

# The 2014 RCVS Survey of the Veterinary Profession

Jonathan Buzzeo

Dilys Robinson

Matthew Williams

# Institute for Employment Studies

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**Institute for Employment Studies**

City Gate  
185 Dyke Road  
Brighton BN3 1TL  
UK

Telephone: +44 (0)1273 763400  
Email: [askies@employment-studies.co.uk](mailto:askies@employment-studies.co.uk)  
Website: [www.employment-studies.co.uk](http://www.employment-studies.co.uk)

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# 1 Executive Summary

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This executive summary presents an overview of the results of the 2014 Survey of the Veterinary Profession, carried out on behalf of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES). The survey was carried out during April and May 2014, yielding a response rate of 27 per cent (6,988 responses). Throughout, VS is shorthand for veterinary surgeon.

## 1.1 Personal Details

### Gender

Over half (53.8%) of respondents to the 2014 RCVS survey are female, while 46 per cent are male. This is the first time that the number of female VSs completing the survey has been greater than the number of men, and is indicative of the 'feminisation' of the veterinary profession. This gap is even greater when we consider those VSs working within the veterinary profession (57.6% female; 42.5% male).

### Age

Consistent with previous surveys, around 49 per cent of RCVS members are aged between 30 and 49 years. The age of respondents ranges from 23 to 93 years, while the overall average age of respondents is 44.3 years (in 2010, the average age was 45.5). Male VSs have a higher average age than females: 51.6 compared to 38. This is indicative of the 'feminisation' of the veterinary profession mentioned above and the large proportions of female graduates that are entering the profession.

### Dependants

Roughly a third of respondents (32.5%) have dependent children living with them, and five-and-a-half per cent provide care to a dependent adult. Among those respondents who live with dependent children, 70 per cent are aged between 30 and 49 years. The majority of respondents caring for adult dependants (64%) are over the age of 50.

## Disability

Six-and-a-half per cent of respondents have a disability or medical condition that limits the work they can do. The age of respondents is associated with whether or not they report having a disability or medical condition; the majority of respondents who report having such a condition (67%) are aged 50 or over.

## Social mobility

The 2014 survey asked, for the first time, a series of questions with the aim of assessing the social mobility of individuals. The first question asked respondents whether any of their parents or guardians had completed a university degree course or equivalent. Just over half of respondents (51%) stated that their parents or guardians had been degree-educated.

The second question asked respondents about the type of school that was mainly attended between the ages of 11 and 16. Over a quarter (26%) of respondents to the survey indicated that they attended a non-selective state-run or state-funded school between these ages. One fifth (20%) attended a selective state-run or state-funded school, while 24 per cent were educated at an independent or fee-paying school. A high proportion of respondents (30%) stated that they had attended school outside the UK.

Respondents were also asked whether their household received income support or free school meals at any point during their school years. Almost eight per cent of respondents stated that they lived in households that were in receipt of income support at some point during their school years, while the proportion of respondents who received free school meals during their school years was 9.6 per cent.

## 1.2 Work status

The proportion of respondents in full-time work (65.4%) has remained relatively stable since the last survey (2010) after declining from 68 to 64 per cent between 2006 and 2010. The number of respondents in part-time work, however, is continuing to rise year on year: 19 per cent of respondents are currently working part-time compared with 16 per cent in 2010, 14 per cent in 2006, 12 per cent in 2002 and 11 per cent in 2000. The proportion of respondents undertaking voluntary work has also increased from 0.4 per cent in 2010 to 1.2 per cent in the current survey.

As in previous surveys, women are more likely to be working part-time than men. Despite this, an increasing share of male respondents are now undertaking part-time work; the proportion who reported doing so has more than doubled since the 2010 and 2006 surveys, from five per cent to 11 per cent of respondents.

**Table 1.1: Employment status by gender: percentages**

Employment status	2014		2010		2006	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Full-time work	67.8	64.5	66.5	62	70	64
Part-time work	11.2	26	5.5	26	5	25
Voluntary work	1.2	1.2	0.5	0.3	-	-
Unemployed	1.1	1.9	1	2	0.5	1
Taking a career break	0.7	4	0.5	5	0.5	5
Retired	18	2.4	26.5	5	23	5

Source: VS Survey, 2014

Ten per cent of respondents to the RCVS survey are currently retired. Of this number, the vast majority of retirees are male (86.4%) whereas 13.6 per cent are female. These proportions have not altered significantly since 2010, when 84 per cent of respondents who were either fully or partially retired were male, while 16 per cent were female.

### 1.3 Country of employment

Eighty-five per cent of VSs currently in employment are working within the UK. This percentage has declined slightly since the 2010 survey, when 89.3 per cent of respondents worked in the UK. For the most recent survey, the next highest proportions are working within Ireland and other EU countries.

Almost one fifth (19.4%) of respondents currently working within the UK are non-British nationals. Of this number, 60 per cent of respondents are female, while 40 per cent are male. When non-British nationals were asked to provide the reasons why they came to the UK this time, the most popular reason given was 'to work abroad' (48.7% of respondents).

### 1.4 Working outside the veterinary profession

Two-hundred-and-eighty-five respondents (4.8%) are currently working outside the veterinary profession (i.e. in a role that does not require a veterinary qualification or the use of veterinary skills). Among this number, 68.2 per cent are working within non-animal-related organisations.

Roughly half of respondents currently working outside the veterinary profession do not intend to seek employment in the veterinary profession in future, and almost a quarter (24%) have yet to decide whether they will re-enter the profession; 26 per cent do intend to return, either within the next year or longer.

## 1.5 Working within the veterinary profession

Ninety-five per cent of respondents (N = 5,628) are currently working within the veterinary profession. Over half of those working within the profession in the UK are employed in small animal/exotic practices (54%), while 16 per cent of respondents work in mixed animal practices and eight per cent are employed in referral practices/consultancies.

Outside clinical practice, the most common types of organisation in which respondents are employed are veterinary schools, charities and trusts, and commerce and industry, in that order.

### Hours of work and on-call time

Respondents to the survey were asked to specify the hours that they work in a typical week (including overtime but excluding time spent on-call) in different areas of practice. The results show that VSs working in mixed practices, small animal/exotic practices and equine practices work the longest hours on average per week (including overtime but excluding on-call time) across all practice areas (i.e. over 40 hours).

With regard to qualified VSs working within other areas of the profession, respondents working in veterinary schools and in other UK government agencies work the longest hours on average during a typical week (39.3 hours in both instances).

Respondents were also asked to provide the number of hours that they are required to be on-call both while they are attending and when they are away from their work premises. The highest on-call hours away from respondents' place of work were found in practice, particularly in the areas of equine, mixed practice and farm/production animal practice work.

**Table 1.2: Average hours worked and on-call by different areas of practice (UK VSs)**

Type of practice	Hours worked	On-call (off premises)	On-call (on premises)
Mixed practice	41.0	20.2	3.8
Small animal/exotic practice	40.9	6.6	3.1
Equine practice	40.4	23.2	9.4
Farm practice/production animal practice	37.4	18.7	1.3
Other first opinion practice	33.5	6.9	11.8
Referral practice/consultancy	34.8	13.4	3.5

*Source: VS Survey, 2014, 2010 and 2006*

The balance of on call on and off the premises has changed between 2010 and 2014. On call on the premises has increased noticeably in every practice type, apart from 'farm

and production animal practices', while on call off the premises has decreased in every practice type.

## **Employer benefits**

Respondents were asked whether their practice provided them with certain provisions or benefits. The vast majority of respondents (84.5%) stated that they received training or CPD support (in terms of time or financial support) from their employer. Over half of UK-practising VSs also received personal indemnity insurance (60%), no or reduced pet fees (55.2%) and uniform or work clothing (52%).

## **Career plans**

When asked about their future career plans, the majority of UK-practising VSs who responded to the survey (83%) indicated that they plan to stay in the profession for the foreseeable future, while 9.3 per cent of respondents stated that they are planning to leave the profession for reasons other than retirement, either as soon as possible or within the next one to five years.

Respondents who indicated that they intend to leave the profession for non-retirement reasons were asked to specify what these were. Dissatisfaction with veterinary work (e.g. working hours, stress) is the most commonly cited reason for planning to leave the profession. Other reasons provided by the majority of this sample included being 'fed up with the way the veterinary profession is going' and not feeling that their work is adequately rewarded or valued in non-financial terms.

## **1.6 Working within clinical practice**

Of those respondents working within the veterinary profession, 84.8 per cent are currently engaged in clinical practice work within the UK.

### **Position in practice**

Over half of those respondents currently working in a clinical practice (57%) hold the position of either a full-time or part-time assistant, the same proportion as in the last survey. The proportion of VSs working as equity partners, meanwhile, has more than halved since the 2010 survey.

The results also show that the proportion of VSs working as sole principals within their respective practices has steadily declined since 2006 (from 11% in 2006 to 5% in 2014), while the number of VSs who hold the position of director has seen a slight increase on previous years.

With regard to the gender of VSs and the position they hold, a greater proportion of males work as directors and equity partners compared to female VSs. A far larger share of UK-practising female VSs work either as full-time or part-time assistants. This reflects, at least to some extent, the differing age profiles of male and female VSs. However, compared to the results of the 2010 survey, the proportion of female respondents working as directors has increased (from 4.9% to 6.5%).

**Table 1.3: Position in practice by gender (%)**

Position	Male	Female
Sole Principal	7.6	3.1
Director (of limited company)	24.5	6.5
Equity Partner	11.8	2.8
Salaried Partner	2.9	1.4
Assistant (or employee of limited company)	36.2	70.7
Consultant	5.1	2.2
Locum	8.1	8.5
Vet working as a veterinary nurse	0.1	0.3
Other	3.7	4.5

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

On average, VSs in clinical practice spend a large share of their working time (76.8% of their working hours) on treating small animals, particularly cats and dogs. By contrast, the average amount of time that respondents report spending on farm animals, in particular cattle, has declined since the last survey.

## Out-of-hours work and 24/7 emergency cover

Fewer than ten per cent of respondents (9.1%) currently undertaking clinical practice work in the UK are based primarily at a dedicated out-of-hours service provider; this compares with 16 per cent of VSs working overseas.

Those respondents who do not primarily work at such a provider (91%) were asked to describe their practice's approach to providing 24/7 cover. Over half (56.2%) stated that their practice covers its own out-of-hours work, a lower proportion than in 2010 (60.5%). A larger share of respondents reported that their practice utilises a dedicated out-of-hours service provider for 24/7 cover than in the previous survey (34.7% compared to 25.6% in 2010).

## Emergency cases

Respondents to the 2014 RCVS survey who worked in clinical practice were asked a series of new questions about the number of emergency cases they had dealt with out-

of-hours during the past 12 months, and whether these cases have made them concerned for their personal safety.

Over the last 12 months of practice, on average, respondents dealt with 73.5 emergency cases out-of-hours at their workplace. However, this average is higher than the number that many VSs will have experienced, due to large differences in the answers provided by respondents (answers ranged from 1 to 3,000 cases). A better indication of the typical VSs experience is provided by the median value: this shows that 50 per cent of respondents had dealt with 40 or fewer emergency cases over the past year. Excluding those VSs who work primarily at a dedicated out-of-hours service provider, the average number of emergency cases was 56, while the median value was 30.

In terms of the average number of emergency cases that respondents dealt with out-of-hours *away* from their practice over the past 12 months, the mean value was over 30, although 50 per cent of the sample had dealt with ten cases or fewer. Again, excluding those VSs who work primarily at a dedicated out-of-hours service provider, the average number of emergency cases was 35, while the median value was 10.

## Working time arrangements

Half of the respondents currently working in a UK clinical practice manage to have a minimum rest period of 11 hours in each 24-hour period. Of the 50 per cent of respondents who do not have this rest period, 9.5 per cent have signed up to a workforce agreement that provides other compensatory rest.

Among those respondents who do not have an 11-hour rest period every day and have not signed up to a workforce agreement with their employer, only 7.1 per cent have discussed a workforce agreement for compensatory rest with their employer.

Eighty-six per cent of UK-practising VSs reported that they have at least two rest days in every 14-day period, while a similar proportion (87%) take at least 20 days' paid holiday each year (plus bank holidays).

## 1.7 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and further education

### CPD methods and funding

Of those respondents who have made use of CPD provision methods over the past 12 months, a large proportion (84.9%) have undertaken ad hoc, undocumented private study. Other popular CPD provision methods include attending lectures by external providers (77%) and engaging in distance learning via webinars (70%).

On average, respondents who had engaged in CPD activities in the past year stated that 47 per cent of this provision had been funded by their employer. Almost 30 per cent of their CPD had been undertaken at no cost (an average of 28%), whereas just under a fifth (18%) had been self-funded. Five-hundred and ninety-three respondents stated that their CPD provision had been funded entirely by their employer.

## Further education

With regard to respondents' current and past engagement in further education, a large proportion (44.4%) of respondents currently hold an additional qualification, other than their primary veterinary qualification. Over a fifth (21.1%) of respondents, meanwhile, are currently studying for further work related qualifications, while a third (33.1%) plan to study for an additional qualification over the next five years.

## 1.8 Electronic communications and use of the internet

Half of the sample stated that they use smart phones or tablets for work purposes. The majority of respondents aged 50 or over, however, do not use such devices for work purposes.

Survey respondents were also asked which social networking sites they use for professional purposes. Among those who responded to this question, 28 per cent utilise Facebook for professional purposes. A further 19 per cent of respondents stated that they use the professional networking site LinkedIn.

## 1.9 Recently qualified VSs

Among those respondents who had become qualified as VSs from 2011 onwards (N = 642), over half (52%) stated that after graduating they went straight into practice work; however, 17.8 per cent of respondents indicated that they took some time out of work following their graduation as they were unable to find employment. These results are in line with the results of the 2013 RCVS Survey of Recent Graduates, which showed that, among those respondents who had found veterinary work since qualifying, 91.7 per cent worked in clinical practices in their first veterinary position.

Comparing respondents' answers to this question based on whether or not they qualified in the UK, it is clear that a higher share of non-UK qualifiers (23.2%) began an internship following graduation compared to those who had attained their veterinary qualification in the UK (5.3%). However, 59 per cent of UK qualifiers went straight into practice post-graduation compared to only a third of respondents (32.7%) who qualified outside the UK.

**Table 1.4: Activities following graduation**

	Post-2011 qualifiers (%)
Went straight into practice	52
Began postgraduate studies	1.4
Began an internship	10
Worked abroad for a charity or other practice	7.6
Took some time out for travel	6.5
Took some time out as you were unable to find a job	17.8
Other	4.7

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 1.10 Views about the profession

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with a series of attitudinal statements about the veterinary profession. The results show that a large proportion of respondents (almost 90%) agree that veterinary work is stressful. However, a similar proportion agree that veterinary work gives variety, and over 80 per cent state that being a VS provides them with job satisfaction. Further, respondents largely agree that clients value the work of VSs, and that veterinary nurses are valued within the profession.

Survey respondents were also asked to consider the best aspects of the profession, possible improvements and the challenges it currently faces. VSs stated that the best aspects of their work were the job satisfaction and the challenge and stimulus it provided them with, as well as the opportunity it afforded them to work with animals. However, respondents believe that the profession could be improved through better pay/remuneration for VSs, and expressed concern at the high demands placed on them by clients and the levels of stress that they felt they were under.

## 1.11 Well-being

For the second time, respondents to the RCVS survey were asked to respond to a short series of questions concerning their well-being in both their professional and personal lives. To do this, a 14-item scale of mental well-being known as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) was used. Individual items are scored from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time) and a total scale score is calculated by summing the 14 item scores. The minimum score is 14 and the maximum is 70. The average population mean is around 51.

The mean WEMWBS score for the entire sample is 49, slightly below the average population mean; respondents to the 2010 survey had the same average score. Female respondents have a lower average score than male respondents (47.8 compared to

49.5), although this gender divide has narrowed slightly since 2010 when female respondents had an average WEMWBS score of 48, while males had a mean score of 50.

## 2 Introduction

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### 2.1 Background

This report presents the results of the 2014 Survey of the Veterinary Profession, carried out on behalf of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES). A survey of veterinary nurses (including student veterinary nurses) was carried out at the same time and the results are presented in a companion report.

The 2014 survey of VSs is the sixth survey carried out by the RCVS; VSs were also surveyed in 1998, 2000, 2002, 2006 and 2010. Throughout this report, where possible and appropriate, results are compared with previous years. The aim of these surveys is to provide the RCVS, and other interested parties, with an evidence-based view of the veterinary profession and the changes taking place within it.

A new series of questions was added to the 2014 survey that sought to examine the issues relating to the provision of 24/7 emergency care. The RCVS was particularly interested in the extent to which VSs working within clinical practices in the UK are involved in and undertake out-of-hours work, the typical profile of out-of-hours workers, and whether and how out-of-hours work impacts first on VSs' working conditions and second on their attitudes towards the profession.

Respondents to the 2014 survey were also asked four new questions relating to their socioeconomic status; at the request of government, the RCVS wants to improve data collection on the social background of its members, and see whether careers in the veterinary profession can be fairly accessed.

### 2.2 Survey process

The questionnaire was compiled by IES using questions from previous surveys, together with additional questions and statements derived from discussions with RCVS staff.

The survey was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014, following an informal questionnaire testing exercise. As the questionnaire has evolved over a number of surveys it was felt that a formal pilot stage was not required.

This year the survey was conducted as an online survey only, whereas earlier surveys used a combination of paper questionnaires and an online version.

Invitations to participate in the survey were sent out to 25,741 VSs for whom the RCVS held valid email or postal addresses, via email or post as appropriate.

## 2.3 Response

By the time the surveys closed on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014, IES had received 6,988 completed VS questionnaires, giving a response rate of 27 per cent. In comparison with recent surveys the response rate is lower: in 2010 a response rate of 37 per cent was achieved, and in 2006 a response rate of 47 per cent was achieved. This may be due to the survey being solely online this year, whereas in earlier years respondents received paper questionnaires, and also due to 'survey fatigue' over time, especially as a major survey had been carried out in 2013 as part of the RCVS First Rate Regulator project.

A response analysis was carried out to compare survey respondents to the RCVS database of VSs for whom they hold a valid email or postal address, and the results are shown in Table 2.1. The response analysis shows that the achieved sample was broadly similar to the VS population as a whole.

**Table 2.1: VS survey 2014 response analysis, percentage**

		Survey respondents	RCVS mailout	Over/under response
Male	20s	3.6	4.6	Slightly under
	30s	9.2	10.2	Slightly under
	40s	8.8	9.7	Slightly under
	50s	9.3	8.9	Equal
	60s	7.7	6.3	Slightly over
	70+	7.4	6.8	Slightly over
	Total	46.0	46.5	Equal
Female	20s	13.8	14.2	Equal
	30s	20.4	20.7	Equal
	40s	10.8	10.6	Equal
	50s	6.8	5.5	Slightly over
	60s	1.6	1.6	Equal
	70+	0.5	0.8	Equal
	Total	54.0	53.5	Equal

*Source: VS Survey, 2014; RCVS database*

## 2.4 Data input and survey analysis

The survey responses were coded and input into the statistical package SPSS for analysis. A number of questions which were open-ended, free-text questions in the 2010 survey were changed to multiple-category tick-box questions based on the responses to the earlier surveys (eg 'What are the three main challenges currently facing the profession?'), with an 'other' option also included.

When carrying out the analysis, IES used key variables to provide breakdowns such as gender, age group, and employment status, and also took account of any analysis undertaken for previous surveys.

## 2.5 Report structure

The report details the findings from the survey under the following headings, exploring trends over time where appropriate:

- Personal details
- Work status
- Current work (veterinary or non-veterinary)
- Working outside the profession
- Working within the profession
- Working within clinical veterinary practice
- Continuing professional development and further education
- Electronic communication and use of the internet
- Recently qualified VSs
- Views about the profession
- Well-being.

A separate report details the findings from the survey of veterinary nurses (VNs), and a synthesis report draws together the key findings from both surveys.



## 3 Personal Details

This chapter details the demographic characteristics of the sample; this includes aggregate data on the gender, age, ethnicity and social background of respondents as well as whether they have responsibility for dependants, disabilities, are members of professional bodies and when they attained their qualifications.

### 3.1 Chapter summary

- Fifty-four per cent of survey respondents are female, while forty-six per cent are male.
- The average age of respondents is 44.3 years.
- Three per cent are from an ethnic minority group.
- Roughly a third of respondents (32.5%) have dependent children living with them, and five-and-a-half per cent provide care to an dependent adult.
- Six-and-a-half per cent of respondents have a disability or medical condition that limits the work they can do.
- Over a quarter (28.4%) of respondents are not members of any veterinary organisation (apart from RCVS).
- The average (median) year of qualification is 1997. Seventy-one per cent of respondents qualified in the UK.
- Just over half of respondents (51%) stated that their parents or guardians had been degree-educated.
- Over a quarter (26%) of respondents indicated that they attended a non-selective state-run or state-funded school, and 24 per cent were educated at an independent or fee-paying school.
- Almost eight per cent (7.8%) of respondents stated that they lived in households that were in receipt of income support at some point during their school years, while 9.6 per cent had received free school meals.

### 3.2 Gender

Over half (53.8%) of respondents to the 2014 RCVS survey are female, while 46 per cent are male. This is the first time that the number of female VSs completing the survey has been greater than the number of men, and is indicative of the 'feminisation' of the veterinary profession. This is evident from the results of previous surveys. For instance, in 2000, 34 per cent of respondents were female; this proportion increased in consecutive surveys, from 37 per cent in 2002 to 45 per cent in 2006 and 50 per cent in 2010.

This gap is even greater when we consider those VSs working within the veterinary profession (57.6% female; 42.5% male); indeed, this proportional difference has increased almost twofold since the last survey in 2010 (where 54 per cent of VSs working within the profession were female, and 46 per cent were male). A similar trend is evident when we observe the gender of respondents working in clinical veterinary practices, 60 per cent of whom are female, 40 per cent male; in 2010, the figures were 57 and 43 per cent respectively.

With regard to the age of female and male respondents, analysis shows that a far larger share of female respondents are under 40 years of age compared to male VSs (63.3% compared to 27.8%, respectively). Male respondents meanwhile predominate among the over 40 age categories (72.2% compared to 36.7% of females). These findings provide further evidence of the shifting demographic profile of VSs, and the 'feminisation' of the profession, over the past two decades.

### 3.3 Age

Consistent with previous surveys, around 49 per cent of RCVS members are aged between 30 and 49 years. The age of respondents ranges from 23 to 93 years, while the overall average age of respondents is 44.3 years (in 2010, the average age was 45.5). As indicated in the previous section, male VSs have a higher average age than females: 51.6 compared to 38. These mean values have remained relatively stable since 2006 where the average age of male and female respondents was 51 and 37.5, respectively.

Further analysis shows that the average age of respondents working outside the veterinary profession is higher than those working within the profession: 49 compared to 41 years. Again, these results are almost identical to those of the 2010 RCVS survey.

As Table 3.1 shows, the average age of those undertaking voluntary work is higher than for RCVS members in full-time or part-time employment. However, the average age profile of voluntary workers has decreased by just over ten years since the last survey, where the mean value was 61. The average age of RCVS members currently unemployed (37.3 years) or taking a career break (38.5 years) is roughly similar to what it was in 2010 (35.5 and 37.5 years, respectively). Again, this could be due to that fact

that female respondents – who have a younger age profile, on average – predominate among those currently unemployed (67% of respondents) and taking a career break (87.4% of respondents).

**Table 3.1: Average age by employment status**

Employment status	Mean
Full-time work	39.7
Part-time work	46.7
Voluntary work	50.6
Unemployed	37.3
Taking a career break	38.5
Retired	72.8
N =	6,806

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

The average age of respondents currently undertaking practice work varies according to their position. Compared with the results of previous surveys, the most striking difference, shown in Table 3.2, concerns the average age of locums who responded to the survey, which has decreased by over ten years between 2010 and 2014. As a result, locums now have the lowest average age among all positions, whereas previously full-time assistants had the lowest. The average age of consultants has also seen a marked and continued reduction since 2006, decreasing by 11 years. As in the 2010, sole principals have the highest average age.

