied (79%), while the least satisfied were those arriving in the UK between 1991-2000 (69%) and 2001-2010 (66%).

5.2.1 What further support and advice should the RCVS provide?

Of the 463 respondents who provided an open text response to this question, a sample of 20 per cent (N = 90) was chosen at random and used as the basis for analysis. Responses were categorised thematically and the table below provides an initial breakdown.

Table 5.3: Suggestions about further support and advice to be provided by the RCVS

20%	Lobby the government
14%	Take steps to protect the interests of VSs
14%	Help with residency and citizenship applications and legal advice
12%	Provide regular updates and be the primary source of information for VSs
10%	There is nothing they can do
8%	Provide general support and reassurance
7%	Secure the rights of VSs to stay in UK
7%	Increase media presence and provide the general public with information
5%	Respondents don't know what the RCVS is currently doing
2%	Provide support to ensure that EU VSs meet future UK standards of practice
1%	Greater consideration for the situation of non-clinical vets

The support most wanted by respondents was for the RCVS to actively lobby the government on behalf of the membership. Specifically, members wanted the RCVS to lobby for:

- The guaranteed rights of European VSs and VNs, their partners and their families.
- A law to make sure that European VSs and VNs can continue to work in the UK under the same conditions as now
- A simpler and less bureaucratic process for permanent residency for VSs and VNs who have lived in the UK for a long time.

"...the RCVS should truly preserve the interests of its members, and those of all the entities associated to this field (pet owners, farmers, industry, academia etc.) by firmly and persistently lobbying the Government and steering them into a compassionate and rational approach to Brexit"

"Lobby strongly to protect existing rights of member states' citizens or suffer a shortage of veterinary surgeons in the future, jeopardising animal welfare in the UK"

'Taking steps to protect the interests of veterinary surgeons' and 'help with residency and citizenship applications and legal advice' were the next most desired areas for support and advice. Respondents specifically want the RCVS to firmly and more visibly represent the interests of European VSs and VNs as some currently feel like *"second class vets"*:

"I would like RCVS to guarantee the status of its members and the mutual recognition of degrees. In other words, whoever is on the register stays on the register."

With regard to 'help with residency and citizenship applications', respondents highlighted the need for advice as to eligibility for residency or UK citizenship, support with applications (e.g. sponsorship letters) and practical assistance with completing complex application forms:

"Please offer support for obtaining British citizenship in cases of long years of service in the UK where the cost to a family and the effort can be substantial and the outcome unpredictable"

"Specific legal support for vets wishing to apply for permanent residency/citizenship"

Twelve of the sample wanted the RCVS to provide regular updates on the progress of Brexit in relation to VSs and felt the RCVS should be the primary source of information. The lack of information was acknowledged as causing fear and uncertainty which many felt the RCVS could, and had a responsibility to, mitigate:

"Regular email updates about the current situation of the veterinary profession, advice given to the government by the RCVS and current status of the negotiations"

Ten per cent of respondents felt there was nothing the RCVS could do:

“The RCVS can’t provide any real support or advice until the article 50 is triggered and or the government gives clear indication on migration control and indefinite right to remain for foreign nationals”

“The future is so unclear that accurate advice and support can’t really be given!”

“I don’t know how much support can be given other than stating that European vets and nursing vets are always welcomed”

Eight per cent of respondents wanted the RCVS to provide further general support and reassurance to members:

“Give some reassurance or explain the options that we may have regarding Brexit”

“Make the process less formal and more welcoming. Walking in to the RCVS building in Horseferry Road is not a happy experience and little above routine civility is done”

“I have read a lot of opinion articles but no specific form of contact was received directly from RCVS reassuring/advising the European professionals about the situation”

For seven of respondents, the RCVS taking steps to secure the rights of European VSs to stay in the UK was commented on. This theme overlaps with others relating to support and advice regarding citizenship and residency status, but is concerned specifically with the RCVS taking practical steps to securing the status and position of European VSs:

“I would like to see some actions from RCVS (eg: parliamentary enquiry) to assess the situation”

“Just to try hard to allow us keep our career in the UK and possibility to work...it would be devastating and destructive if I had to rearrange my life again”

A further seven per cent also wanted the RCVS to have a higher media presence and be seen to inform the general public about the potential impact of Brexit on European VSs and VNs as well as on animal welfare and food safety in the UK.