**Table 3.2: Average age of respondents by position in practice**

Position in the practice	Average age 2014	Average age 2010	Average age 2006
Sole Principal	49	52	50
Director	47	46	No comparable data available
Equity Partner	48	48	No comparable data available
Salaried Partner	39	41	41
Full-time Assistant	35	32	32
Part-time Assistant	43	41	41
Consultant	42	49	53
Locum	30	42	40
Other	39	39	40

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

### 3.4 Ethnicity

The representation of ethnic minorities among survey respondents has increased marginally since 2010 and 2006 from two per cent to three per cent; Asian/Asian British

ethnicities make up one per cent of this cohort, as do those of mixed ethnicity. Chinese ethnicities meanwhile constitute 0.5 per cent of this sample, Black/Black British 0.3 per cent and other ethnicities 0.3 per cent.

**Table 3.3: Ethnicity of respondents**

	Frequency	%
White	6,588	96.9
Mixed	67	1
Asian/Asian British	65	1
Chinese	37	0.5
Black/Black British	21	0.3
Other	21	0.3
Total	6,799	100

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

## 3.5 Dependents

Roughly a third of respondents (32.5%) have dependent children living with them, and five-and-a-half per cent provide care to a dependent adult. The share of respondents living with dependent children had declined slightly since 2010 (34%) and 2006 (35%). The share of respondents providing care to adult dependants meanwhile has remained steady over this period (5% in 2010, and 5.5% in 2006).

Among those respondents who live with dependent children, 70 per cent are aged between 30 and 49 years. As in 2010, there is a roughly even split between the proportion of female and male respondents who have child dependants (52% and 48%, respectively), although a greater share of females now live in such households compared to male respondents (in 2010, 52% of males and 48% of females lived with child dependants). The gender split with regard to providing care to an adult dependant remains the same as it was in 2010, however: 63 per cent of those providing such care are male (65% in 2010) and 37 per cent are female (35% in 2010). Further, the majority of respondents caring for adult dependants (64%) are over the age of 50.

As Table 3.4 shows, over half of respondents in either part-time work (54.2%) or currently taking a career break (53%) have dependent children living with them. Around 30 per cent of respondents in full-time work, meanwhile, live with dependent children.

**Table 3.4: 'Do you have dependent children living with you?'**

Employment status	Yes (%)	No (%)
Full-time work	29.9	70.1
Part-time work	54.2	45.8
Voluntary work	15.9	84.1
Unemployed	25.5	74.5
Taking a career break	53	47
Retired	4.9	95.1
N =	2,203	4,577

Note: The values presented are row percentages, which each sum to 100%

Source: VS Survey, 2014

Table 3.5 demonstrates that larger shares of respondents in voluntary work, part-time work or who are retired provide care for adult dependents compared to VSs in other employment categories.

**Table 3.5: 'Do you provide care to an adult dependant?'**

Employment status	Yes (%)	No (%)
Full-time work	4.8	95.2
Part-time work	6.7	93.3
Voluntary work	8.9	91.1
Unemployed	4.7	95.3
Taking a career break	4.8	95.2
Retired	7.9	92.1
N =	372	6,395

Note: The values presented are row percentages, which each sum to 100%

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 3.6 Disability

Six-and-a-half per cent of respondents have a disability or medical condition that limits the work they can do. This proportion is slightly lower than in the previous two surveys, where it stood at eight per cent of the sample. As Table 3.6 shows, the age of respondents is associated with whether or not they report having a disability or medical condition; as the age of respondents increases, so does the share who report that they have a condition that limits the work they can do. The majority of respondents who have a disability or medical condition (67%) are aged 50 or over (See Table C).

**Table 3.6: Disability or medical condition by age group**

Age group	Yes (%)	No (%)
20 to 29	1.5	98.5
30 to 39	2.7	97.3
40 to 49	5.5	94.5
50 to 59	8.8	91.2
60 to 69	9.7	90.3
70 to 95	25.7	74.3
N =	442	6,372

Note: The values presented are row percentages, which each sum to 100%

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Table 3.7 demonstrates that higher shares of respondents who are currently retired, unemployed or are undertaking voluntary work report having a disability or medical condition that limits the work they can do compared to other employment categories.

Further breakdowns show that, over half of respondents (55%) who have a disability or medical condition are in either full-time or part-time work; over a third (35.5%), meanwhile, are retired (See Table D).

**Table 3.7: Disability or medical condition by employment status**

Employment status	Yes (%)	No (%)
Full-time work	3	97
Part-time work	8.2	91.8
Voluntary work	12.2	87.8
Unemployed	15.1	84.9
Taking a career break	9.5	90.5
Retired	23.8	76.2
N =	439	6,365

Note: The values presented are row percentages, which each sum to 100%

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

### 3.7 RCVS membership category

The majority of survey respondents (72.3%) have a UK-practising RCVS membership category (see Table 3.8). Over ten per cent have a 'Practising outside the UK' RCVS membership.

**Table 3.8: RCVS membership category**

	Frequency	%
UK-practising	4,957	72.3
Practising outside the UK	721	10.5
Non-practising	539	7.9
Non-practising (70 years plus)	414	6
Southern Irish	224	3.3
Total	6,855	100

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 3.8 Membership of professional bodies

Over 28 per cent of respondents are not currently members of any veterinary organisation (excluding RCVS). This is slightly higher than in 2010, where 25 per cent held no other membership. Around 40 per cent of respondents are members of the British Veterinary Association (BVA), while 31 per cent and six per cent are members of the BVA specialist and territorial divisions, respectively.

**Table 3.9: Membership of professional bodies**

	Frequency	% of respondents
No veterinary organisations	1,941	28.4
BVA	2,768	40.5
BVA territorial division	406	5.9
BVA specialist division	2,137	31.3
Other UK associations	1,605	23.5
International associations	1,513	22.2
N =	6,828	

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 3.9 Year of qualification

Table 3.10 shows that nearly 80 per cent of respondents to the survey qualified within the last 30 years. The largest share of respondents (31.8%) qualified between 2001 and 2010.

**Table 3.10: 'In what year did you qualify?'**

Year	Frequency	%
Pre 1970	623	9.6
1971-1980	726	11.2
1981-1990	1,044	16.1
1991-2000	1,275	19.7
2001-2010	2,058	31.8
2011-2014	746	11.5
Total	6,472	100

Source: VS Survey, 2014

### 3.10 Country of qualification

The majority of respondents (70.8%) qualified within the UK, although this proportion is smaller than it was in 2010 and 2006 (where UK qualifiers made up 78.5% of the sample). The share of respondents who qualified in other EU countries, excluding the UK and Ireland, has seen a six per cent increase since 2010.

**Table 3.11: Country of qualification**

	Frequency	%
UK	4,849	70.8
Ireland	427	6.2
Other EU	925	13.5
Europe, outside EU	93	1.4
Australia	179	2.6
New Zealand	59	0.9
Canada	23	0.3
USA	51	0.7
South Africa	170	2.5
Other	73	1.1
Total	6,849	100

Source: VS Survey, 2014

### 3.11 Social mobility

The 2014 survey asked, for the first time, a series of questions with the aim of assessing the social mobility of individuals. The questions are endorsed by the government and recommended for use by professional bodies, in line with their responsibility to ensure fair access to professions and the best use of talent. Respondents to the 2014 RCVS survey of VNs were asked the same series of questions, and the findings are compared in the separate synthesis report.

The first question asked respondents whether any of their parents or guardians had completed a university degree course or equivalent. Just over half of respondents (51%) stated that their parents or guardians had been degree-educated. The parents or guardians of 48 per cent of the sample, had not completed a university degree, while less than one per cent (0.5%) are not sure whether their parents or guardians had done so. Data on the background of doctors in training were also collected from the General Medical Council's National Training Survey 2013; this showed that 65 per cent of doctors in training had a parent or guardian who had completed a university degree course or equivalent.

**Table 3.12: 'Did any of your parents or guardians complete a university degree course or equivalent?'**

	Frequency	VS (%)	GMC (%)
Yes	3,492	51.2	65
No	3,293	48.3	31.4
Don't know/Prefer not to say	37	0.5	3.5
Total	6,822	100	

*Source: VS Survey, 2014; GMC October 2013*

The second question asked respondents about the type of school that was mainly attended between the ages of 11 and 16. As Table 3.13 shows, over a quarter (26%) of survey respondents indicated that they attended a non-selective state-run or state-funded school between these ages. One fifth (20%) attended a selective state-run or state-funded school, while 24 per cent were educated at an independent or fee-paying school. A high proportion of respondents (30%) stated that they had attended school outside the UK. With regard to other professions, data from the 2013 GMC survey shows that around one in three doctors in training (34%) had attended an independent or fee-paying school; and the 2013 Bar Standards Board and Bar Council survey of the working lives of barristers showed that 44 per cent of Barristers went to a fee-paying school.

**Table 3.13: 'What type of school did you mainly attend between the ages of 11 and 16?'**

Type of School	Frequency	VS (%)	GMC (%)
A state-run or state-funded school in the UK - selective	1,353	19.8	23.7
A state-run or state-funded school in the UK - non-selective	1,800	26.3	38.8
Independent or fee-paying school in the UK	1,622	23.7	33.7
Attended school outside the UK	2,056	30	-
I don't know	17	0.2	3.9
Total	6,848	100	

*Source: VS Survey, 2014; GMC October 2013*

Respondents were also asked whether their household received income support, or they received free school meals, at any point during their school years. Almost eight per cent of respondents stated that they lived in households that were in receipt of income support at some point during their school years. This is below the proportion of doctors in training who responded to the 2013 GMC survey, 11.5 per cent of whose households received this benefit during this period.

**Table 3.14: 'Did your household receive income support at any point during your school years?'**

	Frequency	VS (%)	GMC (%)
Yes	532	7.8	11.5
No	6,012	87.8	78.6
Don't know	300	4.4	10
Total	6,844	100	

*Source: VS Survey, 2014; GMC October 2013*

The proportion of respondents who received free school meals during their school years was 9.6 per cent; Table 3.15 shows that this is higher than the proportion of doctors in training (8.3%).

**Table 3.15: 'Did you receive free school meals at any point during your school years?'**

	Frequency	VS (%)	GMC (%)
Yes	656	9.6	8.3
No	5,932	86.6	84.9
Don't know	264	3.9	6.9
Total	6,852	100	

*Source: VS Survey, 2014; GMC October 2013*

## 4 Work Status

This chapter presents aggregate data on the current employment status of all survey respondents.

### 4.1 Chapter summary

- Sixty-five per cent of respondents are employed on a full-time basis, while nineteen per cent are employed on a part-time basis.
- The average working week of full-time employees working within the veterinary profession is 44.3 hours.
- For part-time employees working within the profession, the average working week is 24.4 hours.
- One-and-a-half per cent of respondents are currently unemployed, and two-and-a-half per cent are taking a career break.
- Ten per cent of respondents are currently retired.

### 4.2 Employment status

Table 4.1 provides the current employment status of survey respondents, regardless of whether or not they are working within veterinary profession. The proportion of respondents in full-time work (65.4%) has remained relatively stable since the last survey after declining from 68 to 64 per cent between 2006 and 2010. The number of respondents in part-time work, however, is continuing to rise year on year: 19 per cent of respondents are currently working part-time compared with 16 per cent in 2010, 14 per cent in 2006, 12 per cent in 2002 and 11 per cent in 2000. The proportion of respondents undertaking voluntary work has also increased from 0.4 per cent in 2010 to 1.2 per cent in the current survey.

Considering the employment status of respondents according to their gender (see Table 4.2), it is clear that, as in previous surveys, women are more likely to be working part-time than men. Despite this, an increasing share of male respondents are now undertaking part-time work; the proportion who reported doing so has more than doubled since the 2010 and 2006 surveys, from five per cent to 11 per cent of

respondents. Female respondents are also more likely to be taking a career break. These proportions have remained consistent over the previous two surveys.

**Table 4.1: Employment status**

	Frequency	%
Full-time work	4,519	65.4
Part-time work	1,323	19.2
Retired	703	10.2
Taking a career break	170	2.5
Unemployed	107	1.5
Voluntary work	84	1.2
Total	6,906	100

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

The proportion of both men and women who are retired, in the sample as a whole, has declined since the last survey by 8.5 per cent and two-and-a-half per cent, respectively. However, men still form the largest group of retirees due to their higher average age (51.6 compared to 38 for women).

**Table 4.2: Employment status by gender**

Employment status	2014		2010		2006	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Full-time work	67.8	64.5	66.5	62	70	64
Part-time work	11.2	26	5.5	26	5	25
Voluntary work	1.2	1.2	0.5	0.3		
Unemployed	1.1	1.9	1	2	0.5	1
Taking a career break	0.7	4	0.5	5	0.5	5
Retired	18	2.4	26.5	5	23	5

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

With regard to age, the most notable differences between age categories are present among those currently undertaking voluntary work. The largest shares of voluntary workers are aged 20 to 29 years (27.2%) and 60 to 69 years (27.3%).

### 4.3 Full-time, part-time and voluntary working

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of respondents (65%) are currently in full-time work. Of this number, almost 97 per cent are working within the veterinary profession and 3.3 per cent are working outside. A similar trend can be observed for those respondents currently undertaking part-time work (19.2%), 93 per cent of whom are working within the veterinary profession.

With regard to the average working week, excluding overtime, of those employed within the profession, respondents in a full-time role typically work 44.3 hours per week. RCVS members meanwhile who are in a part-time role work an average of 24.4 hours per week. Both of these findings are consistent with the results of the previous survey in 2010.<sup>1</sup> For those respondents in a voluntary role, less than half are currently working within the profession (45%). Among this cohort, the average working week is 31.4 hours.

## 4.4 Unemployment

One-and-a-half per cent of respondents reported that they are currently unemployed; this figure has remained more or less consistent throughout previous surveys (1% of respondents were unemployed in 2010). However, it is important to note that the survey is only administered to RCVS members, and does not take account of those VSs who are unemployed and have left the RCVS Register.

Among this particular sample, respondents have been unemployed for between one month and 360 months, with an average length of unemployment of 17.6 months. This average is, however, a poor indication of the typical experience of many VSs who find themselves unemployed, owing to a few extreme values; 90 per cent of VSs from this sample have been unemployed for 36 months or less. Solely focusing on these respondents, the average length of unemployment is 8.1 months, while 18 per cent have been unemployed for one month or less. Despite this, it is clear that a greater number of VSs are experiencing long periods of unemployment compared to 2010, when the average period of unemployment, including the extreme outliers, was nine months.

With regard to gender, 67 per cent of respondents who are currently unemployed are female, while 33 per cent are male. The size of this difference in unemployment between genders has decreased somewhat since the last survey in 2010 when 75 per cent of female respondents were unemployed compared to 25 per cent of males.

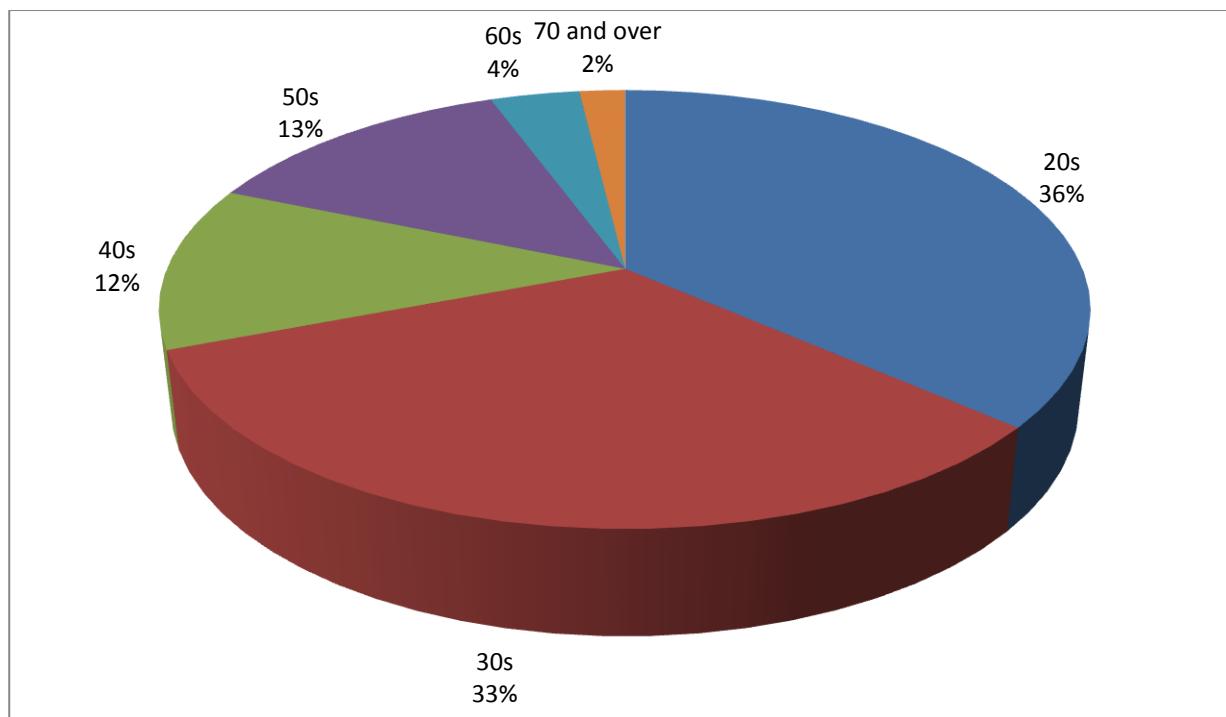
Of those respondents who are currently unemployed, 36 per cent are in their 20s and 33 per cent are in their 30s. These proportions are lower than they were in 2010 (when 39% of respondents in their 20s and 40% of respondents in their 30s were

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<sup>1</sup> Respondents working outside the veterinary profession were not asked to provide their basic working hours in the 2014 survey.

unemployed), with a slightly greater share of respondents aged 50 and over now classifying themselves as unemployed.

**Figure 4.1: Age breakdown of respondents currently unemployed**



*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

The majority of respondents (77.6%) who stated that they are currently unemployed are actively seeking work. This has decreased since the last survey where the proportion of unemployed respondents seeking work was 88 per cent, perhaps owing to the slightly older age profile of the unemployed respondents in 2014. Of this number, almost all (96%) are seeking work within the veterinary profession (2010: 88%). The remaining four per cent were not seeking work within the profession at present but were open to the prospect of doing so in future. This is in contrast with the 2010 survey where five per cent of unemployed respondents were not intending to seek work within the profession.

Over a quarter of respondents (27.7%) were also looking for non-veterinary-related work, while the same proportion was open to the possibility of doing so in future. These proportions have decreased since 2010, with a higher proportion (45% compared to 38%) now stating that they do not intend to look for employment outside the profession either now or in the future.

## 4.5 Career breaks

Table 4.1 showed that 2.5 per cent of respondents are currently taking a career break. Of this number, the vast majority are female (87.4%). The average length of a career break was 27 months. However, nearly a quarter of respondents (24.7%) specified that their current career break would last for 12 months, from start to finish, while another 25 per cent believed their current career break would last less than one year. These results are fairly similar to those of the 2010 and 2006 survey.

As Table 4.3 shows, the proportion of respondents taking a career break who are doing so in order to look after children (47.3%), while still large, has declined since the previous two surveys. The share of respondents taking a career break to study has also been in steady decline since 2006, while the proportion of respondents taking time out due to illness and in order to travel has risen sharply since 2010.

**Table 4.3: Reason for career break: percentage breakdown of the 170 VSs who are on a career break**

	2014	2010	2006
Parental leave/looking after children	47.3	67	54
Study	8.9	9.5	12
Travel	8.9	5	11
Illness (self)	10.7	4	8
Sabbatical	4.1	3	3
Looking after adult dependant	0.6	1.5	1
Other	19.5	10	12

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

## 4.6 Retirement

Ten per cent of respondents to the RCVS survey are currently retired. Of this number, the vast majority of retirees are male (86.4%) whereas 13.6 per cent are female. These proportions have not altered significantly since 2010, when 84 per cent of respondents who were either fully or partially retired were male, while 16 per cent were female.



## 5 Current Work (Veterinary or Non-veterinary)

This chapter provides details of the location of the 85.8 per cent of RCVS members who are currently in work (i.e. omitting those who are fully retired, taking a career break or unemployed).

### 5.1 Chapter summary

- Eighty-five per cent of respondents currently in work are based within the UK.
- Almost one fifth (19.4%) of respondents currently working within the UK are non-British nationals.
- The most popular reasons that non-British nationals gave for coming to work in the UK were a desire to work abroad, wanting to gain further experience and seeking better pay and conditions.
- The average (median) year of arrival for non-British nationals was 2009.
- Half of this sample intends to stay within the UK for 10 years or less.

### 5.2 Country of employment

As Table 5.1 indicates, 85 per cent of VSs currently in employment are working within the UK. This percentage has declined slightly since the 2010 survey, when 89.3 per cent of respondents worked in the UK.

For the most recent survey, the next highest proportions are working within Ireland and other EU countries, respectively; this was also the case for the 2010 survey.

**Table 5.1: 'In which country do you work?'**

	Frequency	%
UK	4,878	84.8
Ireland	239	4.2
Other EU	167	2.9
Europe, outside EU	56	1
Australia	134	2.3
New Zealand	60	1
Canada	35	0.6
South Africa	57	1
Other	128	2.2
Total	5,754	100

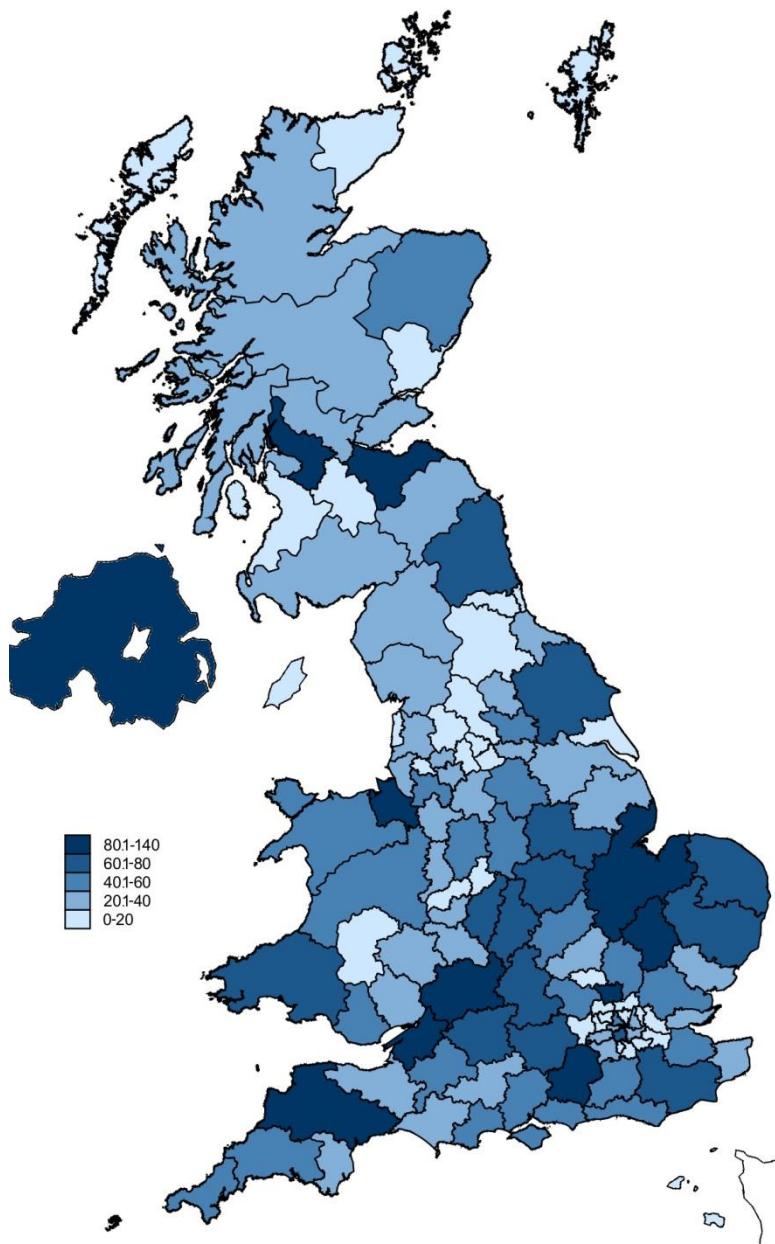
Source: VS Survey, 2014

### 5.3 Location of main workplace

Figure 5.1 shows the geographical distribution of VS respondents across the UK based on the first part of the postcode of respondents' main workplace, as a shaded map of postcode areas. The data are not related to the population size of postcode areas but merely indicate the number of respondents at workplaces in each postcode area<sup>2</sup>. (See Table E, for the number of VSs and VNs in each postcode area).

<sup>2</sup> The eight London postcodes (E, EC, N, NW, SE, SW, W and WC) are geographically small, with each having low to medium numbers of respondents and the largest numbers of respondents working in SW postcodes, but taken together there are 230 VS respondents and 201 VN respondents working across all eight postcode areas.

Figure 5.1: Postcode of main workplace



Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 5.4 Moving to the UK

Almost one fifth (19.4%) of respondents currently working within the UK are non-British nationals. Of this number, 60 per cent of respondents are female, while 40 per cent are male. When non-British nationals were asked to provide the reasons why they came to the UK this time, one of the most popular reasons given was a desire to work abroad (48.7% of respondents). Other reasons provided by large proportions of respondents included wanting to gain further experience (38%) and seeking better pay and conditions (31.9%). These were also the top three reasons

provided by non-British nationals working in the UK in 2010. However, it appears that a greater share of respondents are now citing a lack of work in their home country (22.8%) as one reason why they moved to the UK, than in 2010 (7.2%).

**Table 5.2: 'If you are not a British national, why did you come to the UK, this time?'**

	Frequency	% of number of respondents
To work abroad	456	48.7
Due to marriage/partner	169	18
To gain experience	356	38
As never left after studying	43	4.6
To study/study further	157	16.8
Due to better pay and conditions	299	31.9
Due to lack of work in home country	214	22.8
To learn English	120	12.8
Other reason	52	5.5
N =	937	

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

As Table 5.3 shows, the majority of non-British nationals (66.7%) currently working in the UK arrived in the country, on this occasion, within the last eight years.

**Table 5.3: 'In what year did you come to the UK, this time?'**

	Frequency	%
Before 1990	38	4.1
1990 to 1995	46	5
1996 to 2000	89	9.6
2001 to 2005	136	14.7
2006 to 2010	254	27.4
2011 to 2014	364	39.3
Total	927	100

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

The average intended length of stay in the UK for non-British nationals is 24.6 years. This is almost half the value of the average length of stay in the 2010 survey (40 years) despite the range of responses being almost the same (0 to 100 years). Half of respondents to this question intend to stay within the UK for ten years or fewer, while over a third (35.1%) plan to stay for five years or fewer.

## 5.5 Working within or outside the profession

The overwhelming majority (95.2%) of VSs who are currently in work are, at present, employed within the veterinary profession.

**Table 5.4: ‘In your main employment are you working within or outside the veterinary profession?’**

	Frequency	%
Within the profession	5,628	95.2
Outside the profession	285	4.8
Total	5,913	100

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Among those VSs currently working within the veterinary profession, the large majority (82%) are employed in a clinical veterinary practice.

**Table 5.5: Do you work in a clinical veterinary practice?**

	Frequency	%
Yes	4,550	82
No	996	18
Total	5,546	100

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*



## 6 Working outside the Profession

This chapter of the report provides information about the 285 respondents (4.8%) currently working outside the veterinary profession. The definition of 'working outside the profession' is any role that does not require a veterinary qualification or use of veterinary skills.

### 6.1 Chapter summary

- Five per cent of respondents currently in work are working outside the veterinary profession.
- The majority of this sample (68.2%) is employed in non-animal-related organisations.
- Over half (56.7%) are working in the private sector.
- A quarter of respondents currently working outside the profession are considering a return to veterinary-related work in the future.

### 6.2 Type of organisation

Table 6.1 shows that among those qualified VSs who are currently working outside of the veterinary profession, the majority (68.2%) are working within non-animal-related organisations.

**Table 6.1: 'Is the organisation in which you work animal-related or non-animal-related?'**

	Frequency	%
Animal-related	88	31.8
Non-animal-related	189	68.2
Total	277	100

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

When respondents were asked to specify the nature of the organisation that they work in, using standard sectoral classifications, just over 17 per cent stated that they work in organisations that provide professional, scientific and technical services. Nearly a fifth

of respondents (19%) said that they work in organisations that provided other services than those listed in the survey.

**Table 6.2: 'What is the nature of your organisation?'**

	Frequency	%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	32	11.6
Production	7	2.5
Construction	4	1.5
Wholesale and retail trade	13	4.7
Transport and storage	4	1.5
Hotels and restaurants	10	3.6
Financial and insurance	10	3.6
Professional, scientific and technical	47	17.1
Other business services	12	4.4
Public administration and defence	9	3.3
Education	35	12.7
Human health and social work activities	39	14.2
Other services	53	19.3
Total	275	100

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

As Table 6.3 indicates, the majority (56.7%) of qualified VSs currently working outside the profession are employed in the private sector, whereas just over a quarter of respondents are currently working within the public sector.

**Table 6.3: Sector of organisation**

	Frequency	%
The private sector	156	56.7
The public sector	70	25.5
The third sector (charities)	49	17.8
Total	275	100

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

### 6.3 Ever worked in the profession?

The overwhelming majority (93.6%) of respondents currently working outside the veterinary profession had at some time over the course of their career undertaken veterinary-related work.

**Table 6.4: 'Have you ever worked within the veterinary profession?'**

	Frequency	%
Yes	262	93.6
No	18	6.4
Total	280	100

Source: VS Survey, 2014

Of this number, a significant minority (43.2%) worked within the veterinary profession for up to ten years, while over a quarter undertook veterinary-related work for between 11 and 20 years. With regard to the type of work respondents were engaged in while working within the veterinary profession, the large majority (79.3%) had worked within a clinical practice.

Among those respondents who had never worked within the veterinary profession (N = 18), the most common reasons provided for not doing so included finding it difficult to find veterinary work as a recent graduate and/or a foreign national with no (UK) work experience, deciding to pursue a career in academic research, or taking a role in the human healthcare sector.

## 6.4 Lost to profession?

Roughly half of respondents currently working outside the veterinary profession do not intend to seek employment in the veterinary profession in future; this figure has not changed since the 2010 survey. Almost a quarter of respondents (24%), meanwhile, have yet to decide whether they will re-enter the profession. This percentage has decreased since the previous survey, where 33 per cent were unsure of their intentions.

The proportion of respondents currently working outside the profession who are intending to look for veterinary work within the next year, meanwhile, has increased since 2010, with 16.5 per cent of respondents now intending to do so, compared to nine per cent in the previous survey. The share of respondents intending to seek veterinary work within the profession in the longer term has also risen (from 7% to 9%), albeit more marginally.

**Table 6.5: 'Do you intend to seek employment in the veterinary profession in future?'**

	Frequency	%
Yes, within the next year	46	16.5
Yes, longer term	26	9.3
No	139	49.8
Unsure	68	24.4
Total	279	100

Source: VS Survey, 2014



## 7 Working within the Profession

This chapter focuses on the 95 per cent of respondents ( $N = 5,628$ ) currently working within the veterinary profession. Working 'within the profession' includes any role using a veterinary qualification, paid or unpaid. The main body of the chapter focuses on VSs working within the profession in the UK ( $N = 4,656$ ), although a summary of the average hours worked among VSs employed in other countries ( $N = 827$ ) is also provided for comparative purposes (see section 7.5).

It is important to note that the findings from previous surveys referenced throughout this section concern all VSs currently working within the profession (i.e. both those practising within the UK and overseas). As a result, the comparisons with previous years that are presented should be interpreted with caution, given that overseas VSs consistently report working longer hours, on average, per week (including overtime but excluding on-call time), which may account for higher overall averages in the 2010 and 2006 surveys.

### 7.1 Chapter summary

- Eighty-five per cent of respondents currently working within the veterinary profession in the UK are engaged in clinical practice work.
- Almost half (48%) of respondents consider their main employment to be in small/exotic animal practices.
- VSs working in mixed practices, small animal/exotic practices and equine practices work the longest hours on average per week (over 40 hours) across all practice areas.
- The highest on-call hours, away from respondents' place of work, were found in practice, particularly in the areas of equine, mixed practice and farm/production animal practice work.
- The majority of respondents receive training or CPD support (84.5%), personal indemnity insurance (60%), no or reduced vet fees (55.2%) and uniform or work clothing (52%) from their employer.
- Eighty-three per cent of UK-practising VSs indicated that they plan to continue working within the profession for the foreseeable future.

- The most frequently cited reason provided by respondents planning to leave the profession, other than retirement (9.3%), was dissatisfaction with veterinary work.

## 7.2 Type of practice employed in

The vast majority of VSs working within the profession in the UK (84.8%) are undertaking clinical practice work.

Table 7.1 provides a breakdown of the different types of organisation that respondents work in. Over half of those VSs currently working within the profession in the UK are employed in small animal/exotic practices (54%), while 16 per cent of respondents work in mixed animal practices and eight per cent are employed in referral practices/consultancies. These results, in terms of ranking, are in line with the 2010 survey findings, although the proportion of VSs who reported working in small animal/exotic practices has visibly increased (from 49 to 54 per cent), while the proportion working in mixed practices has decreased by six per cent (from 22 to 16 per cent).

Outside clinical practices, the most common type of organisation that respondents are employed in are veterinary schools, charities and trusts and commerce and industry, in that order.

**Table 7.1: Type of organisation employed in (% of number of respondents)**

Type of organisation	2014	2010
Mixed practice	15.8	22.1
Small animal/exotic practice	53.6	48.9
Equine practice	5.5	7.6
Farm practice/production animal practice	3.7	3.8
Other first opinion practice	0.9	1
Referral practice/consultancy	8.1	6.7
DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)	0.5	1.6
Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA)	2.4	2.4
Other UK government	2.5	3.6
Overseas government	0.1	1.6
Veterinary school	7.2	5.9
Other university/educational establishment	2.2	1.2
Commerce and industry	4	3.9
Charities and trusts	4.2	2.7
Research Council	0.2	0.2
Other	2.3	2.3
N =	4,654	

*Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category*  
*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Table 7.2 shows the **main** area of employment for VSs working within the profession in the UK. It shows that almost half of VSs (48%) consider their main employment to be in small animal/exotic practices, a slightly higher proportion than in 2010 (45.8%). Outside clinical practice employment, seven per cent of respondents work mainly within veterinary schools; this proportion has also increased since the last survey (where it stood at 5%).

**Table 7.2: Main area of employment**

Type of organisation	2014 (%)	2010 (%)
Mixed practice	14.1	22.1
Small animal/exotic practice	47.9	45.8
Equine practice	4.6	5.9
Farm practice/production animal practice	3.2	2.8
Other first opinion practice	0.5	0.5
Referral practice/consultancy	5.2	3.7
DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)	0.4	1.2
Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA)	1.9	2.1
Other UK government	2	3.3
Overseas government	1.9	1.3
Veterinary school	6.8	4.6
Other university/educational establishment	1.8	0.7
Commerce and industry	4.1	3.1
Charities and trusts	2.8	1.5
Research Council	0.1	0.1
Other	2.6	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,584</b>	<b>6,783</b>

Source: VS Survey, 2014

### 7.3 Hours of work and overtime

Respondents in a full-time role within the profession in the UK work, on average, 44 hours per week. This is a slightly lower value than in 2010 (45 hours). Those working in a part-time role work an average of 24 hours per week. A small number of respondents were currently undertaking voluntary work within the profession in the UK (N = 15); among this group, the average working week was 22 hours.

With regard to the amount of overtime that respondents worked in the month prior to the survey (or in a typical month, if the preceding one had been unusual), the average amount of overtime worked by full-time VSs was 16 hours, while among part-time VSs the average was seven hours. These values are far lower than those found in the previous survey (23 hours for full-time workers, and 13 hours for part-time workers),

although the working hours of non-UK practising VSs were included in this estimate (see section 7.5 for the findings for VSs working within the profession overseas). Respondents working within a voluntary role within the profession worked the most amount of overtime, on average, during the month prior to the survey: 43 hours.

VSs aged between 20 and 29 work longer hours per week, on average, than respondents in older age categories (43.6 hours), and a greater amount of overtime per month (17.6 hours). This is in line with the results presented in Table 3.1, which showed that respondents in full-time employment had a younger average age than those in part-time and voluntary roles.

On average, male respondents currently employed within the veterinary profession work a greater number of hours per week, excluding overtime, than female respondents: 41.6 hours compared to 37.9 hours. This is due to far larger proportion of females undertaking part-time work within the profession (three-quarters of those working part-time are female). There are no substantial differences in terms of the average number of hours worked between part-time male and female workers, and full-time male and female workers.

Of those respondents who indicated that they were required to be on-call and present on the premises, the overwhelming majority (92.5%) said they were normally asleep when not working and 7.5 per cent said they are awake all night (Table 7.3). In 2010, 94.5 per cent were normally asleep when not working and 5.5 per cent were awake all night.

**Table 7.3: 'If you have indicated you are required to be on-call and present are you normally:'**

	Frequency	%
Awake all night	169	7.5
Asleep when not working	2,099	92.5
Total	2,268	100

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 7.4 Hours of work by practice

Respondents to the survey were asked to specify the hours that they work in a typical week (including overtime but excluding time spent on-call) in different areas of practice. The results show that VSs working in mixed practices, small animal/exotic practices and equine practices work the longest hours on average per week (including overtime but excluding on-call time) across all practice areas (i.e. over 40 hours). As Table 7.4 shows, these findings are largely consistent with the results of the 2010 and 2006 surveys, although average hours have decreased in every category since 2010, following a rise between 2006 and 2010.

**Table 7.4: Average hours worked in a typical week by different areas of practice**

Type of practice	Hours worked 2014 (UK VSs)	Hours worked 2010 (UK & overseas)	Hours worked 2006 (UK & overseas)
Mixed practice	41.0	45.3	44.4
Small animal/exotic practice	40.9	43.9	43.2
Equine practice	40.4	46.1	41.3
Farm practice/production animal practice	37.4	41	35.8
Other first opinion practice	33.5	33.8	33.9
Referral practice/consultancy	34.8	36.5	30.6

*Source: VS Survey, 2014, 2010 and 2006*

With regard to qualified VSs working within other areas of the profession, respondents working in veterinary schools and in other UK government agencies work the longest hours on average during a typical week (39.3 hours in both instances); again, these results are mostly consistent with the findings from the 2010 survey, although average hours in two categories – veterinary schools and commerce/industry – have fallen noticeably since 2010.

**Table 7.5: Average hours worked in a typical week by different types of organisation**

Type of organisation	Hours worked 2014 (UK VSs)	Hours worked 2010 (UK & overseas)	Hours worked 2006 (UK & overseas)
DEFRA	32.6	30.7	No comparable data available
AHVLA	36.6	35.2	No comparable data available
Other UK government	39.3	39.6	No comparable data available
Veterinary school	39.3	45.8	45.7
Other university/educational establishment	33.4	32.4	36.5
Commerce and industry	31.8	40	39
Charities and trusts	29.2	27.6	31.9
Research Council	31.0	28.8	33.8
Other	28.4	No comparable data available	No comparable data available

*Source: VS Survey, 2014, 2010 and 2006*

Respondents were also asked to provide the number of hours that they are required to be on-call both while they are attending and when they are away from their work premises. The highest on-call hours, away from respondents' place of work, were found in practice, particularly in the areas of equine, mixed practice and

farm/production animal practice work; Table 7.6 shows that these findings reflect those of the 2010 survey.

The balance of on call on and off the premises has changed between 2010 and 2014. On call on the premises has increased noticeably in every practice type, apart from 'farm and production animal practices', while on call off the premises has decreased in every practice type.

**Table 7.6: Average hours on-call in a typical week by different areas of practice**

Type of practice	On-call (off premises) 2014	On-call (on premises) 2014	On-call (off premises) 2010	On-call (on premises) 2010
Mixed practice	20.2	3.8	29.3	2.2
Small animal/exotic practice	6.6	3.1	12.7	2.3
Equine practice	23.2	9.4	36.1	3
Farm practice/production animal practice	18.7	1.3	25.4	1.7
Other first opinion practice	6.9	11.8	9	9.8
Referral practice/consultancy	13.4	3.5	22	2.8

Note: Outliers at or above the range of 100 hours have been excluded from this analysis, and figures based on less than 10 responses have been suppressed.

*Source: VS Survey, 2014 and 2010*

Table 7.7 shows that respondents working for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) are required to spend the most amount of time, on average, on-call away from their work premises compared to VSs working in the other main areas of employment within the profession (an average of almost 8.5 hours per week).

**Table 7.7: Average hours on-call in a typical week by different types of organisation**

Type of organisation	On-call (off premises) 2014	On-call (on premises) 2014
DEFRA	8.4	1.4
AHVLA	6.9	1.1
Other UK government	4.5	5
Veterinary school	7.6	2
Other university	2.5	0.7
Commerce and industry	4.3	2.5
Charities and trusts	6.5	2.5
Research Council	-	-
Other	4.3	1

Note: Outliers at or above the range of 100 hours have been excluded from this analysis, and figures based on less than 10 responses have been suppressed.

## 7.5 Hours of work (overseas VSs)

VSs working within the profession overseas in a full-time position had an average basic working week of 43 hours, while those working part-time had an average working week of 27 hours. Among those undertaking voluntary work within the profession outside the UK (N = 13) the average working week was 43 hours; this is almost twice the average working week of VSs undertaking voluntary work within the UK, which stands at 22 hours.

Regarding the amount of overtime worked in the month prior to the survey, respondents engaged in full-time employment overseas worked, on average, 21 hours' overtime, whereas those in part-time employment worked nine hours' overtime. These mean values are higher than for UK practising VSs, particularly those working within a full-time position who worked, on average, five fewer hours of overtime during the previous month. Respondents engaged in a voluntary overseas role worked 30 hours' overtime. This is 13 hours fewer than the average amount of overtime worked by UK-based VSs engaged in voluntary work, although the number of VSs undertaking such work overseas and in the UK is small in both instances.

Table 7.8 and Table 7.9 show the average amount of hours worked and spent on-call by the different types of practices/organisations that respondents work in. Compared to UK-practising VSs, VSs working overseas in mixed, equine and farm/production animal practices reported working more hours, on average, during a typical week; in the case of mixed and farm/production animal practices, VSs working overseas in these practice areas work six hours more, on average, during a typical week than UK-practising VSs working in these areas.

Regarding the amount of time that VSs working overseas are required to be on-call when they are away from their work premises, as for UK-practising VSs, VSs working in the areas equine, mixed practice and farm/production animal practice work spend the greatest number of hours on-call across all practice areas. However, the average amount of time that overseas VSs are required to be on-call away from their work premises in each of these practice areas is greater than for UK-practising VSs; in the area of mixed animal practice work, for instance, overseas VSs are required to spend, on average, 7.2 hours more of their time on-call compared to VSs working within the UK.

The average amount of time that overseas VSs are required to be on-call while attending their work premises has risen across nearly all practice areas since 2010; the same trend was evident among UK-practising VSs.

**Table 7.8: Average hours per week worked and on-call by different areas of practice**

	Hours worked	On-call (off premises)	On-call (on premises)
Mixed practice	46.6	27.4	12.9
Small animal/exotic practice	38	10.8	7.2
Equine practice	42.4	27.7	13.5
Farm practice/production animal practice	42.8	25	9.4
Other first opinion practice	-	-	-
Referral practice/consultancy	30.2	7.8	6.5

Note: Outliers at or above the range of 100 hours have been excluded from this analysis, and figures based on less than 10 responses have been suppressed.

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

With regard to VSs working overseas in other areas of the profession, respondents employed in veterinary schools work the longest hours, on average, during a typical week (46.4 hours); this is followed by those working for overseas governments (37.8 hours) and for commerce and industry (37.4 hours). The largest differences in the average hours that UK and non-UK practising surgeons work across these areas is between respondents working in charities and trusts (overseas VSs work, on average, 8 ½ fewer hours per week) and veterinary schools and commerce and industry (overseas VSs work, on average, seven hours more per week).

VSs working in veterinary schools are required to spend the most amount of time on-call away from their respective work premises each week (an average of ten hours).

**Table 7.9: Average hours per week worked and on-call by different types of organisation**

	Hours worked	On-call (off premises)	On-call (on premises)
Overseas government	37.8	8.1	4.6
Veterinary School	46.4	10	10.5
Other university/educational establishment	29.7	2.2	0
Commerce and industry	37.4	0.6	1.7
Charities and trusts	20.7	1.9	1.5
Other	32.6	3.6	3.8

Note: Outliers at or above the range of 100 hours have been excluded from this analysis, and figures based on less than 10 responses have been suppressed.

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

## 7.6 Employer benefits

Respondents were asked whether their practice provided them with certain provisions or benefits. Table 7.10 shows that the vast majority of respondents (84.5%) received training or CPD support (in terms of time or financial support) from their employer. Over half of UK practising VSs also received personal indemnity insurance (60%), no or reduced pet fees (55.2%) and uniform or work clothing (52%). These proportions have all increased since the 2010 survey. However, a slightly smaller number of respondents now report receiving accommodation and health insurance from their employer.

**Table 7.10: 'Does your employer provide you with the following?' (% of number of respondents)**

	2014	2010
Accommodation	11.5	14
Health insurance	18.1	15
Uniform/work clothing	52	42
Pension	31	-
Car	19.5	23
No/reduced vet fees	55.2	49.5
Free/reduced pet insurance	1.8	-
Training/CPD support (time and/or cost)	84.5	71
RCVS retention fees paid (whole or part)	48.9	39
Professional subscriptions (eg BVA)	35.8	32
Professional indemnity insurance	60	54
Membership of a technical/scientific library	13.8	-
Access to scientific literature and research papers	27.8	-
Other	2.9	-
N =	3,858	

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

## 7.7 Career intentions

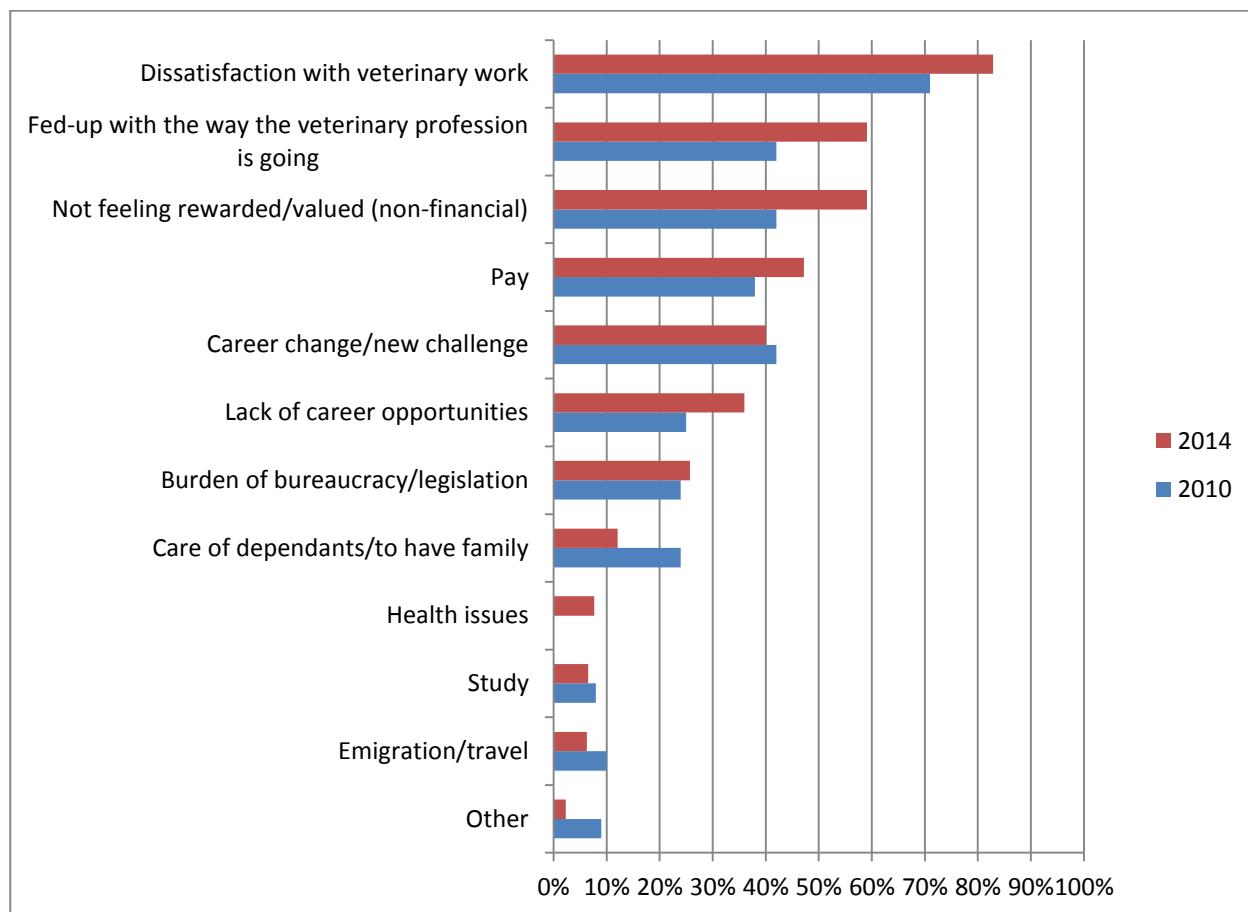
When asked about their future career plans, the majority of UK-practising VSs who responded to the survey (83%) indicated that they plan to stay in the profession for the foreseeable future, while 9.3 per cent of respondents stated that they are planning to leave the profession for reasons other than retirement, either as soon as possible or within the next one to five years. As Table 7.11 shows, these findings are broadly in line with the results of the 2010 survey.