“We need to make the voice of the profession heard in the media on how the Brexit will impact food safety, food security and risk of introduction of diseases, lack of veterinary services etc.”

“A public statement to the nation that EU veterinary surgeons are very needed for animal and people’s health, as they mainly are controlling the food safety and protecting the nation from food borne diseases”

“Make a lot of effort in the media to make the general public understand the impact Brexit is going to make on the veterinary profession, and the contribution EU vets made to the profession by filling roles and by generating job opportunities”

Five per cent of respondents felt they did not know what the RCVS was currently doing and therefore could not state what *further* action it should take:

“I don’t know which support is currently giving”

Two per cent of respondents were concerned that the RCVS should provide support to ensure that EU Vets meet future UK standards of practice and are still eligible to work in the UK:

“Assurance that EU veterinary qualifications will be recognised by RCVS after Brexit.”

Finally, Vets working outside clinical practice were represented in the sample, and one respondent expressed concern for the particular needs of those working in areas such as the meat industry and for organisations such as the FSA:

“I have always felt a bit left aside by the RCVS. There are not many articles about what we do and who we are in the magazine the RCVS produces twice or thrice a year and it seems like we are not vets for the RCVS. The RCVS should include us and take into account all within the FSA, APHA and in some other departments are also vets”

5.2.2 Final comments about the impact of Brexit

Of the 904 respondents who provided an open text response to a question asking for final comments about the impact of Brexit, a sample of ten per cent (n = 92) was chosen at random and used as the basis for analysis. Responses to the perceived impacts of Brexit have been grouped thematically (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Themes about the impact of Brexit

20%	Impact on the UK of a lack of Vets
20%	Impact on feelings about the UK
18%	Impact on the treatment of EU citizens/individual lives
16%	Impact of uncertainty, including the ability to work in the UK
6%	Financial impact of Brexit
4%	Impact on food standards
4%	Impact of dividing people
4%	Impact on all UK services
2%	Impact on universities and research
2%	Impact on personal pensions
2%	Paperwork and bureaucracy

The top four perceived impacts of Brexit were mentioned by 75 per cent of respondents. The area in which respondents perceived the greatest impact was on the UK veterinary profession, should VSs from the EU no longer be welcome, restricted in their work or sent back to their country of origin. Many believed there were severe shortages of VSs in the UK in certain areas, and a lack of UK VSs from which to recruit. As such, they expect that should the working rights of VSs not be protected, the UK will experience problems:

“Our small animal/exotic practice is run by two German vets only, giving job security for seven British staff (practice manager, nurses and receptionists). To fill a veterinary position in 2015 has taken four months. No British vets with one year + experience applied”

“Our practice has been searching for a replacement vet since last year June without ANY British applications and only three foreign (EU) ones”

“I could not have, and cannot, run my practices without foreign nurses and vets”

“The UK does not train enough vets for its own necessities, it will be difficult to carry out some duties if less veterinary resources are available”

Of equal importance to respondents was the impact of Brexit on their feelings about the UK as a country in which to live and the people:

“Brexit made me feel the Brits are not as open minded as they think they are”

“Brexit was the first time in 20 years that I felt not welcome and a true immigrant/foreigner”

“It has been a very sad thing for all of us. I grew to love the UK and I felt part of it only until Brexit. All I want now is to go back home”

“I don’t any longer enjoy living and working in UK”

The impact that Brexit would have on the treatment of EU citizens in the UK and the associated impact on their individual lives was mentioned by 18 per cent of respondents. There were particular concerns that the rights of EU citizens would be diminished and opportunities for career progression will be reduced in favour of UK citizens. Some respondents were very concerned about, or had already experienced, prejudice and discrimination and were concerned that this would worsen as a result of Brexit:

“I have felt increased segregation and different treatment from colleagues who are aware that I am not British born... I am suffering from exclusion at work, obstructive behaviour ...with little support from my management”

“I see that foreigners are being given less opportunities than British people. ... [there] is an increasing concern that we won’t be given the same chances and everything will be harder for us”

"I am afraid that Brexit can cause many problems for some Europeans living in UK"

"... it will not only be important to retain my rights but also to still feel welcome here as a EU citizen, I will leave if I do not feel welcome or if any of my present rights are diminished!"