**Table 7.11: Career plans of UK VVs currently working within the profession**

	2014 (%)	2010 (%)
Stay in the profession for the foreseeable future	82.9	84
Fully retire within the next year	1.1	1.4
Fully retire within the next five years	6.8	6.6
Leave the profession as soon as possible (non-retirement)	1.6	1.1
Leave the profession within the next year (non-retirement)	1.2	1.2
Leave the profession within the next five years (non-retirement)	6.5	5.6

*Source: VS Survey, 2014 and 2010*

Respondents who indicated that they intend to leave the profession for non-retirement reasons were asked to specify what these were using a list of options derived from the 2010 survey, which included an 'other' reason category; these are presented in Figure 7.1. It is clear that dissatisfaction with veterinary work (e.g. working hours, stress) is the most commonly cited reason for planning to leave the profession. Other reasons provided by the majority of this sample included being 'fed up with the way the veterinary profession is going' and not feeling that their work is adequately rewarded or valued in non-financial terms. As Figure 7.1 shows, these results broadly reflect the findings from the 2010 survey, although the top three reasons provided by respondents for planning to leave in both surveys are now even more commonly cited than they were previously.

**Figure 7.1: Reason(s) for planning to leave profession**

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category

Source: VS Survey, 2014 and 2010



## 8 Working within Clinical Veterinary Practice

This chapter of the report concentrates on the 3,896 respondents currently engaged in clinical veterinary work within the UK (84.8% of those working within the profession in the current survey). Comparisons with previous surveys presented in this chapter should be interpreted with caution as previous survey findings included non-UK-practising VSs.

### 8.1 Chapter summary

- Fifty-seven per cent of respondents currently engaged in clinical practice work in the UK hold the position of either a full-time or part-time assistant.
- The average (median) number of VSs per practice was four, while the average (median) number of VNs per practice was five.
- Fifty per cent of VSs carry out work in the special interest areas of internal medicine (57.6%), soft tissue surgery (57.2%) and diagnostic imaging (52.7%).
- VSs in practice spend a large share of their working time (76.8% of their working hours) on treating small animals, particularly cats and dogs.
- Over half (56.2%) of respondents stated that their practice covers its own out-of-hours work, while 64.5 per cent personally engage in out-of-hours work.
- The average (median) number of emergency cases that respondents dealt with out-of-hours at their place of work was 40, while the average (median) number of cases that respondents dealt with away from practice was 10.
- Half of the respondents currently working in a UK clinical practice manage to have a minimum rest period of 11 hours in each 24-hour period.
- Of the 50 per cent of respondents who do not have an 11-hour rest period, 9.5 per cent have signed up to a workforce agreement that provides other compensatory rest.
- Eighty-six per cent of UK-practising VSs reported that they have at least two rest days in every 14-day period, while a similar proportion (87%) take at least 20 days' paid holiday each year (plus bank holidays).

## 8.2 Position in practice

As Table 8.1 shows, over half of those respondents currently working in a clinical practice (57%) hold the position of either a full-time or part-time assistant, the same proportion as in the last survey. The proportion of VSs working as equity partners, meanwhile, has more than halved since the 2010 survey.

The results also show that the proportion of VSs working as sole principals within their respective practices has steadily declined since 2006 (from 11% in 2006 to 5% in 2014), while the number of VSs that hold the position of director has seen a slight increase on previous years.

**Table 8.1: Position in Practice**

Position	2014 (%)	2010 (%)	2006 (%)
Assistant (or employee of limited company)	57	57	51
Equity Partner	6	13	No data available
Director	13	9	10
Sole Principal	5	8	11
Locum	8	6	6
Salaried Partner	2	2	2
Consultant	3	2	1
Vet working as a veterinary nurse	0.2	No data available	No data available
Other	4	3	2

*Source: VS Survey 2014, 2010 and 2006*

With regard to the gender of VSs and the position they hold, a greater proportion of males work as directors and equity partners compared to female VSs; a far larger share of UK-practising female VSs work either as full-time or part-time assistants. This reflects, at least to some extent, the differing age profiles of male and female VSs. However, compared to the results of the 2010 survey, the proportion of female respondents working as Directors has increased (from 4.9% to 6.5%).

Fifteen per cent of UK-practising VSs are currently working in more than one practice. Of this number, the majority (72.7%) are working across two to three practices. Over half of those VSs currently working as locums (56.1%) work across more than one practice, while almost a quarter of consultants do so (24.4%).

**Table 8.2: Position in practice by gender**

Position	Male	Female
Sole Principal	7.6	3.1
Director (of limited company)	24.5	6.5
Equity Partner	11.8	2.8
Salaried Partner	2.9	1.4
Assistant (or employee of limited company)	36.2	70.7
Consultant	5.1	2.2
Locum	8.1	8.5
Vet working as a veterinary nurse	0.1	0.3
Other	3.7	4.5

Source: VS Survey, 2014

### 8.3 Size of practice

VSS currently undertaking clinical practice work in organisations of varying sizes: some respondents were the only full-time VS in their workplace, while others worked alongside over 100 other full-time equivalent VSSs and VNs.

The average number of VSSs per practice was seven, although the average is distorted by the small number of very large veterinary practices; 50 per cent of respondents worked alongside four or fewer other full-time equivalent VSSs. Likewise, respondents worked with seven and a half full-time equivalent VNs in their practice, on average, while half of the sample worked with five or fewer.

**Table 8.3: Average number of full-time equivalent VSSs in a practice**

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
3,486	1	100	7.1	4

Source: VS Survey, 2014

**Table 8.4: Average number of full-time equivalent VNs in a practice**

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
3,184	0	120	7.5	5

Source: VS Survey, 2014

### 8.4 Special interest areas

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they personally carry out work in any special interest areas. While respondents reported undertaking work in a broad range

of the interest areas listed, over 50 per cent of VSs carry out work in the areas of internal medicine (57.6%), soft tissue surgery (57.2%) and diagnostic imaging (52.7%).

**Table 8.5: 'Do you personally carry out work in any of the following areas of particular interest?'**

Area of interest	Frequency	% of number of respondents
Anaesthesia	1,438	49
Avian medicine	350	11.9
Cardiology	1,075	36.7
Dentistry	1,368	46.6
Dermatology	1,325	45.2
Diagnostic imaging	1,546	52.7
Exotics	698	23.8
Fish health/production	37	1.3
Food hygiene/safety	68	2.3
Health & Production	290	9.9
Internal medicine	1,689	57.6
Neurology	941	32.1
Oncology	958	32.7
Ophthalmology	1,103	37.6
Orthopaedic surgery	756	25.8
Pathology	321	10.9
Public Health	138	4.7
Reproduction	750	25.6
Soft tissue surgery	1,679	57.2
Other	384	13.1
N =	2,933	

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

## 8.5 Allocation of work hours

Table 8.6 provides a breakdown of the average proportion of respondents' working time that is spent on different animals and other practice activities, compared across previous surveys. The results show a steady increase in the proportion of time spent on dogs between 2006 and 2014, and on cats between 2010 and 2014.

Overall, the time spent on small animals continues to increase, and takes up the largest share of VSs' working time, on average; however, this is due entirely to the time spent with dogs and cats rather than rabbits, birds and other small animals. In comparison, the amount of time VSs spend working with various types of farm animals is quite low,

and is either decreasing or has remained static over time; the decrease in time spent with cattle (beef or dairy) is noticeable.

**Table 8.6: Breakdown of working time now (mean percentages)**

Species/Discipline/Activity	2014	2010	2006	2002	2000
Dogs	39.7	35.7	33.5		
Cats	30.7	29.1	29.1		
Rabbits	4.2	4.7	4.8		
Birds	0.8	1	1.1		
Other small animals	1.4	1.8	1.6		
<b>Total small animals</b>	<b>76.8</b>	<b>72.3</b>	<b>70.1</b>	<b>73.5</b>	<b>68</b>
Horses	7.9	10	9.2	8.4	9
Beef cattle	1.9	2.7	3		
Dairy cattle	3.0	4.6	5.2		
Total cattle	4.9	7.2	8.2	7.5	9
Sheep	1.0	1.1	1.3	1.3	2
Pigs	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	1
Poultry	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.2	0
Exotics	0.7	0.7	0.6	1	1
Meat Hygiene	0.0	0.2	1.1	1.1	1
Fish for food	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0
Local Veterinary Inspector	1.9	2.3	2.7	2.7	2
Practice mgmt/admin	4.8	5.3	5	3	6
Other	1.0	0.7	0.8	0.4	1

Source: VS Survey, 2014, 2010, 2006, 2002 and 2000

These findings are reflected in Table 8.7**Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**, which shows that the average amount of on-call time respondents spend working with small animals has increased since 2010, while with regard to farm animals, in most cases, it has either decreased or remained the same.

Table 8.8 shows past, present and future working time predictions with various animal species and disciplines. In 2010 it was predicted that the amount of time spent with small animals, in particular with dogs, would decrease over the next five years. The results show, however, that the average amount of time spent working with dogs during a typical week has increased over this period. Respondents to the 2010 survey also predicted that the share of their time spent working with cattle would stay the same, while it has actually decreased.

**Table 8.7: Working time now compared to on-call time (mean percentages)**

Species/Discipline/Activity	Working time 2014	Working time 2010	On-call 2014	On-call 2010
Small animals	76.8	72.3	68.2	64
Horses	7.9	10	13.0	14.5
Cattle	4.9	7.2	10.0	12.4
Sheep	1.0	1.1	2.3	1.8
Pigs	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4
Poultry	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2
Exotics	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.4
Meat Hygiene	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0
Laboratory animals	0.3		0.5	
Fish for food	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
Local Veterinary Inspector	1.9	2.3	0.1	0.1
Practice management	4.8	5.3	1.9	1.6
Other	1.0	0.7	2.0	0.8

*Source: VS Survey, 2014 and 2010*

Table 8.8: Past, present and future working time predictions (mean percentages)

Species/Discipline/Activity	2006 (actual)	2010 (actual)	2014 (actual)	2015 (2010 prediction)	2019 (2014 prediction)	2010 predicted trend	Actual trend
Dogs	33.5	35.7	39.7	33.1	37.0	▼	▲
Cats	29.1	29.1	30.7	28.9	30.0	▼	▲
Rabbits	4.8	4.7	4.2	4.9	4.0	▲	▼
Birds	1.1	1	0.8	1	0.8	Same	▼
Other small animals	1.6	1.8	1.4	1.6	1.4	▼	▼
<b>Total small animals</b>	<b>70.1</b>	<b>72.3</b>	<b>76.8</b>	<b>69.5</b>	<b>73.2</b>	<b>▼</b>	<b>▲</b>
Horses	9.2	10	7.9	11	8.6	▲	▼
Beef cattle	3	2.7	1.9	2.6	2.0	Same	▼
Dairy cattle	5.2	4.6	3.0	4.8	3.3	▲	▼
<b>Total cattle</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>Same</b>	<b>▼</b>
Sheep	1.3	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.1	Same	Same
Pigs	0.5	0.5	0.5	4	0.4	▲	Same
Poultry	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	Same	Same
Exotics	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.9	▲	Same
Meat Hygiene	1.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	Same	▼
Laboratory animals			0.3		0.2		
Fish for food	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	Same	Same
Local Veterinary Inspector	2.7	2.3	1.9	1.5	0.9	▼	▼
Practice mgmt/admin	5	5.3	4.8	6.4	6.2	▲	▼
Other	0.8	0.7	1.0	1.1	3.1	▲	▲

## 8.6 Routine visits

The majority of UK-practising VSs who responded to the survey (65.2%) personally carry out routine (not out-of-hours) visits to their clients. Among this number, the average one-way distance that VSs travel to a routine call is roughly seven and a half miles, although 50 per cent of respondents stated that they routinely travel five miles or less. Compared to previous surveys, the average distance travelled has decreased among survey respondents (in 2006 and 2010, the average distance travelled to a routine call was 8.2 and 8.3 miles, respectively).

For respondents who indicated that their main employment is in clinical practice (N = 3,650), their responses to this question were broken down by the type of practice they are employed in. Table 8.9 shows that the vast majority of respondents whose main employment is in equine, farm and production, and mixed animal practice work, personally carry out routine visits to their clients.

**Table 8.9: Personal involvement in routine visits by type of practice employment**

Type of practice employment	Yes (%)	No (%)
Mixed practice	85.5	14.5
Small animal/exotic practice	68.7	31.3
Equine practice	90.1	9.9
Farm practice/Production animal practice	87.7	12.3
Other first opinion practice	33.3	66.7
Referral practice/consultancy	11.3	88.7

Note: The values presented are row percentages, which each sum to 100%

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

The average maximum one-way distance that respondents who personally visit clients have travelled to a routine call is 23.1 miles, although 50 per cent of the sample reported travelling a maximum distance of 15 miles or less.

These values are again lower than in previous surveys. In 2010, respondents travelled an average maximum distance of 25.7 miles, while 50 per cent of the sample travelled 20 miles or fewer. In 2006, meanwhile, respondents travelled an average maximum distance of 24.2 miles, with a median distance of 19 miles.

Table 8.10 again provides these figures by the type of practice respondents are employed in; it shows that respondents who mainly work in farm and production practices or in equine practices travel the furthest average distances to routine calls. Regarding the maximum average distance that respondents had travelled to a routine call, again VSs working mainly in farm and production practices or equine practices

reported travelling the furthest distances. The maximum distance travelled by 50 per cent of respondents (i.e. the median value) working in equine practices was 40 miles or less, while for 50 per cent of those mainly engaged in farm and production animal work the maximum distance was 35 miles or less.

**Table 8.10: Distance travelled to a routine call (one-way) by type of practice employment**

Type of practice employment	Mean typical distance	Median typical distance	Mean maximum distance	Median maximum distance
Mixed practice	9.1	8	28.2	25
Small animal/exotic practice	4.8	5	14.7	12
Equine practice	15.8	15	108.2	40
Farm practice/Production animal practice	17.7	12	146.7	35
Referral practice/consultancy	11.6	10	70.9	20

Note: Figures based on less than 10 responses have been suppressed.

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 8.7 Out-of-hours work and 24/7 emergency cover

Fewer than ten per cent of respondents (9.1%) currently undertaking clinical practice work in the UK are based primarily at a dedicated out-of-hours service provider; this compares with 16 per cent of VSs working overseas.

**Table 8.11: Practice approach to providing 24/7 emergency cover**

Approach to providing emergency cover	2014 (%)	2010 (%)
Practice covers its own out-of-hours work	56.2	60.5
Practice covers its out-of-hours work with the help of a locum	0.7	1
Practice uses a dedicated out-of-hours service provider	34.7	25.6
Practice cooperates with other local practices	4.2	5.8
Other	4.2	3.9

Note: 2010 figures do not sum to 100% as question included two additional categories

Source: VS Survey, 2014

Those respondents who do not primarily work at such a provider (91%) were asked to describe their practice's approach to providing 24/7 cover. Over half (56.2%) stated that their practice covers its own out-of-hours work, a lower proportion than in 2010 (60.5%). A larger share of respondents reported that their practice utilises a dedicated

out-of-hours service provider for 24/7 cover than in the previous survey (34.7% compared to 25.6% in 2010).

These figures are not substantially different for VSs undertaking clinical practice work overseas, although dedicated out-of-hours providers appeared to be less utilised in other countries and a higher proportion of VSs reported that their practice tends to share out-of-hours work with other local practices.

Regarding any out-of-hours work that respondents personally engage in, 64.5 per cent of the sample stated that they do undertake such work either on an evening, during the night or on a weekend; this proportion has decreased slightly since the last survey (66% of respondents in 2010). The 2010 survey analysis also included those VSs working overseas, however; in the current survey, a higher proportion of VSs working outside the UK (74%) reported that they do personally engage in out-of-hours work. The majority of UK based respondents that reported undertaking some form of out-of-hours work (72.1%) stated that this work includes visits to their clients.

On average, respondents report undertaking out-of-hours work on behalf of 8.35 full-time-equivalent VSs. This is slightly higher than in 2010 (when the average was 7 full-time equivalent VSs), although there is a greater disparity in the range of responses provided this time round (responses range from 0 to 500 in 2014 compared to 0 to 200 in 2010). A better indication of the typical situation for many VSs undertaking out-of-hours work is provided by the median value: this shows that half of the sample provide cover for five full-time equivalent VSs or less.

Respondents engaging in out-of-hours work were also asked to provide the average and the maximum one-way distance that they travel to an out-of-hours call. On average, respondents reported travelling an average of 9.4 miles to an out-of-hours call, although 50 per cent of the sample travelled eight miles or less.

The average maximum distance travelled by respondents to an out-of-hours call was 25.3 miles and the median value was 20 miles. This is slightly less than in previous years where respondents reported travelling an average maximum one-way distance of 28.5 miles to out-of-hours calls.

Table 8.12 provides these figures by the type of practice respondents are employed in; it shows that respondents who work primarily in equine practices or in farm and production practices travel the furthest average distances to an out-of-hours call. These two sets of respondents also reported travelling the furthest maximum one-way distances to an out-of-hours call, on average.

**Table 8.12: Distance travelled to an out-of-hours call (one-way) by type of practice employment**

Type of practice employment	Mean typical distance	Median typical distance	Mean maximum distance	Median maximum distance
Mixed practice	10.3	10	28.8	25
Small animal/exotic practice	6.6	5	17.3	15
Equine practice	16.5	15	42.6	40
Farm practice/Production animal practice	16.1	15	47.3	39
Referral practice/consultancy	14.6	10	30.3	25

Note: Figures based on less than 10 responses have been suppressed.

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 8.8 Emergency cases and concerns for personal safety

Respondents to the 2014 RCVS survey were asked a series of new questions about the number of emergency cases they had dealt with out-of-hours during the past 12 months, and whether these cases have made them concerned for their personal safety.

Over the last 12 months of practice, on average, respondents dealt with 73.5 emergency cases out-of-hours at their workplace. However, this average is higher than the number that many VSs will have experienced, due to large differences in the answers provided by respondents (answers ranged from 1 to 3,000 cases).

A better indication of what VSs typically experience is provided by the median value: this shows that 50 per cent of respondents had dealt with 40 cases or less over the past year. In terms of the average number of emergency cases that respondents dealt with out-of-hours *away* from their practice over the past 12 months, the mean value was over 30, although 50 per cent of the sample had dealt with ten cases or fewer.

Respondents were asked to specify the number of times they had concerns for their personal safety during the past 12 months when dealing with emergency cases at the practice, away from the practice and at any other time (including daytime and out-of-hours work). In each instance, a large proportion of respondents (71-77%) reported no such concerns.

Among those who had had concerns for their personal safety when dealing with an emergency case at the practice (N = 749), 70 per cent indicated that they had encountered between one and two incidents. The majority of respondents who had personal safety concerns when dealing with emergency cases away from the practice (68.8%) and at any other time (61.6%) also reported that they had experienced between one and two such incidents over the previous 12 months.

VSs were subsequently asked whether there had been any incidents regarding their personal safety over the past 12 months that they had reported to the police when they were dealing with emergency cases either at the practice, away from the practice and/or at any other time. Again, in each instance, a large number of VSs stated that no such incidents had occurred. Among those respondents who had experienced such incidents while attending their practice (N = 74), 88 per cent stated that there had been one incident that they had reported to the police over the previous 12 months.

In relation to incidents concerning personal safety reported to the police when VSs were attending an emergency case away from their practice, 15 respondents (62.5% of those reporting such incidents) stated that there had been one occasion where this had happened, while seven respondents (29.2%) reported that there had been two such incidents. As these figures indicate, the actual number of VSs who reported any serious concerns was small (N = 24).

A larger number of respondents stated that they have had concerns for their personal safety at other times than those specified that they reported to the police over the past 12 months of practice (N = 119). Of these, 82.4 per cent (N = 98) reported one such incident.

## 8.9 Working time arrangements

As in the 2010 survey, half of the respondents currently working in a UK clinical practice manage to have a minimum rest period of 11 hours in each 24-hour period. Of the 50 per cent of respondents who do not have this rest period, 9.5 per cent have signed up to a workforce agreement that provides other compensatory rest.

This is a slightly lower proportion than in the previous survey, where 11.6 per cent of respondents who did not have the specified rest period every day had a workforce agreement in place. The majority of the sample (65%), however, has not signed such an agreement, while a quarter of respondents are unsure whether they have done so.

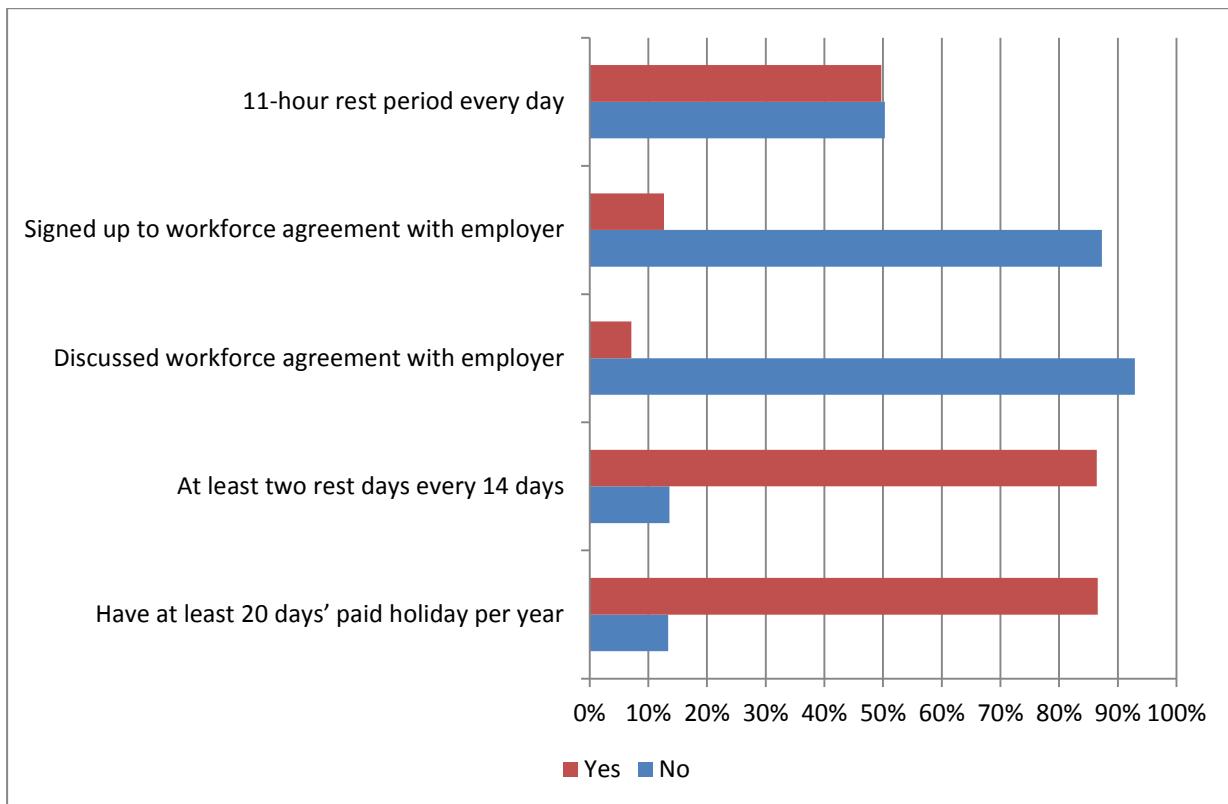
Just four per cent of respondents working in other countries who do not manage to have 11 hours' rest every day commented that they have a workforce agreement in place that provides other compensatory rest.