The fourth area that was mentioned by 16 per cent of respondents was the impact Brexit was having of creating uncertainty around the ability for EU citizens to continue living and working in the UK. Concern was especially high for those who had families where children had been born in the UK, were in school and had little connection to the country of their parents' birth:

"There is a feeling of unease at work"

"I have no idea if my current situation or any future career plans are jeopardized because of Brexit"

"The worst about the Brexit is that we don't have any information at all about what is going to happen"

"I feel unsecure now as I am here in the UK for more than 10 years, me and my husband have permanent jobs here. We set up our life here (we bought house, bringing up our child) and we don't know what future brings"

The impact on finances and investments, both personally and nationally, were mentioned by six per cent of respondents. There was concern that Brexit will stimulate an economic downturn and that the cost of Brexit will be passed onto taxpayers and create hardship for individuals. Some respondents who own their practices also raised the possibility of selling their practices and leaving the country:

"The inevitable huge expenses for all the necessary changes which come with Brexit will no doubt be passed on to the working people of this country. As I do not own any property nor have supporting family in the UK I fear it will become simply unaffordable for me to live here"

"I am a partner in a small animal practice together with two other German vets....we considering to sell the practice and move abroad"

The impact of Brexit on food standards was mentioned by four per cent of respondents and raised a number of concerns. First, it was acknowledged that the EU workforce makes up a significant proportion of those working in the meat industry and official controls, and therefore standards and quality will be affected if EU staff are made to leave the UK or not recruited in the future, as UK Vets are reluctant to work in this area:

“The food standards probably will decline as UK move more under the USA influence and the interests of the big transnational will [take] prevalence more and more over the citizens’ rights”

“Impact of Brexit on slaughterhouse workforce, MHS and Defra will be immense. These vital jobs are to some extent held in poor esteem by British workers and British vets. Filling these foreseeable vacancies will be difficult and only possible with higher pay, meaning increasing costs to taxpayers!”

Four per cent of respondents noted the effect of Brexit on dividing people, creating ill-feeling and leaving some believing they had to choose between one nationality or the other.

A further four per cent mentioned the impact of Brexit more widely on UK service provision citing similar problems of labour shortages that will be faced by the NHS and other industries that rely heavily on EU workers:

“I am certain that excluding or prohibiting “European” vets to come to this country will have a negative impact on the whole country. Not just only vets, but doctors and nurses, engineers and others. Brexit will need to take into account all the work that we carry out there and respect our (little as it seems) rights to stay in this country”

Two per cent of respondents cited the likely impact of Brexit on each of universities and research; personal pensions; and increases in paperwork and bureaucracy. There was concern expressed for the potential ‘brain drain’, reduced access to research funding and expertise and uncertainty over pension rights if EU citizens do move to another country or back to their home country. In addition, there is the perception that Brexit will increase paperwork and bureaucracy once the right to travel, live and work freely in Europe is removed and this will be off-putting to people:

“I am very concerned that the international standing of UK universities will be affected because of reduced international research funding and due to increased difficulties to recruit European scientists”

“I am more worried about all the paperwork which will be now more likely necessary”

Very few general comments about the survey were added. However, those who provided comments focused on being grateful for the consultation and for being given the opportunity to express their opinions.

6 The views and intentions of European VNs

This brief chapter summarises the views of the small number of VNs who participated in the survey. Just 19 responses were received, four of which were only partially-completed questionnaires, which unfortunately gives little scope for further analysis.

6.1 Personal details

- The gender breakdown was 74 per cent female and 26 per cent male.
- Respondents were aged between 24 and 38, with a mean average of 28 and a modal (most common) age of 27.
- All except one respondent, who preferred not to say, identified as White.
- Fifty-three per cent said they had a spouse, civil partner or long-term partner.
 - Of these, all said their partner was both living and working in the UK.
- Only two respondents had dependent children.
 - In both cases, the children were living in the UK.
- The 19 respondents had all qualified between 2003 and 2014, with over three-quarters (79%) qualifying from 2011 onwards.
- Seven VNs had qualified in Ireland, six in Portugal, two in each of Spain and the Netherlands, and one in each of France and Sweden.
 - In every case, the country of qualification and nationality was the same.
- All of the respondents had arrived in the UK between 2012 and 2016, with the most frequent year of arrival being 2014 (42%).
- The most common reasons given for coming to the UK were '*to work abroad*' and '*better career opportunities*' (58% each); followed closely by '*to gain experience*' (53%); '*better pay and conditions*' (37%); and '*lack of work in home country*' (32%).

- When first coming to the UK, the biggest group of respondents (47%) were undecided about their future plans. The next largest group were those intending to stay for more than five years (26%); followed by those intending to stay for a year or two (16%).
- The majority of respondents (79%) stated that their plans had not changed as a result of the Brexit vote.
- Among the four respondents whose plans had changed, intentions were split equally across the four options: *stay longer than planned*, *stay for less time than planned*, *leave as soon as possible*, and *wait to see how Brexit unfolds*.

6.2 Job details

- The majority (89%) were working full-time. One respondent was working part-time and another was on a career break.
- The majority of respondents (over 90%) are working within the veterinary profession; one respondent not currently working within the profession planned to return to it within the next five years.
- Of those working within the veterinary profession, 90 per cent are working within clinical veterinary practice. Unfortunately, the two people who said they were working within the profession, but outside clinical practice, did not respond to a later question about place of work.
- Of those working within a clinical veterinary practice, all but one respondent are working as VNs; this respondent self-classified as an assistant/employee.
- All except one respondent said they worked in a 'small animal/exotic' practice.
- Nobody worked mainly or entirely within the meat industry/official controls sector.
- All except one respondent said they were currently in their preferred role; this individual would prefer to be working in clinical veterinary practice, but in a different position within the practice.
- These respondents had not changed their area of work since coming to the UK.

6.3 Personal views about the impact of Brexit

Respondents were asked to give their views about a variety of aspects of their working and personal lives, by responding to attitudinal statements on a five-point scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. These statements are given in the tables below, together with the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed. Positively-

worded statements (to which agreement indicates a positive view) are in Table 6.1. Negatively-worded statements (to which agreement indicates a negative view) are in Table 6.2. Table 6.3 contains the responses to neutrally-worded statements that relate to waiting for the situation to become clearer.

It should be noted that, of the 19 respondents, only 14 (for some statements, 13) people gave their views about these statements. Nevertheless, Table 6.1 indicates that these individuals have had positive experiences of working in the UK in terms of career progression, income, and employment prospects; and they would like to stay, despite not finding colleagues, and people in general, any more supportive or friendly.

Table 6.1: Personal impact of Brexit – positively-worded statements

Statement	N	% agree or strongly agree
I am satisfied with my career progression since coming to the UK	14	100
I would like to stay in the UK	13	78
Working in the UK has increased my employment prospects abroad	14	65
I am satisfied with my pay/income progression since coming to the UK	14	57
I am optimistic about my future	14	50
My employer is more supportive now	14	36
My colleagues are more supportive now	14	7
People I meet in the course of my work are friendlier towards me	14	0
Nothing much has changed for me	14	71

Table 6.2 suggests that the Brexit vote has had a considerable impact on European VNs in that it caused sadness, anxiety and stress and, in some cases, thoughts about leaving the UK and/or moving back home. However, there has been less of an impact on job security, promotion opportunities and opinions about feeling supported.

Table 6.2: Personal impact of Brexit – negatively-worded statements

Statement	N	% agree or strongly agree
The Brexit vote has saddened me	14	92
I find the uncertainty about the future difficult	14	65
I feel less welcome in the UK	14	58
I am fearful about the future	14	57
I am more likely to leave the UK	14	50
I am considering a move back home	14	50
I am more stressed at work	13	31
Fewer development opportunities are open to me	14	29
I feel pessimistic about my future	14	21
A lot has changed for me	14	21
I am actively looking for work outside the UK	14	14
I have personally experienced prejudice at work since the vote	14	14
I have observed prejudice at work since the vote	14	14
My skills are less valued	14	7
My job security has reduced	14	7
My opportunities for promotion/advancement are more limited	14	7
My colleagues are less supportive now	14	0
My employer is less supportive now	14	0
People I meet in the course of my work are less friendly towards me now	14	0

Finally, Table 6.3 suggests that European VNs, despite expressing some negative views and having had some negative experiences, are not rushing into making any decisions; most are waiting to see what will happen before taking any action. This includes possible applications for UK citizenship, in that when asked if they had applied, 81 per cent said no and the remaining 19 per cent said they were considering it.