Among those respondents who do not have an 11-hour rest period every day and have not signed up to a workforce agreement with their employer, only 7.1 per cent have discussed a workforce agreement for compensatory rest with their employer. Again, this is a lower proportion than in 2010, when 12.7 per cent of the sample had discussed this type of agreement.

Eighty-six per cent of UK-practising VSs reported that they have at least two rest days in every 14-day period, while a similar proportion (87%) take at least 20 days' paid holiday each year (plus bank holidays); these proportions are relatively unchanged

from those reported in the 2010 survey. Lower proportions of VSs working overseas, meanwhile, have at least two rest days every two weeks (77%) and 20 days' paid holiday each year (67%).

**Figure 8.1: Respondents' rest periods and working time arrangements**



Note: Respondents who answered 'don't know' to the question, 'Have you signed up to a workforce agreement with your employer?' are excluded from this figure.

Source: VS Survey, 2014



## 9 Continuing Professional Development and Further Education

This chapter focuses on the engagement of respondents currently working within the veterinary profession in the UK in CPD activities and further education.

### 9.1 Chapter summary

- Just 14 per cent of respondents have not received any CPD away from the workplace over the past 12 months.
- Of those respondents who have made use of CPD provision methods over the past year, a large proportion (84.9%) has undertaken ad hoc, undocumented private study.
- Other popular CPD provision methods include attending lectures by external providers (77%) and engaging in distance learning via webinars (70%).
- On average, respondents who engaged in CPD in the past year stated that 47 per cent of this provision had been funded by their employer. Almost 30 per cent of their CPD had been undertaken at no cost.
- Eighteen per cent of respondents currently hold an RCVS Certificate. A further eleven per cent of respondents are currently studying for this qualification, while just over a fifth plan to study for an RCVS certificate within the next five years.
- Forty-four per cent of respondents are using the RCVS Professional Development Record to record their CPD online.

### 9.2 Days away from workplace

As in the previous survey, the majority of respondents (80%) have not been involved in delivering any CPD away from their place of work over the past year. Just 14 per cent of respondents have not received any CPD away from the workplace over the past 12 months, a slightly lower proportion than in 2010 (17%). The majority of respondents (63%) working within the profession did not report having any sick days over the past year, while the vast majority (88%) had not engaged in any veterinary politics.

Table 9.1 shows that the average number of days that respondents spend away from the workplace, according to the main reasons provided, has remained relatively stable

since the 2010 survey; the largest difference is in the number of days spent receiving CPD, which has increased by an average of one day.

**Table 9.1: Average (mean) days away from workplace by reason**

Reason for absence	2014	2010
CPD (giving)	1.2	1.1
CPD (receiving)	5.9	4.9
Holidays	21.1	21.1
Veterinary politics	0.7	0.8
Illness	2.3	2.4
Parental leave	5.5	4.8
Compassionate leave	0.3	0.3
Caring for dependants	0.4	0.3
Other activities	0.7	1.1

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Females spent a greater number of days, on average, on parental leave than males, while male respondents spent slightly more time on holiday and delivering CPD away from their place of work. In terms of age, as might be expected, respondents in older age categories spent more time on sick leave, on average, while younger respondents spent a greater amount of days on parental leave.

### 9.3 Further work-related qualifications

As Table 9.2 shows, a large proportion (44.4%) of respondents currently hold an additional qualification, other than their primary veterinary qualification. Over a fifth (21.1%) of respondents, meanwhile, are currently studying for further work related qualifications, while a third (33.1%) plan to study for an additional qualification over the next five years.

Of those respondents who currently hold another work related qualification, 18.4 per cent hold a RCVS certificate. A further 11.5 per cent of respondents are currently studying for an RCVS certificate, while 21 per cent plan to study for this qualification within the next five years.

**Table 9.2: Further work-related qualifications, other than primary veterinary (% of number of respondents)**

	Hold this qualification	Studying for this qualification	Plan to study for in next 5 years
Certificate (RCVS - modular or non-modular)	18.4	11.5	21.0
Diploma (RCVS, European or American College)	9.9	2.8	5.5
Fellowship (RCVS)	1.2	0.2	0.9
Master's degree (veterinary-related)	10.7	1.6	3.8
PhD or other professional doctorate	9.9	2.0	3.0
Specialist (RCVS, European or American College)	7.2	1.3	3.9
Other veterinary-related qualification	12.5	3.9	4.3
Any other qualification total	44.4	21.1	33.1
N =	3,171	3,171	3,171

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 9.4 CPD methods

Table 9.3 shows that, of those respondents who have made use of CPD provision methods over the past 12 months, a large proportion (84.9%) have undertaken ad hoc, undocumented private study. Other popular CPD provision methods include attending lectures by external providers (77%) and engaging in distance learning via webinars (70%).

Just over half the sample had also engaged in planned and documented private study/reading as part of their CPD during the past 12 months. On average, respondents reportedly spent 28 minutes a day reading veterinary literature.

**Table 9.3: 'Which of the following CPD provision methods have you used in the past 12 months?'**

	Frequency	% of number of respondents
Ad hoc, undocumented private study	3,574	84.9
Clinical audit activity	846	20.1
Discussion group - informal learning set	1,733	41.2
Distance learning - online/formal (assessed and/or moderated by a third party)	1,060	25.2
Distance learning - online/informal (not assessed)	1,381	32.8
Distance learning - webinar	2,946	70
Lecture by external provider	3,239	77
Mentoring or being mentored	985	23.4

	Frequency	% of number of respondents
Practical - clinical skills lab	586	13.9
Practical - wet lab	547	13
Preparing a new lecture/presentation	1,259	29.9
Project - working on a new project/in a new area of work	697	16.6
Reading - planned and documented private study/reading	2,150	51.1
Research - clinical	563	13.4
Research - scientific	415	9.9
Research - veterinary businesses	183	4.3
Secondment to another workplace	78	1.9
Seeing practice - work-based observation	398	9.5
Seminar/workshop - external	1,407	33.4
Studying for an external qualification	562	13.4
Training - in-house	1,706	40.5
Training as examiner/assessor	267	6.3
Other	93	2.2
N =	4,209	

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 9.5 CPD funding

On average, respondents who engaged in CPD in the past year stated that 47 per cent of this provision had been funded by their employer. Almost 30 per cent of their CPD had been undertaken at no cost (an average of 28%), whereas just under a fifth (18%) had been self-funded. Compared to the results of the 2010 survey, it appears that Vets working within the profession are now undertaking a greater proportion of their CPD free of charge, while the proportion that is funded by their employer, although still substantial, has declined. Considered alongside the fact that, as reported in Section 7.6 on Employer benefits, a higher proportion of respondents now report that they receive CPD support (in terms of time and/or cost) from their employer than in 2010, these results seem to suggest that employers are offering more support to their workforce to undertake CPD activities that are free of charge.

Table 9.4: Average percentage

Proportion of CPD funded	2014	2010
Free	28.3	17
Self-funded	18	21
Commercial sponsorship	4.7	5
Employer-funded	47	56
Grant funded	0.9	1
Other	0.8	1

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## 9.6 RCVS Professional Development Record

As Table 9.5 shows, 44 per cent of respondents are using the RCVS Professional Development Record to record their CPD online ([www.recv.or.uk/vetpdr](http://www.recv.or.uk/vetpdr)).

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**Table 9.5: ‘Are you using the RCVS Professional Development Record to record your CPD online?’**

	Frequency	%
Yes	1,860	44.1
No	2,358	55.9
Total	4,218	100

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*Source: VS Survey, 2014*



# 10 Electronic Communications and use of the Internet

This chapter of the report focuses on the use of electronic communications and the internet among all respondents to the RCVS survey.

## 10.1 Chapter summary

- Fifty per cent of respondents use smart phones or tablets for work purposes.
- The majority of respondents who use a tablet or smart phone for work purposes (59%) stated that, as part of these activities, they utilise application software.
- Twenty-eight per cent of respondents utilise Facebook for professional purposes. A further 19 per cent stated that they use the professional networking site LinkedIn.
- Ninety per cent of the VSs surveyed use the RCVS website. The majority of respondents (61.3%) will use the website just a few times over the course of a year.
- The majority of respondents (74.1%) stated that they would prefer to receive RCVS communications via email, while a quarter wanted to receive these communications by post.
- Forty-seven per cent of respondents stated that *RCVS News* is their best source of information about the Royal College, while a quarter identified the RCVS website as a good information source.

## 10.2 Use of smart phones and tablets

Half of the sample stated that they use smart phones or tablets for work purposes. The majority of respondents aged 50 or over, however, do not use such devices for work purposes.

Of those who use smart phones or tablets in their day to day work activities, the majority of respondents utilise an IOS phone (56%), while over a quarter use IOS tablets (28%) and Android phones (27%)

**Table 10.1: Type of phone/tablet used**

Type of phone/tablet used	Frequency	% of number of respondents
Android phone	604	27.3
Android tablet	148	6.7
IOS (Apple) phone	1241	56.1
IOS (Apple) tablet	621	28.1
Blackberry	127	5.7
Other	83	3.8
N =	2,213	

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category

Source: VS Survey, 2014

The majority of respondents who use a tablet or smart phone for work purposes (59%) stated that, as part of these activities, they utilise application software. Table 10.2 shows that, on average, respondents have downloaded three-and-three-quarter applications for professional purposes over the past 12 months.

**Table 10.2: Number of applications downloaded for professional purposes over the past 12 months**

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
1,291	0	250	3.75

Source: VS Survey, 2014

### 10.3 Use of the RCVS website

Ninety per cent of the VSs surveyed use the RCVS website. However, as Table 10.3 shows, the majority of respondents (61.3%) use the website just a few times over the course of a year. Around three per cent of respondents use the website 'frequently' (i.e. several times over the course of a week), while over a quarter (26%) will visit it 'occasionally' (i.e. a few times a month). Compared to the previous survey in 2010, a smaller proportion of respondents report that they never visit the RCVS website (9.9% compared to 25.2% in 2010). This finding should be treated with caution, however, as the 2014 survey was run entirely online, so participants might be somewhat more 'tech savvy' than in previous years when the survey was paper-based with an online option.

**Table 10.3: Frequency of visits to the RCVS website**

	2014	2010
Frequently (several times a week)	2.8	2.5
Occasionally (a few times a month)	26	20.8
Rarely (a few times over the year)	61.3	51.5
Never	9.9	25.2

Source: VS Survey, 2014 and 2010

Among those VSs that had used the RCVS website over the past 12 months, the majority (72%) have done so in order to either register or renew their RCVS membership. Other popular reasons for visiting the RCVS site cited by respondents included for information purposes (40%), to use 'Check the Register' (37%) and 'Find a Vet' (27%), to check the *Code of Professional Conduct* (26%) and to pay a fee (25%).

**Table 10.4: Reason(s) for using the RCVS website over the past 12 months**

Reason	Frequency	% of number of respondents
To register or renew my registration	2,891	71.7
To pay a fee	1,007	25
To read a news story	837	20.8
To use Find a Vet	1,080	26.8
To use Check the Register	1,481	36.7
To subscribe to RCVS e-News	105	2.6
To read a publication	339	8.4
To find some information	1,605	39.8
To check the Code of Professional Conduct and Supporting Guidance	1,052	26.1
Other	379	9.4
N =	4,032	

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 10.4 Use of social networking sites

Table 10.5 shows that by far the most popular social networking site that respondents regularly use is Facebook (63%), while 21 per cent also frequently visit YouTube. Well over a quarter (30%) of respondents do not use social networking sites.

**Table 10.5: 'Which of the following social networking sites do you use regularly?'**

	Frequency	% of number of respondents
I do not use social networking sites	1,262	28.7
Facebook	2,782	63.4
Twitter	474	10.8
Flickr	32	0.7
Pinterest	172	3.9
LinkedIn	622	14.2
Tumblr	24	0.5
Google +	367	8.4
YouTube	940	21.4
www.VSsurgeon.org	364	8.3
www.vetnurse.co.uk	15	0.3
BVA Community	125	2.8
Other	76	1.7
N =	4,391	

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Regarding the age of respondents, 94 per cent of those aged between 20 and 29 years have a Facebook account. As Table 10.6 demonstrates, the proportion of VSs who regularly use Facebook within each age category becomes gradually smaller as the age of the respondents increases, although even within the 60 to 69 age bracket, over a quarter (27%) still use the social networking site. Greater proportions of respondents within the youngest age categories also regularly visit the social networking sites YouTube and Twitter. However, LinkedIn and Google + are used more consistently across the age categories, with the greatest use of LinkedIn being among those in their 40s.

Survey respondents were also asked which social networking sites they use for professional purposes. Among those who responded to this question, 28 per cent utilise Facebook for professional purposes. A further 19 per cent of respondents stated that they use the professional networking site LinkedIn.

**Table 10.6: Use of social networking sites by age**

	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 to 95
I do not use social networking sites	4.5	17.5	38.4	53.3	57.3	63.5
Facebook	93.7	77.6	50.4	33.5	26.6	23.1
Twitter	13.3	11.7	11.6	7.1	6.2	3.8
Flickr	0.3	0.7	1.2	0.7	0	1.9
Pinterest	7.9	5	2.2	0.9	0	1.9
LinkedIn	9	13.6	18.2	15.4	16.1	11.5
Tumblr	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.7	0
Google +	8.9	9.2	7.5	6.7	8.8	13.5
YouTube	36.8	23.8	15.6	11.4	10.9	7.7
www.vetsurgeon.org	7.5	9.4	8.6	6.8	8.4	3.8
www.vetnurse.co.uk	0.2	0.1	0.8	0.4	0.4	0
BVA Community	4.1	2.1	2.1	3.5	4.4	1.9
Other	1.5	1.4	1.3	3.3	1.5	0
N =	863	1,473	964	747	274	52

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category.

Source: VS Survey, 2014

**Table 10.7: 'Which of the following social networking sites do you use for professional purposes?'**

	Frequency	% of number of respondents
I do not use social networking sites	1,354	44.2
Facebook	860	28.1
Twitter	261	8.5
Flickr	7	0.2
Pinterest	7	0.2
LinkedIn	590	19.3
Tumblr	1	0
Google +	170	5.5
YouTube	204	6.7
www.vetsurgeon.org	390	12.7
www.vetnurse.co.uk	24	0.8
BVA Community	141	4.6
Other	86	2.8
N =	3,064	

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents could select more than one category

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 10.5 RCVS sources of information

The majority of respondents (74.1%) stated that they would prefer to receive RCVS communications via email, while a quarter wanted to receive these communications by post. This has changed since the last RCVS survey in 2010 where 43 per cent of respondents stated that they would like to receive RCVS communications by post and 57 per cent via either their home or work email, demonstrating a growing preference among VSs for email correspondence (although with the caveat that the 2014 survey was conducted entirely online).

As Table 10.8 shows, the majority of respondents indicated that they would prefer RCVS to send communications via email, regardless of their age. However, a large minority of those aged 60 and over would still like to receive their communications by post.

**Table 10.8: Preferred communication method by age**

	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 to 95
Email	78	79	70	71.8	61.7	50.9
In the post	18.7	19.8	28.4	28.2	37.9	49.1
Social media site	1.5	0.3	1.0	0	0	0
Text message	1.7	0.9	0.5	0	0.4	0
N =	865	1,486	981	770	282	53

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Respondents were subsequently asked at what time of day they are most likely to check their work emails. Table 10.9 shows that over half of respondents (57%) are likely to check their work emails several times a day, while 14 per cent stated that they tend to check their work emails in the evening.

**Table 10.9: 'At what time of the day are you most likely to check work emails?'**

	Frequency	%
Any time/several times a day	2,539	57.4
Morning - first thing	303	6.8
Morning - later	99	2.2
Lunchtime	269	6.1
Afternoon - first thing	49	1.1
Afternoon - later	168	3.8
End of working day	301	6.8
Evening	603	13.6
Night (after 10 pm)	95	2.1
Total	4,426	100

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Respondents to the survey were also asked to identify their best source of information about the RCVS. Table 10.10 shows that 47 per cent of respondents stated that *RCVS News* is their best source of information, while a quarter identified the RCVS website as a good information source. These findings, in terms of ranking, are broadly in line with the results of the 2010 survey, although the RCVS website is now better regarded as an information source (17% of respondents believed that the RCVS website was the best source of information in 2010).

Just under one in ten (9.2%) of respondents stated that RCVS e-news is their best source of information; 51 per cent of the sample receives this monthly newsletter.

**Table 10.10: 'Which of the following is your best source of information about the RCVS?'**

	Frequency	%
RCVS News	2,007	47.1
RCVS VN Standard/VN Education	5	0.1
RCVS website	1,072	25.1
Other website(s)	21	0.5
RCVS Twitter feed	28	0.7
RCVS YouTube Channel	1	0
RCVS Flickr feed	1	0
RCVS meetings	13	0.3
Congresses	53	1.2
RCVS e-News	391	9.2
RCVS Review/Facts (annual report)	118	2.8
Veterinary/Vet nursing press	427	10
RCVS LinkedIn feed	5	0.1
Other	123	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,265</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*



# 11 Recently Qualified VSs

This chapter of the report focuses on those respondents who have qualified as VSs within the last three years.

## 11.1 Chapter summary

- Fifty-two per cent of recently qualified VSs stated that following graduation they went straight into practice work.
- Eight per cent went to work abroad for a charity or other practice, while eighteen per cent took some time out as they were unable to find work straight away.
- The average time taken by respondents to find their first post was three months.
- Among those respondents who went into practice work, the majority (64.2%) received training during their first year at work.
- Over half of this sample (54.4%) stated that they underwent an appraisal or performance review during their first year of work.
- Forty-five per cent stated that this process took account of their progress within the Professional Development Phase (PDP).

## 11.2 Activities following graduation

Among those respondents who had become qualified as VSs from 2011 onwards ( $N = 642$ ), over half (52%) stated that after graduating they went straight into practice work; however, 17.8 per cent of respondents indicated that they took some time out of work following their graduation as they were unable to find employment.

As Table 11.1 shows, these figures differ from those presented in the 2010 survey findings where a greater proportion of post-2006 qualifiers (63%) went straight into practice work, and a smaller proportion of respondents found themselves immediately unemployed (13.6%). Higher proportions of recent graduates who responded to the survey are also now undertaking internships and working abroad for charities or other practices after qualifying.

'Other' activities undertaken by respondents that did not fall under any of the main categories provided included taking time out either to relax or for medical reasons, or finding employment in a non-veterinary-related role.

**Table 11.1: Activities following graduation**

	Post-2011 qualifiers (%)	Post-2006 qualifiers (%)
Went straight into practice	52	63
Began postgraduate studies	1.4	1.1
Began an internship	10	6
Worked abroad for a charity or other practice	7.6	3.5
Took some time out for travel	6.5	7.7
Took some time out as you were unable to find a job	17.8	13.6
Other	4.7	5.1

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Comparing respondents' answers to this question based on whether or not they qualified in the UK, it is clear from the results presented in Table 11.2 that a higher share of non-UK qualifiers (23.2%) began an internship following graduation compared to those who had attained their veterinary qualification in the UK (5.3%). However, 59 per cent of UK qualifiers went straight into practice post-graduation compared to almost a third of respondents (32.7%) who qualified outside the UK.

**Table 11.2: Activities following graduation by country of qualification**

	UK-qualifiers	Non-UK qualifiers
Went straight into practice	59	32.7
Began post-graduate studies	0.2	4.8
Began an internship	5.3	23.2
Worked abroad for a charity or other practice	7	9.5
Took some time out for travel	7	5.4
Took some time out as you were unable to find a job	17.5	17.9
Other	4	6.5
Total	473	168

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Table 11.3 provides a breakdown of respondents' answers to the preceding question by gender; it shows that a greater proportion of females took time out after their graduation as they were unable to find work (20% of female respondents, compared to 9% of males). A larger share of male respondents began an internship upon graduation, compared to their female counterparts (17.7% and 8%, respectively).

**Table 11.3: Activities following graduation by gender**

	Male	Female
Go straight into practice	56.2	51.1
Begin postgraduate studies	2.3	1.2
Begin an internship	17.7	8
Work abroad for a charity or other practice	6.9	7.8
Take some time out for travel	3.8	7.2
Take some time out as you were unable to find a job	9.2	19.8
Other	3.8	4.9
Total	130	511

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Respondents were asked how long it had taken them to find their first position after they started to look; the average time taken to find this first position was three months, although a few respondents had taken between one and two years to find work.

Five respondents had yet to find their first position. Of this number, one respondent had only been looking for work for a two-month period, while the other four had been looking for their first role for between 16 and 36 months. While the number of respondents yet to find work is quite small, it should again be noted that the survey is only administered to RCVS members and so does not take account of those VSs who are unemployed and have left the RCVS Register.

### 11.3 Recent qualifiers in practice work

Among those respondents who went into practice work – either straight away following their graduation, or after a period of time – the majority (64.2%) received training during their first year at work, although over a third (35.7%) did not receive any training during this period. Over half of this sample (54.4%) stated that they underwent an appraisal or performance review during their first year of work, which means that a significant minority (45.6%) did not. The proportion that received a performance review during their first year in practice has decreased slightly since the 2010 survey, when 57 per cent of recently qualified respondents in practice work stated that they had received appraisals.

Among those respondents who did have their performance formally assessed, 45 per cent stated that this process took account of their progress within the Professional Development Phase (PDP). This proportion has increased since the last survey in 2010, where a third of respondents stated that this process took account of their progress within the PDP.

Forty per cent of respondents had completed their PDP since starting practice work. Among those respondents who have not yet completed their PDP (N = 336), as Table

11.4 shows, half commented that they have not done so because they do not currently have enough experience, although they do expect to complete their PDP eventually.

**Table 11.4: Reason for not having completed PDP**

Reason	Frequency	%
I have not started it yet	31	9.3
I don't yet have enough experience but expect to complete PDP eventually	166	49.6
Did not start straight away	31	9.3
Have not received adequate support in practice	23	6.9
Have stopped the PDP before finishing it	15	4.5
Not been able to gain required experience and am unlikely to be able to do so	8	2.4
Other reason	61	18.2
Total	335	100

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

# 12 Views about the Profession

This chapter of the report focus on the attitudes and views of respondents towards the veterinary profession. In this section of the survey, respondents were also asked whether they would still opt for a career within the veterinary profession if they had the chance to start again, and to consider the best aspects of the profession, possible improvements and challenges.

## 12.1 Chapter summary

- Nearly 90 per cent of respondents agree that veterinary work is stressful. However, a similar proportion agree that veterinary work gives variety, and over 80 per cent state that the vocation provides them with job satisfaction.
- Over 70 per cent of respondents agree that veterinary schools are currently recruiting too many students for the available future work.
- Nearly 90 per cent of respondents reported that they are familiar with the concept of evidence-based veterinary medicine, and that recent scientific information influences their clinical decisions.
- Around 60 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the quality, frequency and quantity of information that they receive from the RCVS.
- Roughly 80 per cent of respondents agree that they should continue to be obliged to provide emergency care to animals according to their skills and the specific situation they find themselves in.
- A significant minority of respondents (46.2%) stated that they would still opt for a career in the veterinary profession if they had the choice again.
- The most popular aspect of the profession cited by respondents (64.4%) was the chance to work with animals.
- The frequently cited improvement that would make the veterinary profession a better place in which to work was a better work-life balance.
- The main challenges currently facing the veterinary profession identified by a large share of respondents were high client expectations and demands (53.8%) as well as stress levels among veterinary staff (53.4%).

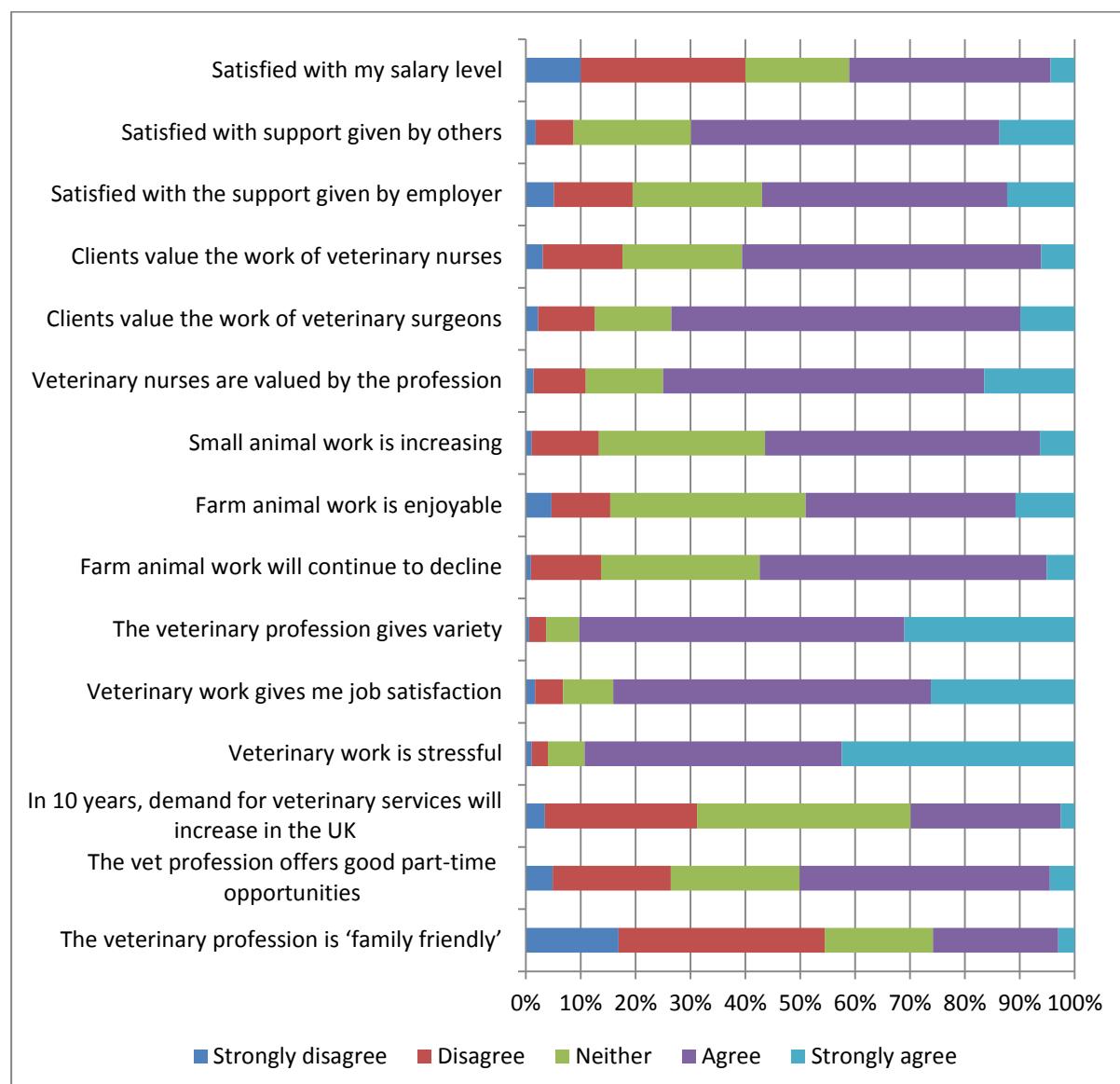
## 12.2 General views about the profession

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with a series of attitudinal statements about the veterinary profession. Each statement used a five-item scale to capture responses ranging from 'strongly disagree' (scoring 1) to 'strongly agree' (scoring 5), with a mid-point score of 3. Figure 12.1 shows the spread of responses to a selection of these statements, while Figure 12.2 provides the mean scores.

The findings are remarkably consistent with the results of the previous RCVS survey. As in 2010, the figures show that a large proportion of respondents (almost 90%) agree that veterinary work is stressful. However, a similar proportion agree that veterinary work gives variety, and over 80 per cent state that the vocation provides them with job satisfaction. Further, respondents largely agree that clients value the work of VSs, and that veterinary nurses are valued within the profession.

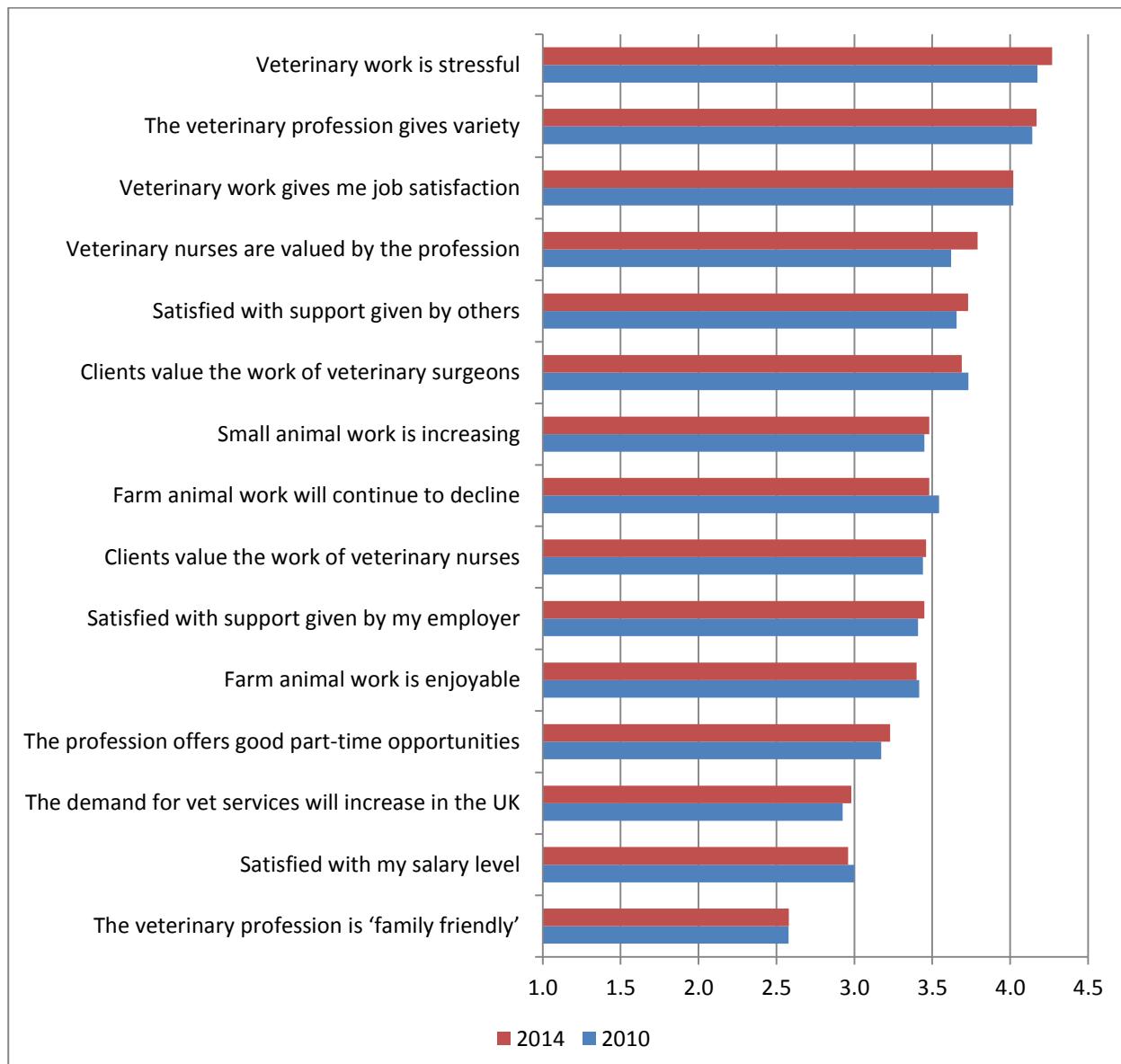
The attitude statements covering VSs' views of their profession are a relatively large collection of variables which may or may not be related to each other in some way. An alternative approach to looking at them individually is factor analysis, which can be used to break the list down into groups of related variables.

Factor analysis is a commonly-used statistical method of examining the nature of the relationships between variables in a survey. This statistical procedure identifies variables where responses to items are similar between individuals and brings them together as 'themes' and is a more reliable way of bringing together the variables than merely using common sense or intuition. Unfortunately the factor analysis of VS respondents' views did not yield a large number of multi-item factors with high levels of reliability; only two reliable factors with three or more items were identified, one covering the three statements concerning RCVS information, and the other covering the three statements concerning the ability to assess research studies. Therefore we have not presented details of the factors, but have grouped items together thematically later in the chapter, following exploration of the general views regarding the profession.

**Figure 12.1: Views about work and the profession**

Source: VS Survey, 2014

Figure 12.2: Views about work and the profession (mean scores)



Note: Scale is based on 1 = strongly disagree, 2 =disagree, 3=neither, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

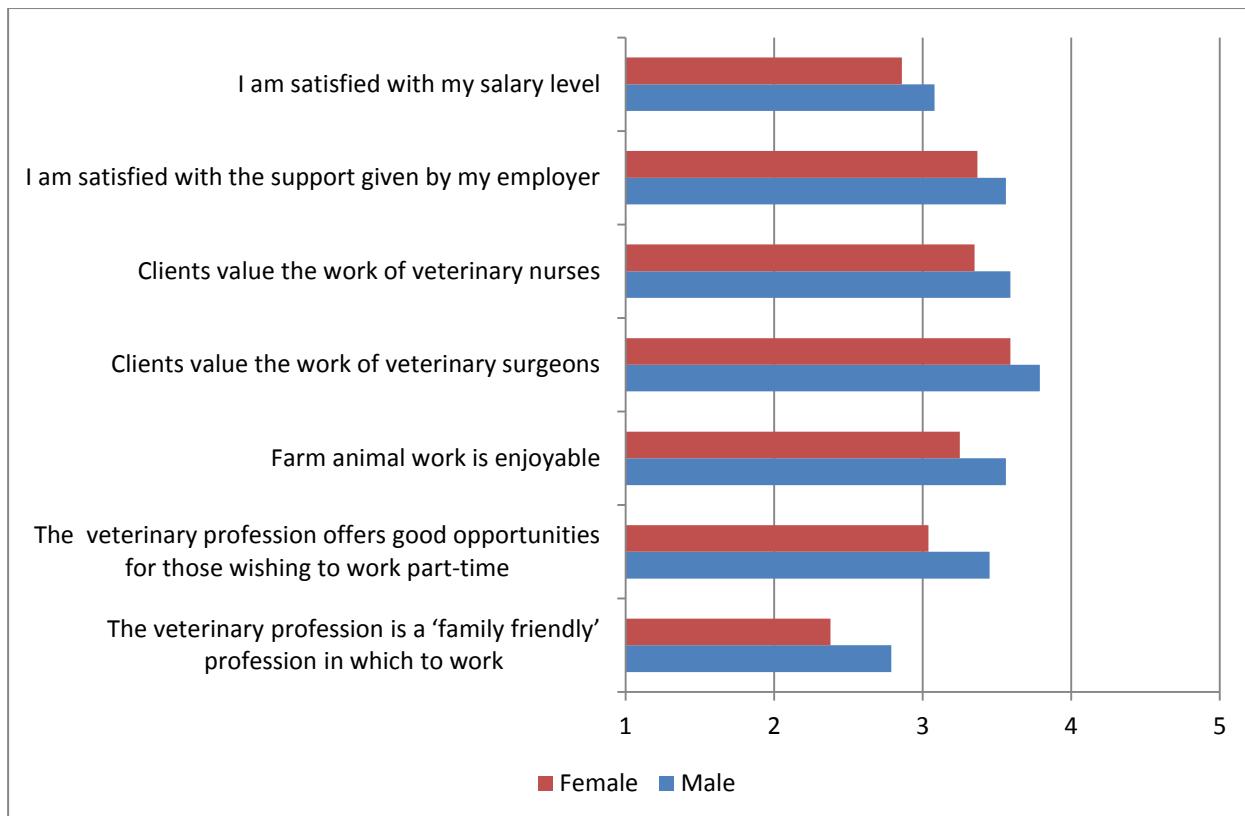
Source: VS Survey, 2010 and 2014

As Figure 12.3 shows, results showed some variation by gender; on average, male respondents are more satisfied with their salary levels and the support given by their employer, and are more likely to agree that the veterinary profession offers good opportunities for those wishing to work part-time and that it is a 'family friendly' profession in which to work.

With regard to the age of respondents, Figure 12.4 shows that, on average, respondents in the highest age categories tended to more strongly agree that the veterinary profession offers good part-time opportunities and is a 'family friendly'

profession. Respondents in the youngest age categories, meanwhile, were more likely to perceive veterinary work as being stressful.

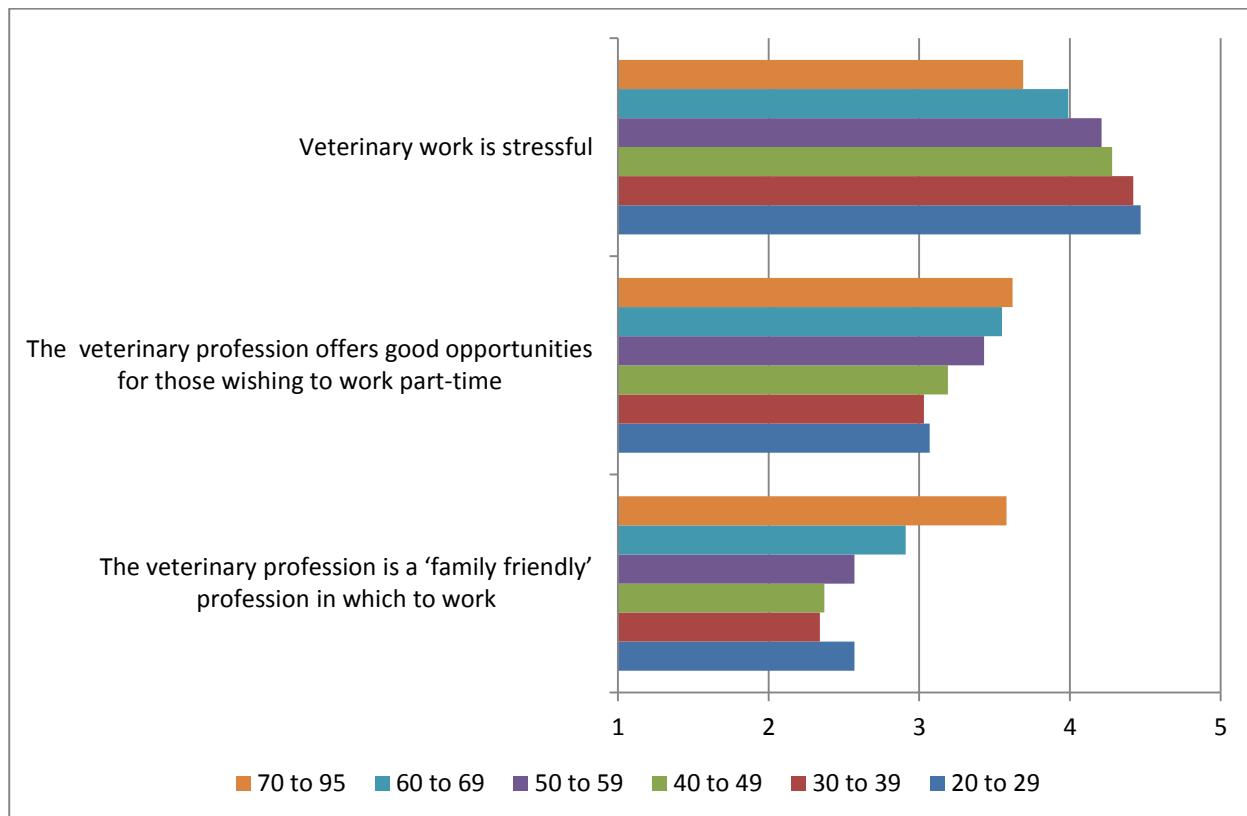
**Figure 12.3: Views about work and the profession by gender (mean scores)**



Note: Scale is based on 1 = strongly disagree, 2 =disagree, 3=neither, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

Source: VS Survey, 2014

Figure 12.4: Views about work and the profession by age (mean scores)

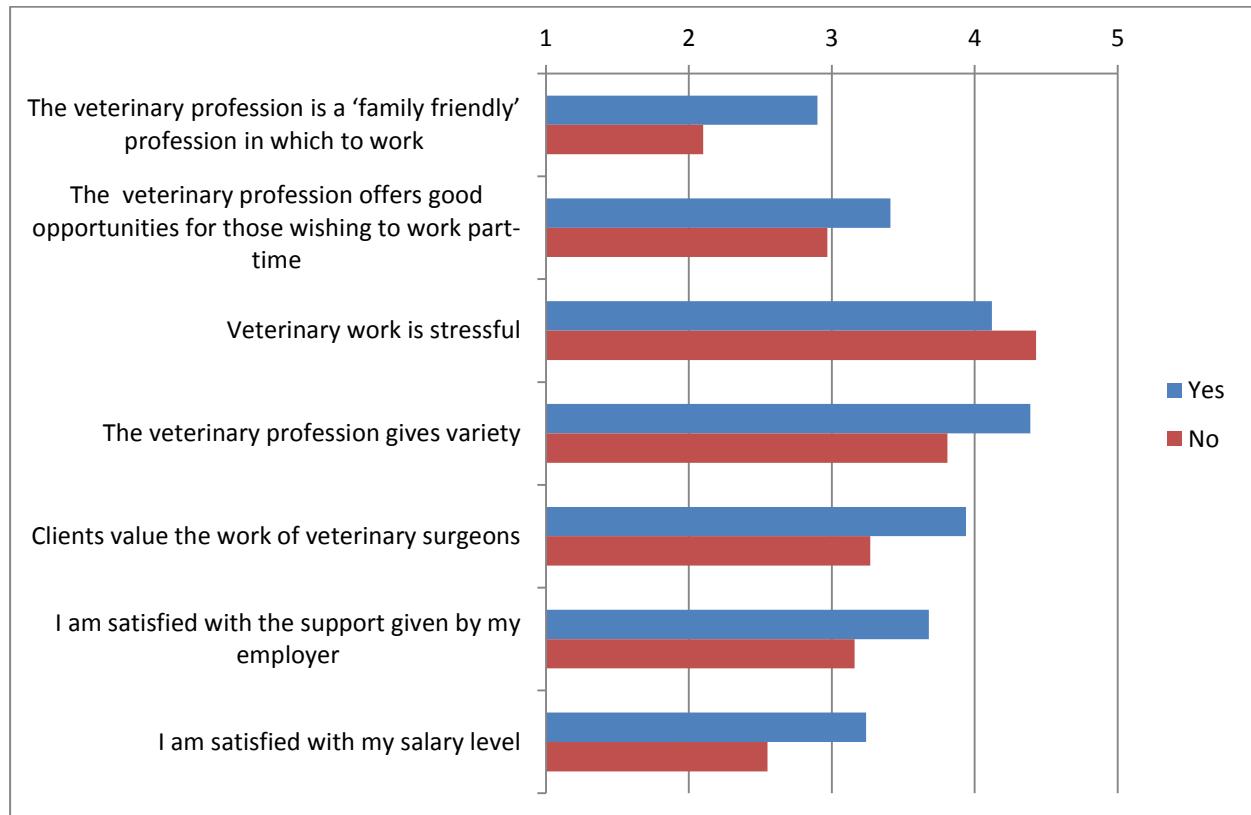


Note: Scale is based on 1 = strongly disagree, 2 =disagree, 3=neither, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

Source: VS Survey, 2014

On average, respondents who stated that they would still opt for a career within the veterinary profession, if they had the opportunity to start again, more strongly agreed that the veterinary profession is 'family friendly', gives variety and offers good part-time opportunities than those who would not opt for a veterinary career, if they had the choice again. Further, respondents who would not opt again for a veterinary career more strongly agreed that veterinary work is stressful.

**Figure 12.5: Views about work and the profession by whether respondents would still opt for a veterinary career (mean scores)**



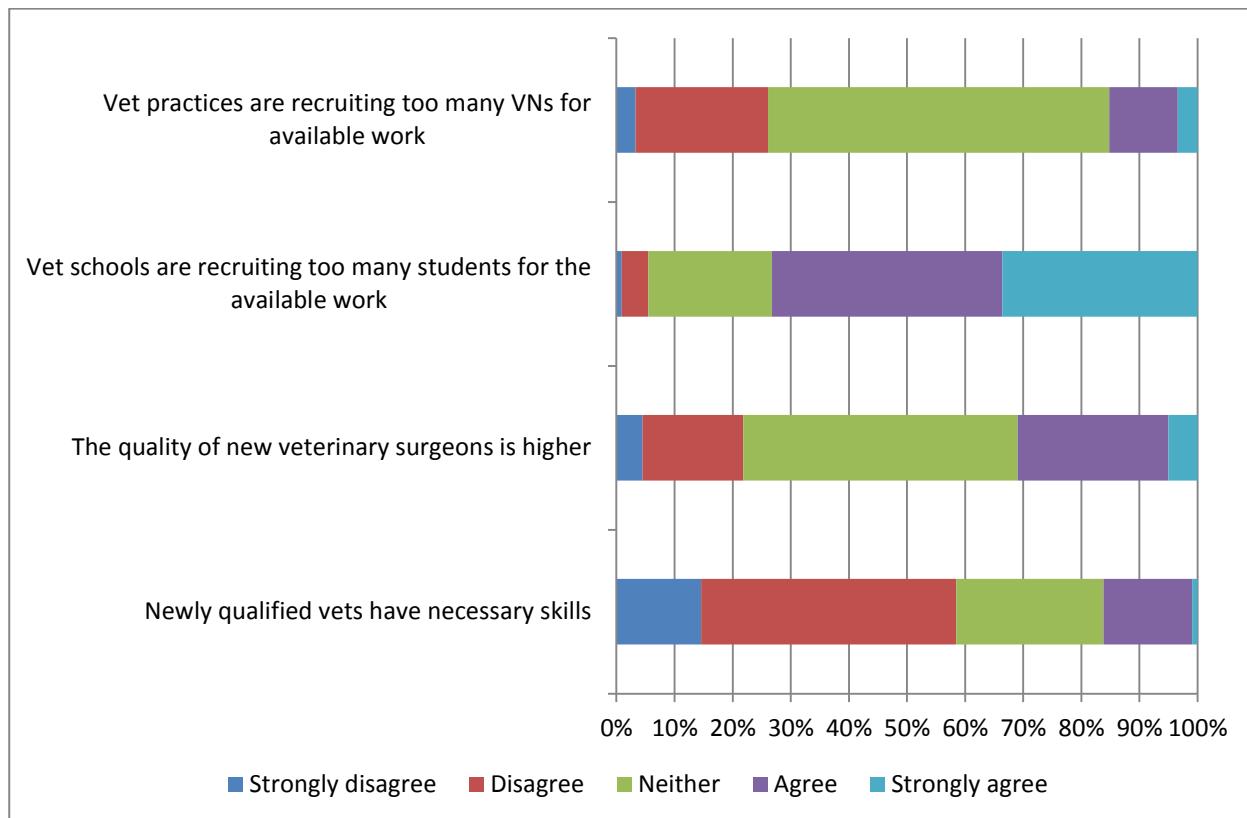
Note: Scale is based on 1 = strongly disagree, 2 =disagree, 3=neither, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

Source: VS Survey, 2014

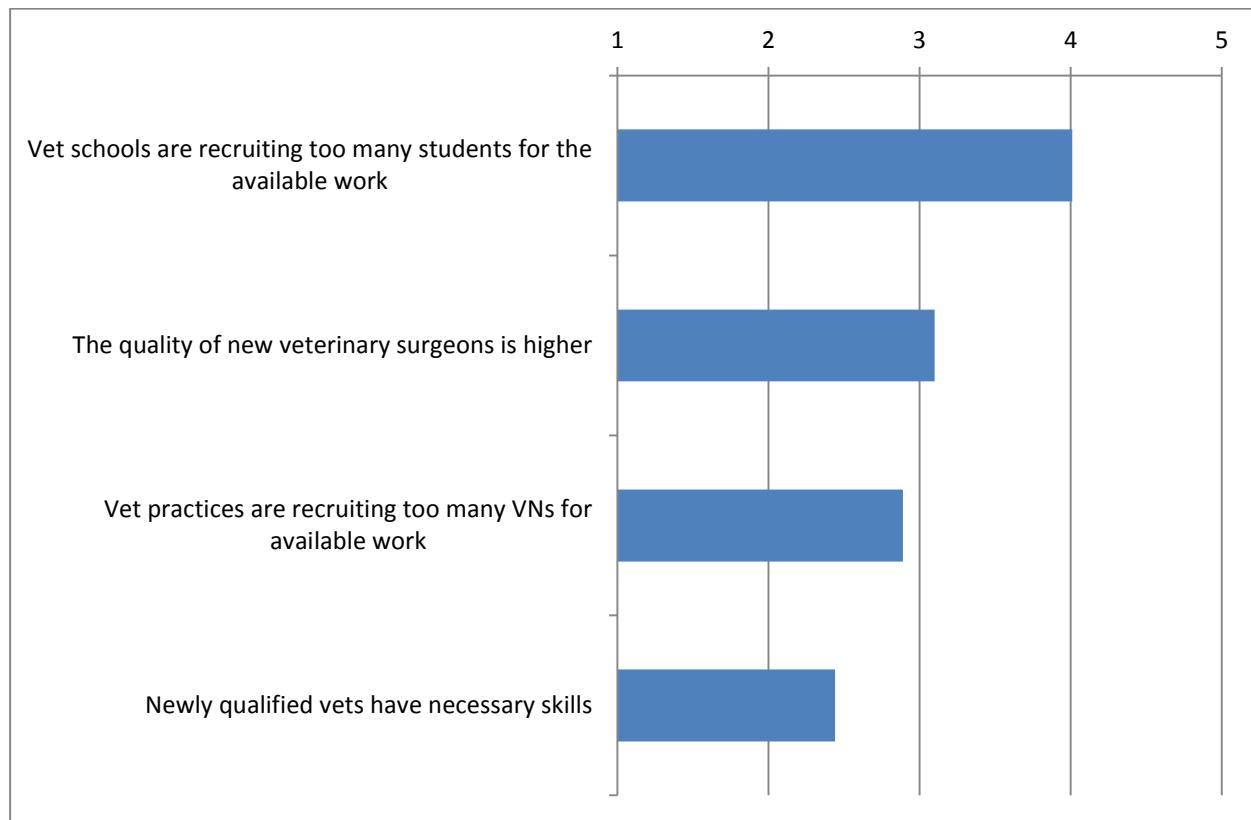
## 12.3 Views on recently qualified VSs/VSs

Respondents were also asked for their views on the number and quality of newly qualified VSs and nurses currently entering the profession. As Figure 12.6 and Figure 12.7 show, a large share of respondents (over 70%) agree that veterinary schools are currently recruiting too many students for the available future work. Analysing respondents' views on this statement by their mean scores and age, it is interesting to note that, on average, respondents in their 20s tended to more strongly agree with this statement (with an average score of 4.25) than those aged 40 and over (who had an average score of less than 4). A high proportion of respondents, meanwhile, disagree that newly qualified VSs have the necessary skills for general practice employment from day one. Respondents over the age of 40 more strongly disagreed with this statement (with an average score of 2.41) than VSs in their 20s (who had an average score of 2.57).