The final personal question asked of VNs was *'If you had known that the UK would vote for Brexit, would you still have come here?'* Opinions among the 15 respondents who answered this question were divided, with 20 per cent selecting 'yes', 27 per cent 'no', and 54 per cent 'unsure'.

Table 6.3: Personal impact of Brexit – neutrally-worded statements

Statement	N	% agree or strongly agree
I am waiting to see how the situation will unfold	14	79
I will make no decision about my future in the UK until I understand the situation better	14	79
I have put major 'life decisions' on hold since the vote	14	21

6.4 Views about the impact of Brexit on the UK veterinary profession

A separate set of statements, also using a five-point scale from '*strongly disagree*' to '*strongly agree*', asked VNs to consider the impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession as a whole. These statements are given in the Table 6.4, together with the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed. It should again be noted that not all of the 19 respondents gave their views about these statements; each statement was responded to by either 14 or 15 people.

Table 6.4: Impact on the veterinary profession of Brexit

Statement	N	% agree or strongly agree
Special rules are needed to ensure that European veterinary surgeons can still work in the UK	15	87
European veterinary nurses are less likely to come here	15	87
European veterinary surgeons are less likely to come here	15	80
The veterinary profession in the UK will experience shortages if European veterinary surgeons are no longer welcome	15	80
The veterinary profession in the UK will experience shortages if European veterinary nurses are no longer welcome	15	80
Special rules are needed to ensure that European veterinary nurses can still work here	15	80
Veterinary employers are less likely to employ European veterinary nurses	14	50
Veterinary employers are less likely to employ European veterinary surgeons	14	50

Table 6.4 shows very clearly that European VNs believe that Brexit could have a very significant impact on the profession, leading to workforce shortages, and that special rules are needed to allow VNs and VSs to stay.

Encouragingly for the RCVS, 87 per cent of responding VNs believe that the RCVS is giving sufficient support and advice to European VNs and VNs. The 13 per cent who disagreed did not put forward any suggestions about further advice and support the RCVS could give.

Just one respondent completed the free text box at the end of the questionnaire that asked 'Do you have any further comments to make about this survey or the impact of Brexit?' This response is given here for completeness with regard to VN respondents.

"I feel that the decision for the UK to leave the EU is very surprising and upsetting. What makes Britain great is the opportunities and a diverse lifestyle. I feel Brexit is having a negative effect on this. It is upsetting to me, that I've come to Britain, worked hard every day since I've got here and contributed to the economy, and this is the way we are being treated. I feel we should be protected during and after this move. I have created a life and home for myself here. The UK is a home away from home for me."

7 Conclusions and next steps

7.1 Conclusions

Despite the distress and upset caused by the UK's vote to leave the EU, which has undoubtedly left many European VSs feeling less welcome and less valued, the prevailing mood seems to be 'wait and see'. Few VSs are planning on taking immediate action, for example by returning home or seeking work outside the UK, and half have either applied for UK citizenship (9%) or are considering doing so (41%). The benefits of working in the UK – on career progression, income and employment prospects – are very clearly expressed, so it is not surprising that, when asked whether they would have still come here if they had known that the UK would vote for Brexit, almost twice as many VSs said 'yes' (39%) than 'no' (21%).

However, respondents are very firmly of the opinion that the UK veterinary profession will suffer considerably if European VSs, and to a lesser extent European VNs, are no longer welcome here, and that special provisions need to be made for them to still be able to work in the UK. The threat of shortages is not imminent, in that few VSs are planning to leave as soon as possible; the vast majority are waiting to find out what is in store for them, and nearly three-quarters (73%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to stay in the UK.

7.2 Next steps

A separate qualitative report will be produced, containing the analysis of the telephone interviews with a sample of VSs who have volunteered to take part in a follow-up interview.

Two further surveys will be conducted over the next 18 to 24 months, which will track the opinions and intentions of European VSs and VNs over time, as Brexit decisions are made, policies are formed and the options available to non-UK nationals become clearer.