Figure 12.6: Views on recently qualified VSs and VNs



Source: VS Survey, 2014

**Figure 12.7: Views on recently qualified VSs and VNs (mean scores)**

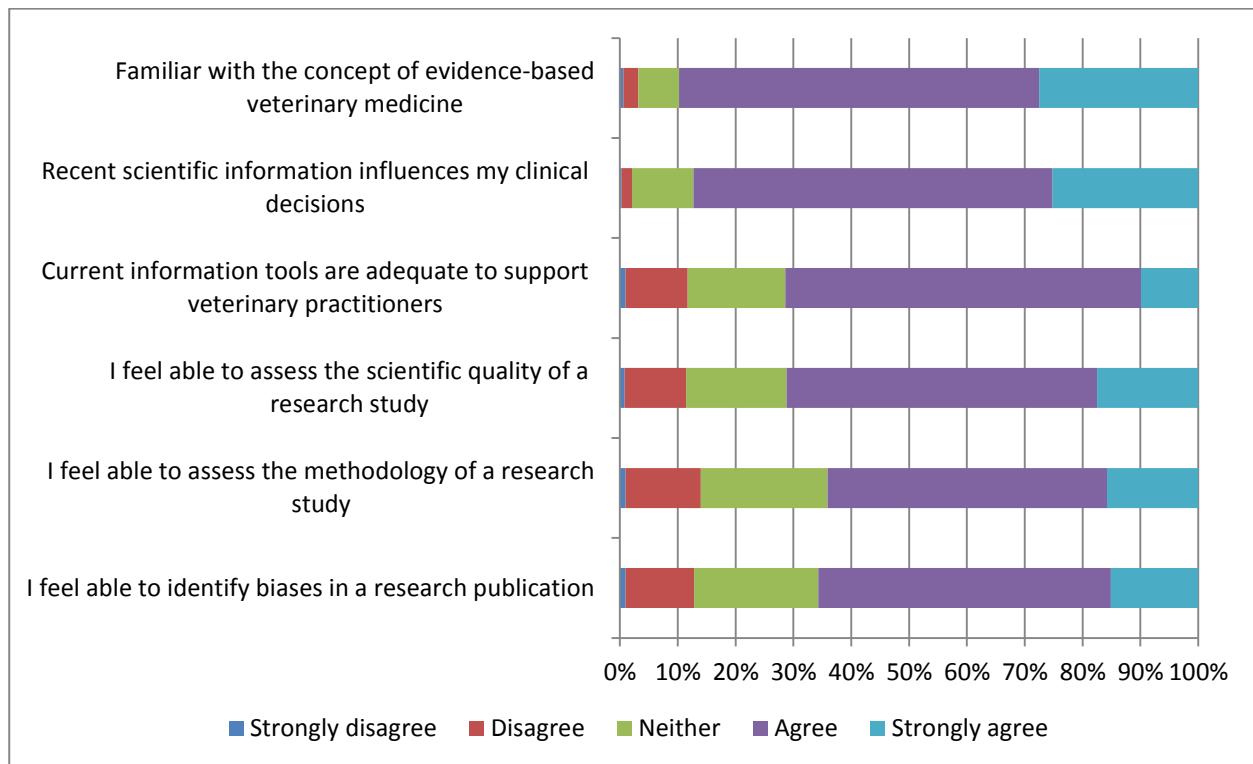
Note: Scale is based on 1 = strongly disagree, 2 =disagree, 3=neither, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 12.4 Views on the concept of evidence-based veterinary medicine

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions that aimed to gauge their familiarity with the concept of evidence based veterinary medicine and its basic tenets. They were also asked about extent to which they use scientific information to support their practice work. Figure 12.8 shows that a substantial proportion of respondents (almost 90%) reported that they are broadly familiar with the concept of evidence-based veterinary medicine, and that recent scientific information influences their clinical decisions. On average, respondents in the youngest age categories had slightly higher mean scores for each of these statements, and thereby more strongly agreed with these statements, than respondents in the highest age categories.

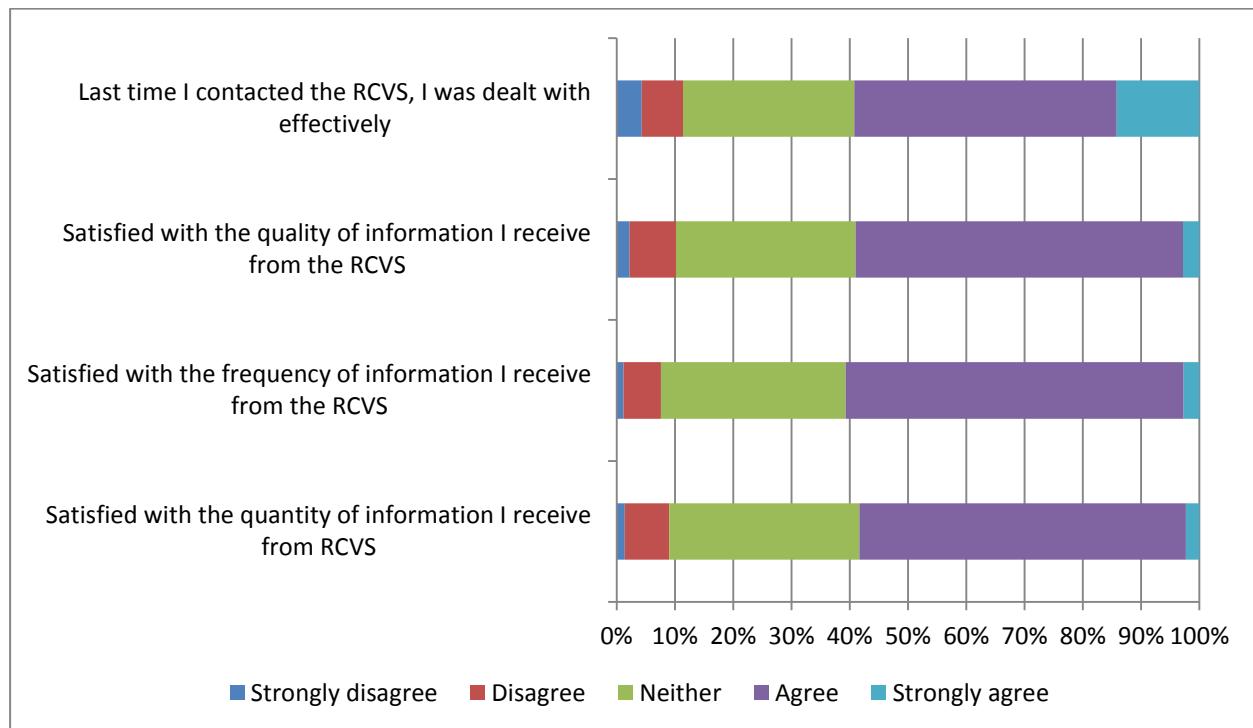
Respondents were slightly less confident, however, in assessing the scientific quality and the methodology of a given research study, and in identifying the biases in a research publication, although the majority still felt that they were competent in these areas. A similar proportion of respondents agree that current information tools – such as the internet and scientific journals – are adequate to support veterinary practitioners

**Figure 12.8: Views on concept of evidence-based veterinary medicine**

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 12.5 Views on RCVS communications

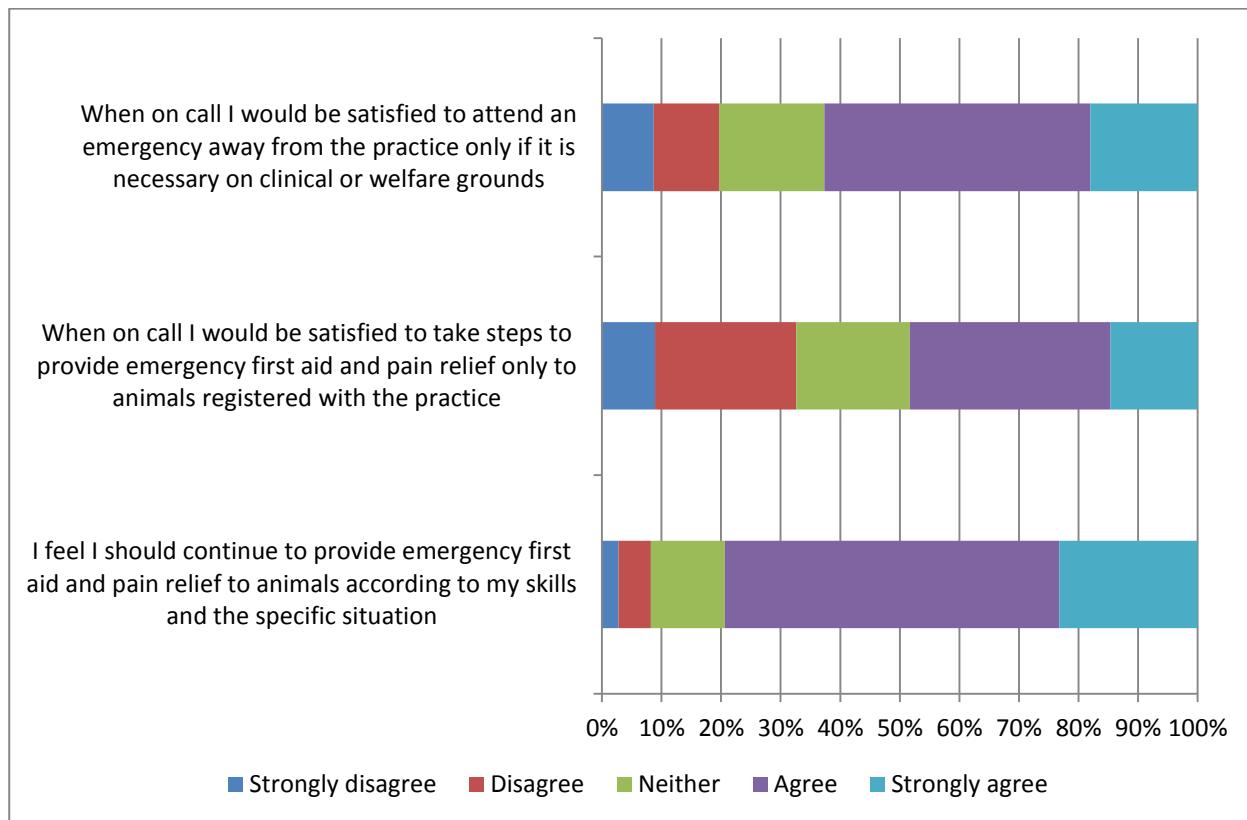
Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they are satisfied with the communications that they receive from the RCVS. As Figure 12.9 demonstrates, the majority of respondents agreed that they were satisfied with the quality, frequency and quantity of information that they receive from the Royal College, while a significant minority neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. The majority of respondents (59.2%) also agreed that the last time they contacted the RCVS, they were dealt with effectively, although the actual proportion is slightly lower than in 2010 (61.6%).

**Figure 12.9: Views on RCVS communications**

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 12.6 Views towards on-call obligations

Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a new series of attitudinal statements around the provision of emergency care; an early snapshot of this data fed into the RCVS Standards Committee's 24/7 review in spring 2014. Figure 12.10 shows that the vast majority of respondents agree that they should continue to be obliged to provide emergency care to animals according to their skills and the specific situation they find themselves in. Around half of the sample stated that they would be satisfied, when on-call, with providing emergency care only to animals registered with the practice; roughly a third of respondents disagreed with this statement. Finally, the majority of respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the obligation that, when on call, they should only attend an emergency away from the practice if it is necessary on clinical or welfare grounds.

**Figure 12.10: Views towards on-call obligations**

Source: VS Survey, 2014

## 12.7 Reflections on career choice

A significant minority of respondents (46.2%) stated that they would still opt for a career in the veterinary profession if they had the choice again. This proportion has decreased slightly since 2010, where 52.5 per cent of respondents stated that they would still opt for a veterinary career. Just over a quarter of respondents (25.2%), meanwhile, indicated that they would not choose to pursue a veterinary career again, while almost 30 per cent were unsure as to whether they would do so. These proportions have risen since the 2010 survey, where 21.8 per cent of respondents stated that they would not choose a veterinary career again, and 25.6 per cent were uncertain.

When analysed by gender, a greater proportion of women were unsure as to whether they would pursue a veterinary career again (32.5% of females were unsure, compared to 24.3% of males).

With regard to age, the average age of respondents who stated that they would still opt for a veterinary career, if they had the choice again, is 47 years, while the average age of those who would not opt for a veterinary career again or who were unsure is 43 years. These figures are almost identical to those found in the 2010 survey. A further breakdown of participant responses by age is provided in Table 12.1; this shows that,

in line with the 2010 survey, respondents within the older age groupings tend to have more certainty that they would opt for a veterinary career again. The least positive group was those in their 30s, 63.5 per cent of whom said 'no' or were unsure.

**Table 12.1: Reflections on career choice by age**

	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 to 95
Yes	45.6	37.5	42.1	48.9	58.2	66.7
No	23.2	29.4	30.4	24	17.5	14
Unsure	31.2	33.1	27.5	27.1	24.3	19.4

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

## 12.8 Best things, suggestions for improvements and challenges

Survey respondents were asked to consider the best aspects of the veterinary profession. They were asked to select up to three aspects from a list of five possible options; these were derived from the most popular positive aspects of the profession cited by respondents to the 2010 RCVS survey. Participants could also specify positive aspects of the profession other than those listed.

Of the five options listed in the survey, the most popular aspect of the profession cited by respondents (64.4%) was the chance to work with animals. The share of respondents who cited this aspect has increased since 2010, where 27 per cent of respondents identified working with animals as one of the best aspects of the profession. Other facets of the profession that were valued by a large proportion of respondents included the job satisfaction (52.9%) and challenge/stimulus (53.3%) with which their work provides them. These two aspects have also increased in popularity since 2010: 36 per cent of respondents stated that job satisfaction was one of the best aspects of veterinary work in the previous survey, while 21 per cent identified the challenge and stimulus that the job provides.

**Table 12.2: 'What are the best things about being in the veterinary profession?'**

	Frequency	% of number of respondents
Job satisfaction	3,234	52.9
Client relationships	2,229	36.5
Working with animals	3,932	64.4
Challenge/stimulus	3,255	53.3
Making a difference	1,817	29.7
Other	249	4.1
N =	6,110	

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Other positive facets of the profession identified by respondents are provided below. These are listed in order of popularity:

- The variety of veterinary work
- The working relationships VSs have with colleagues/other members of a practice team
- The chance to work outdoors away from a typical office environment and, related to this, the practical aspects of veterinary work
- The chance to teach/train new VSs
- The scientific aspect of veterinary work

In terms of making the veterinary profession a better occupational area in which to work, respondents again had the chance to select up to three options from a list comprised of the ten most frequently cited improvements in the 2010 RCVS survey. Participants could also specify possible improvements other than those listed. Of the ten options presented, the most popular improvement identified by respondents was a better work-life balance; the proportion of respondents who suggested this as one of three possible improvements to the profession has risen from 19 per cent of respondents in 2010 to 64.3 per cent in 2014.

**Table 12.3: 'What would, for you, make the veterinary profession a better profession in which to work?'**

Improvements to profession	Frequency	% of number of respondents
Better pay/remuneration	3391	56.7
More responsibility	100	1.7
Less out-of-hours/on call	1,798	30.1
Better work-life balance	3,845	64.3
Flexible working hours	863	14.4
Shorter hours	840	14.0
Less regulation/bureaucracy	1,608	26.9
More support staff	485	8.1
More respect/recognition from the public	1,527	25.5
Better opportunities for career progression	1,357	22.7
Other	227	3.8
N =	5,983	

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Other potential improvements that were popular among a large proportion of respondents related to better pay/remuneration (56.7%), less out-of-hours/on-call time (30.1%), less regulation and bureaucracy (26.9%), more respect/recognition from the

public (25.5%) and better opportunities for career progression within the profession (22.7%). The proportion citing better pay/remuneration and less out-of-hours/on-call time has risen since the last survey when 38 per cent and 19 per cent of respondents, respectively, cited these as one of three possible improvements.

Respondents' suggested improvements for the veterinary profession, other than those listed, that would make it a better place in which to work are provided below. These are listed in order of popularity:

- Better practice management.
- A more supportive practice environment, especially for new graduates. Related to this, a few respondents specified that they would like to see better people management and less of a bullying culture within practice.
- Better career structures in practice.
- Better regulation, particularly in terms of a stricter adherence to working time regulations and restrictions/recommendations on the amount of out-of-hours work that can be undertaken. A few respondents commented that they would like to see the RCVS take a leading role in the promotion of such guidance.
- Less of a commercial emphasis within practice.
- More realistic client expectations.
- A few respondents wanted RCVS to better represent the veterinary profession and modern practice.

Finally, respondents were asked to identify the main challenges currently facing the veterinary profession. Again, respondents could select up to three options of a list of the most commonly identified challenges in the 2010 RCVS survey. Respondents also had the chance to specify challenges other than those listed. From the ten options presented in the survey, the main challenges currently facing the veterinary profession identified by a large share of respondents were high client expectations and demands (53.8%) as well as stress levels among veterinary staff (53.4%). The proportion of respondents citing high client expectations as one of the main issues facing the profession has increased since 2010 when 15 per cent of respondents identified this as a challenge.

Respondents also saw the affordability of veterinary services, the economic climate and poor financial reward as being important challenges currently facing the profession. The share of respondents citing affordability (37.7%) and the current economic climate (35.8%) as one of three main challenges has increased since 2010 when 11 per cent of

respondents and 20 per cent of respondents, respectively, identified these as major issues.

**Table 12.4: 'In your opinion, what are the main challenges currently facing the veterinary profession?'**

Main challenge(s)	Frequency	% of number of respondents
Economic climate	2,179	35.8
Decline in farming	1,025	16.8
Client expectations/demands	3,275	53.8
Misinformation/bad PR	898	14.8
Affordability of veterinary services	2,294	37.7
Workforce depletion relating to demographics (number of female VSs)	600	9.9
Stress levels	3,253	53.4
Poor financial reward	2,130	35.0
Poor support for profession	859	14.1
Changes in training	208	3.4
Other	274	4.5
N =	6,088	

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Other challenges facing the profession that were identified by respondents are provided below. These are listed in order of popularity:

- A perception that there are too many vet students for the available work.
- Increase in corporate practices and the perceived emphasis that this is placing on finances over animal care.
- Increasing competition between practices as a by-product of greater corporatisation.
- The 24/7 emergency care requirements that are being placed on practice workers.

# 13 Well-being

For the second time, respondents to the RCVS survey were asked to respond to a short series of questions concerning their well-being in both their professional and personal lives. To do this, a 14-item scale of mental well-being known as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) was used. The rationale underpinning the inclusion of these questions is to track the mental well-being of the veterinary profession at a population level over time. Respondents did not have to complete this section of the survey if they preferred not to. This chapter of the report provides details of the responses to the WEMWBS, comparing the results to those found in the 2010 survey.

## 13.1 Chapter summary

- The mean well-being score for the entire sample is 49, slightly below the average population mean.
- Respondents were especially positive about how often they had been able to make up their own mind and to think clearly.
- Less than 30 per cent of respondents reported that they often had energy to spare and felt relaxed.

## 13.2 Background to the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)

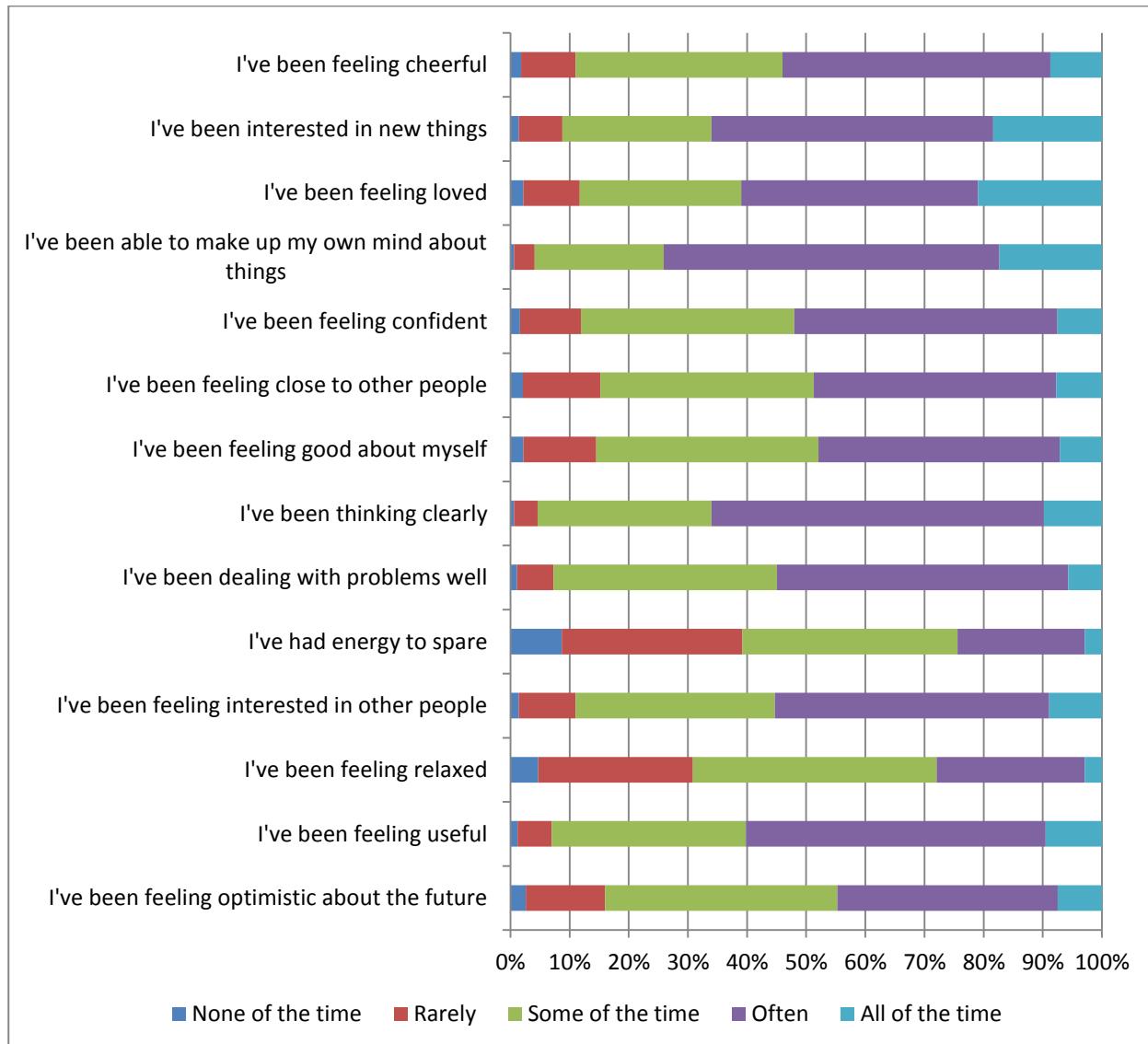
The WEMWBS asks respondents about their experiences over the past two weeks. They are asked to respond to fourteen attitudinal statements and describe their thoughts and feelings during this period. Individual items are scored from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time) and a total scale score is calculated by summing the 14 item scores. The minimum score is 14 and the maximum is 70. The average population mean is around 51.

## 13.3 Responses to the WEMWBS

As in 2010, respondents were largely positive in how they rated the individual items of the WEMWBS (see Figure 13.1). During the two weeks prior to completing the survey,

respondents were especially positive about how often they had been able to make up their own mind and to think clearly. Regarding those factors that respondents felt less positive about, less than 30 per cent of respondents reported that they often had energy to spare and felt relaxed. These results mirror the findings of the 2010 survey.

**Figure 13.1: Self-ratings for well-being statements**



Source: VS Survey, 2014

In terms of overall well-being scores, the mean WEMWBS score for the entire sample is 49, slightly below the average population mean; respondents to the 2010 survey had the same average score. Further, as Table 13.1 shows, female respondents again have a lower average score than male respondents (47.8 compared to 49.5), although this gender divide has narrowed slightly since 2010 (see Table 13.2) where female respondents had an average WEMWBS score of 48, while males had a mean score of 50. Gender also appeared to be associated with well-being when coupled with other factors; for instance, female respondents from an ethnic minority background who

provide care for an adult dependant or who consider themselves to have a disability, had some of the lowest average well-being scores across all the breakdowns considered.

When analysed by respondents in the older age bands have higher average well-being scores than respondents in the youngest age bands (see Table 13.1). Further, respondents under the age of 40 score equal or lower, on average, than those aged 40 or over across all the breakdowns considered. This is consistent with the results of the 2010, although again, as Table 13.2 demonstrates, this difference between age bands has decreased since the last survey (the difference between the oldest and youngest age groupings is now 3.7 points, instead of five).

**Table 13.1: Breakdown of average WEMWBS scores**

	Overall	Female	Male	Aged below 40	Aged 40 years & above
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	47.8				
Male	49.5				
<b>Age bands</b>					
20 to 29	47.5	47.2	48.6		
30 to 39	47.9	47.7	48.3		
40 to 49	48.3	48.0	48.7		
50 to 59	48.6	48.2	49.0		
60 to 69	51.1	48.5	51.8		
70 to 95	51.2	53.1	51.2		
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
White	48.5	47.8	49.4	47.8	49.1
Other ethnic group	47.9	46.2	50.6	45.9	50.4
<b>Dependent children</b>					
Yes	49.1	49.3	48.9	49.2	49.0
No	48.2	47.1	49.8	47.3	49.3
<b>Dependent adult</b>					
Yes	48.0	45.8	49.5	43.3	48.7
No	48.5	47.8	49.4	47.8	49.2
<b>Disability</b>					
Yes	45.3	43.8	47.2	44.6	45.4
No	48.7	48.0	49.6	47.8	49.5

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

In the current survey, respondents who consider themselves to have a disability or medical condition that limits the work they can do have a lower average well-being score than those who do not have such a condition (45.3 compared to 48.7); as shown in Table 13.2, this difference in average scores has grown since 2010.

In contrast to the last survey, respondents of white ethnicity had marginally higher well-being scores than other ethnic groups (in 2010, respondents from other ethnic groups had a slightly higher average well-being score). However, this difference is not statistically significant and the number of VSs from other ethnic groups who responded to this section of the survey was small ( $N = 156$ ). Whether a respondent cares for dependent children or adults also has a slight effect on well-being; those caring for dependent children have a slightly higher average score than those without (49.1 compared to 48.2) whereas those providing care for a dependent adult have a slightly lower average score than those who are not providing such care (48 compared to 48.5).

**Table 13.2: Breakdown of average WEMWBS scores compared**

		Overall (2014)	Overall (2010)
Gender			
	Female	47.8	48
	Male	49.5	50
Age bands			
	20 to 29	47.5	48
	30 to 39	47.9	48
	40 to 49	48.3	48
	50 to 59	48.6	49
	60 to 69	51.1	53
	70 to 95	51.2	53
Ethnicity			
	White	48.5	49
	Other ethnic group	47.9	50
Dependent children			
	Yes	49.1	49
	No	48.2	49
Dependent adult			
	Yes	48.0	49
	No	48.5	49
Disability			
	Yes	45.3	47
	No	48.7	49

*Source: VS Survey, 2014 and 2010*

The average well-being score of respondents working within the profession is 2.4 points lower than those working outside the profession (48.2 compared to 50.6); in 2010, those working within the profession scored just one point lower than those working outside (49 compared to 50).

Respondents working within the profession undertaking clinical veterinary practice work have an average well-being score of 48, while those not undertaking such work have an average score of 49.3. With regard to the country that respondents work in, those working within the UK have a lower average well-being score than those working in other countries (48.1 compared to 49.8).

Table 13.3 provides respondents' average well-being scores by employment status, comparing them with the 2010 figures. It shows that respondents who are unemployed have the lowest average well-being scores, whereas those that are retired have the highest. This is consistent with the results of the 2010 survey, although retirees' average well-being score is two points lower. Analysing these results by gender, we find that female respondents have lower average well-being scores across all groups compared to male respondents.

**Table 13.3: Average WEMWBS scores by employment status compared**

Employment status	Mean (2014)	Mean (2010)
Full-time work	48.2	49
Part-time work	48.7	49
Voluntary work	49.0	50
Unemployed	45.5	46
Taking a career break	49.2	49
Retired	51.2	53

*Source: VS Survey, 2014 and 2010*

Among those respondents working within the profession whose main employment is in practice (N = 3,507), Table 13.4 indicates that there are slight variations in respondents' average well-being scores according to the type of practice they work in. Respondents working in mixed animal practices and small animal/exotic practices have an average well-being score of 47.9 and 47.6, respectively, while those working in farm or production animal practices have a mean score of 49.6.

**Table 13.4: Average WEMWBS scores by main area of employment**

Main area of employment	Mean
Mixed practice	47.9
Small animal/exotic practice	47.6
Equine practice	48.7
Farm practice/Production animal practice	49.6
Other first opinion practice	49.2
Referral practice/consultancy	49.3

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Table 13.5 provides a breakdown of the mean well-being scores of respondents working within the profession by their career plans. It shows that those planning to leave the profession, for reasons other than retirement, have lower average well-being scores than respondents nearing retirement, or planning to stay within the veterinary profession for the foreseeable future. These results mirror the findings from the previous survey; however, as Table 13.5 shows, the size of the differences between these two groups has increased. There were no significant differences between groups based on the gender of respondents, although females again had lower well-being scores, on average, than male respondents across all categories.

**Table 13.5: Average WEMWBS score by career plans**

	Mean (2014)	Mean (2010)
Stay in the profession for the foreseeable future	48.7	49
Fully retire within the next year	49.5	50
Fully retire within the next five years	49.4	49
Leave the profession as soon as possible (non-retirement)	39.3	42
Leave the profession within the next year (non-retirement)	44.5	46
Leave the profession within the next five years (non-retirement)	43	44

*Source: VS Survey, 2014 and 2010*

Table 13.6 presents the average WEMWBS score of respondents undertaking clinical veterinary practice work, according to the position they hold in the practice. Respondents who hold the position of Equity Partner, Sole Principal and Consultant have the highest well-being scores, on average, compared other practice positions; Vets working as veterinary nurses, meanwhile, have the lowest average well-being score (46.4). These results more or less reflect the 2010 survey findings, although the average score of respondents working as Assistants is almost two points lower.

**Table 13.6: Average WEMWBS score by position held compared**

Position in the practice	Mean (2014)	Mean (2010)
Sole Principal	49.6	50
Director	49.1	49
Equity Partner	49.7	49
Salaried Partner	48.9	48
Assistant	47.1	49
Consultant	49.6	49
Locum	48.3	49
Vet working as a veterinary nurse	46.4	No data available
Other	48.2	48

*Source: VS Survey, 2014 and 2010*

With regard to respondents' level of engagement in out-of-hours work, whether respondents work primarily at a dedicated out-of-hours service provider or whether they personally undertake any out-of-hours work is not associated with their average well-being score. The approach taken by respondents' respective practices to providing 24/7 emergency cover appears to have a slight association with well-being; as Table 13.7 shows, respondents who work in practices that utilise dedicated out-of-hours service providers have a lower average well-being score than respondents who work in practices that use alternate approaches.

**Table 13.7: Average WEMWBS score by approach to providing 24/7 cover**

Practice approach to providing 24/7 cover	Mean
Practice covers its own out-of-hours work	48.1
Practice covers its out-of-hours work with the help of a locum	48.8
Practice uses a dedicated out-of-hours provider	47.6
Practice cooperates with local practices to share out-of-hours work	48.4
Other	48.6

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

Respondents who reported that, during the past 12 months, they have had concerns for their personal safety when dealing with an emergency case had a lower average well-being score than those who reported no such concerns (46.2 compared to 48.5). Respondents who reported that they have had personal safety concerns that were reported to the police during the past 12 months of practice also had a lower mean WEMWBS score than respondents who encountered no such incidents (47 compared to 48).

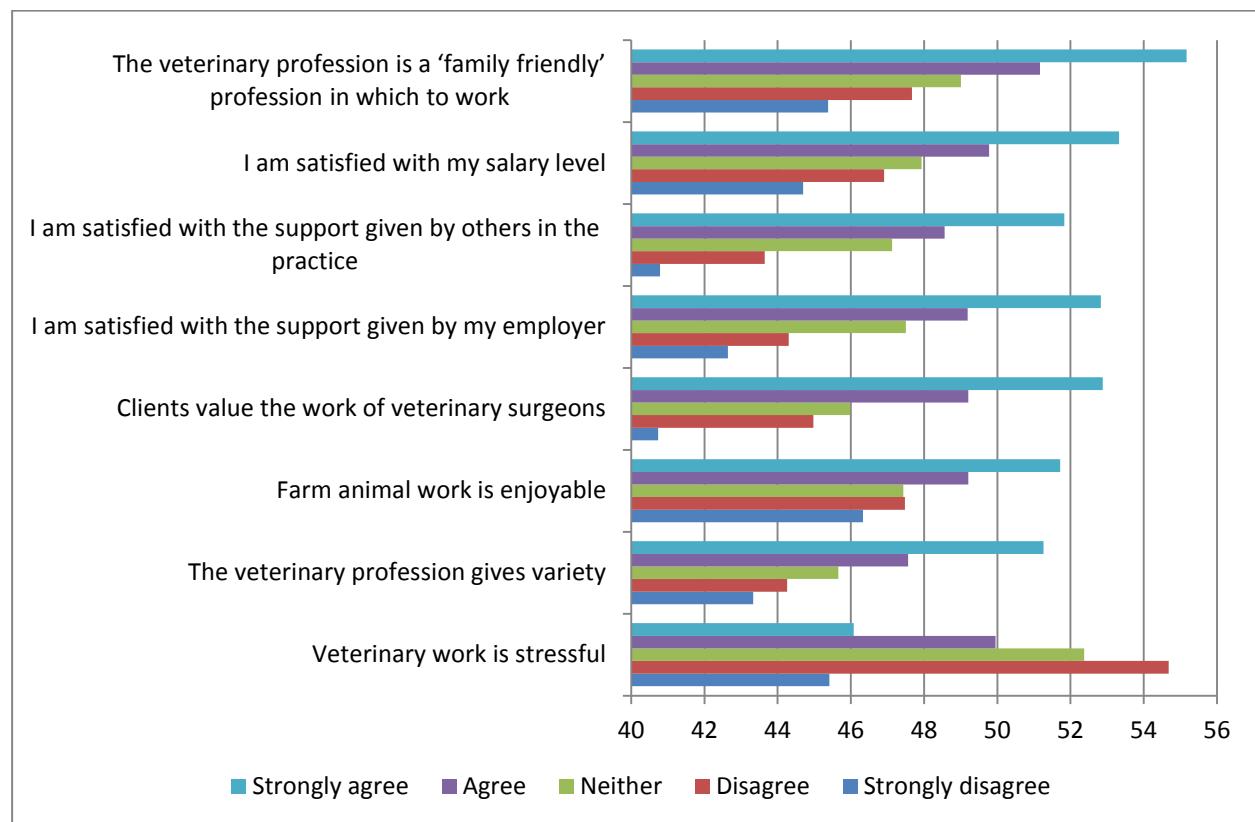
Figure 13.2 shows that there is an association between adherence to the Working Time Regulations and well-being. Respondents who do not manage to have a minimum rest period of 11 hours each day score two points lower, on average, on the WEMWBS than those who do manage to have this rest period (47 compared to 49). However, if those respondents who do not manage to have this average rest period have signed a workforce agreement with their employer that provides for other compensatory rest, their average well-being score rises by over two points to 49.5. The average well-being score of respondents who do not have such agreement in place is less than 46.8; however, respondents' average score is higher (47.7) if they have at least discussed a workforce agreement with their employer.

The average well-being score of respondents who do not manage to have at least two rest days every 14 days is 2.2 points lower than it is for respondents who do manage to have this rest period (48.3 compared to 46.1); respondents who have at least 20 days paid holiday every year also have a higher average WEMWBS score (48.1) than those who do not have this amount of annual leave (47.4), although the differences are smaller.

**Figure 13.2: Average WEMWBS score by rest periods**

Source: VS Survey, 2014

Figure 13.3 shows that there is a clear association between respondents' attitudes towards the veterinary profession and their average well-being scores. It is clear, for instance, that the greater the level of agreement that respondents have with 'positively worded statements (i.e. 'the veterinary profession is a "family friendly" profession in which to work') the higher their average well-being scores will be. It is also evident that the more respondents agree with 'negatively worded' statements (i.e. veterinary work is stressful') the lower their average well-being scores tend to be. It therefore follows that, unsurprisingly, a more positive view of the profession is associated with greater well-being.

**Figure 13.3: Average WEMWBS scores by views on the profession**

Source: VS Survey, 2014



## 14 Conclusion

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This report has presented the findings from the 2014 RCVS survey of VSs, carried out on behalf of the RCVS by IES. The survey has provided the RCVS with an evidence-based view of the veterinary profession, and has helped highlight a number of important trends that are taking place within the vocation.

### 14.1 Evidence of trends

The number of qualified VSs in part-time work continues to rise, incrementally, from survey to survey; in 2014 the proportion of respondents in part-time work (19%) was three per cent higher than in 2010, five per cent higher than in 2006 and seven per cent higher than in 2002. Breaking the results down by gender, it is clear the this rise is at least partly driven by a gradual increase in the proportion of male respondents in part-time employment, although female VSs still constitute the majority (73.2%) of those in part-time work. The proportion of respondents in full-time work (65.4%) has remained relatively stable since the last survey after declining from 68 to 64 per cent between 2006 and 2010.

For VSs working within the profession, there have been some changes in the types of clinical practices that respondents report working in since the last RCVS survey. For instance, the share of respondents who are employed, at least in part, in mixed animal practices has declined since 2010 from 22.1 per cent to 15.8 per cent. The proportion of respondents working in equine practices has also decreased slightly, while the number working in small animal/exotic practices has increased from 48.9 per cent to 53.6 per cent.

Outside practice employment, the proportion of respondents working for UK government departments or agencies has continued to decline. The 2010 RCVS survey noted that there had been a six per cent decrease in the share of VSs working in this area, and the 2014 shows a continuation of this downward trend. There has been slight increase, meanwhile, in the proportion of respondents who reported working in veterinary schools and other educational establishments, as well as within charities and trusts.

Among VSs working within UK clinical practices, the average hours worked in a typical week has decreased across all areas of practice since 2010, following a rise

between 2006 and 2010. As noted in the main body of the report, however, these results should be interpreted with caution given that previous survey analyses also included VSs working overseas. Nevertheless, it is clear that for both UK and overseas clinical practice VSs, the amount of time spent on-call away from their work premises has decreased since the last RCVS survey across all practice areas, while the amount of time spent on-call while on work premises has increased across all areas, excluding farm and production animal practices.

VSs in practice continue to spend an increasing share of their working time (76.8% of their working hours, on average, during a typical week) on treating small animals, particularly cats and dogs; respondents spent 72.3 per cent of their working time on small animals in 2010, and 70.1 per cent in 2006. Meanwhile, the average amount of time that respondents report spending on farm animals, in particular cattle, during an average week has continued to decrease over this time period.

Compared to the 2010 survey findings slightly fewer VSs are personally engaged in out-of-hours work (64.5% compared to 66% in 2010), and fewer respondents report that their practice covers its own out-of-hours work (56.2% compared to 60.5% in 2010), with a higher share now utilising dedicated out-of-hours service providers. However, it is worth noting that the majority of respondents and/or practices are still involved in the provision of 24/7 emergency cover.

Employers within the veterinary profession appear to be offering more time to employees to engage in CPD activities than they did previously, although survey findings also indicate that the share of these activities that are funded by VSs' employers has decreased since the 2010 survey, with a greater number now engaging in free CPD provision. These results suggest that employers may be making more allowances in terms of the amount of working time employees spend engaging in CPD, although are not providing any extra funding for these activities.

With regard to recently qualified VSs (i.e. those respondents who gained their veterinary qualification in the last three years), the findings presented here show that, compared to the results of the 2010 survey, a smaller proportion are now going straight into practice work following graduation (52% compared to 63% in 2010). A larger share reported that they had been unable to find work immediately after qualifying (17.8% compared to 13.6% in 2010); while there was also an increase in the number working abroad for a charity or other practice.

In terms of their views of the veterinary profession, consistent with previous surveys, respondents stated that the best aspects of their work were the job satisfaction and the challenge and stimulus it provided them with, as well as the opportunity it afforded them to work with animals. However, respondents still believed that the profession could be improved through better pay/remuneration for VSs, and remained concerned

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about the high demands placed on them by clients and the levels of stress they are under.

## 14.2 Implications for the future

In the future, the trends identified in this report suggest that the outlook for the VS profession may be as follows:

- The feminisation of the VS profession will continue in coming years. This is demonstrated by the fact that of those respondents who obtained a veterinary degree in the UK in 2012 and 2013, three quarters were female (75.3% and 76.6% respectively).<sup>3</sup> Further, in the context of this current survey, male VSs have a higher average age than females (52 years compared to 38 years, respectively); this indicates that men will continue to retire in greater numbers than women for the foreseeable future.
- The number of VSs working in clinical practices is likely to increase further, while the proportion working for mixed animal and farm animal practices will continue on a downward trend.
- It is likely that the number of VSs working for government departments and agencies will decline further or remain static over the next few years, especially in light of UK government fiscal policy.
- More clinical practices may opt to use dedicated out-of-hours service providers in future, instead of covering their own out-of-hours work.
- We may expect VSs to spend an increasing share of their working time treating small animals, allocating less time to the treatment of farm animals such as cattle. After being evidenced in the last three surveys, it is clear that this is a consistent trend within the profession, and is not due to any short-term effects as a result of the recession.

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<sup>3</sup> RCVS (2013), *RCVS Facts: The Annual Report of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons: Part 2*.



## Appendix 1: Additional Tables

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### Personal details (Chapter 2)

Table A: 'Do you have dependent children living with you?'

Employment status	Yes (%)	No (%)
Full-time work	60.7	68.5
Part-time work	32.0	13.0
Voluntary work	0.6	1.5
Unemployed	1.2	1.7
Taking a career break	4.0	1.7
Retired	1.5	13.5
N =	2,203	4,577

Source: VS Survey, 2014

Table B: 'Do you provide care to an adult dependant?'

Employment status	Yes (%)	No (%)
Full-time work	57.5	66.5
Part-time work	23.4	19.0
Voluntary work	1.9	1.1
Unemployed	1.3	1.6
Taking a career break	2.2	2.5
Retired	13.7	9.4
N =	372	6,395

Source: VS Survey, 2014

**Table C: Disability or medical condition by age group**

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	(%)	(%)
20 to 29	4.1	18.3
30 to 39	12.2	30.7
40 to 49	16.5	19.9
50 to 59	21.7	15.7
60 to 69	14.0	9.1
70 to 95	31.4	6.3
N =	442	6,372

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

**Table D: Disability or medical condition by employment status**

<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	(%)	(%)
Full-time work	30.5	68.4
Part-time work	24.4	18.9
Voluntary work	2.3	1.1
Unemployed	3.6	1.4
Taking a career break	3.6	2.4
Retired	35.5	7.8
N =	439	6,365

*Source: VS Survey, 2014*

## Current work (Chapter 4)

Table E: Postcode of respondents' main workplace

Post-code	VS	VN	Post-code	VS	VN	Post-code	VS	VN	Post-code	VS	VN
AB	54	21	E	30	24	LE	73	57	SK	39	49
AL	81	64	EC	5	3	LL	43	34	SL	17	24
B	74	127	EH	133	93	LN	39	25	SM	5	11
BA	53	43	EN	15	37	LS	46	59	SN	67	52
BB	18	29	EX	85	68	LU	15	16	SO	49	70
BD	17	35	FK	25	24	M	36	48	SP	34	26
BH	52	60	FY	11	21	ME	51	57	SR	8	15
BL	24	29	G	95	87	MK	35	42	SS	39	36
BN	49	88	GL	86	79	ML	17	12	ST	43	48
BR	9	5	GU	89	94	N	19	26	SW	70	64
BS	127	119	GY	4	5	NE	67	81	SY	56	26
BT	118	68	HA	9	18	NG	69	70	TA	37	39
CA	36	30	HD	13	14	NN	51	62	TD	21	7
CB	120	103	HG	25	10	NP	23	28	TF	28	25
CF	48	38	HP	41	44	NR	68	60	TN	63	82
CH	85	56	HR	23	14	NW	49	35	TQ	29	27
CM	46	56	HS	2	2	OL	19	23	TR	45	37
CO	31	28	HU	19	27	OX	70	80	TS	28	27
CR	11	15	HX	12	17	PA	23	17	TW	22	26
CT	32	42	IG	11	14	PE	81	115	UB	8	15
CV	67	64	IM	10	4	PH	22	11	W	21	24
CW	33	35	IP	71	69	PL	49	62	WA	47	52
DA	17	27	IV	25	26	PO	42	55	WC	4	0
DD	18	12	JE	6	5	PR	25	46	WD	19	34
DE	55	63	KA	17	17	RG	77	87	WF	25	38
DG	23	14	KT	38	33	RH	60	80	WN	8	19
DH	15	19	KW	10	10	RM	19	31	WR	26	33
DL	18	30	KY	22	32	S	57	82	WS	12	25
DN	39	49	L	40	26	SA	61	39	WV	20	31
DT	31	19	LA	28	22	SE	32	25	YO	66	39
DY	21	23	LD	10	3	SG	46	47	ZE	3	2

Source: VS and VN Survey, 2014