

# The 2014 RCVS Survey of the Veterinary Nurse Profession

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# 1 Executive Summary

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This chapter of the report presents an overview of the results of the 2014 Survey of the Veterinary Nursing 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 31 per cent from registered and listed veterinary nurses (3,612 responses were received from registered/ listed nurses, plus 1,792 from student nurses giving a total of 5,496). Throughout this report, VN is shorthand for veterinary nurse, including students, unless otherwise specified.

## 1.1 Personal details

### Demographics

The overwhelming majority of VNs are female, with just two per cent male, as has been the case in previous VN surveys.

The average age of VNs is 31 years, as it was in the previous two surveys. Male VNs are younger than female VNs on average, and full-time workers are younger than part-time workers. The proportion of young VNs aged under 20 has increased since the 2010 survey, from three per cent to seven per cent; almost all of these are students.

Minority ethnic representation among VNs is very low, at two per cent, although it has increased slightly from the 2010 survey.

### Dependants

Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) have dependent children living with them, and three per cent provide care to a dependent adult. Among those respondents who live with dependent children, 80 per cent are in their 30s and 40s, and 41 per cent of respondents in their 30s, and 49 per cent of those in their 40s, have dependent children. Half of respondents caring for adult dependants are aged 40 or older, compared with just 16 per cent of those without adult care responsibilities.

## Disability

Four per cent of respondents have a disability or medical condition that limits the work they can do. The proportion of respondents with disabilities increases with age, and among respondents aged 50 and older, 11 per cent report a work-limiting disability or medical condition.

## VN status

Almost two thirds of respondents (64%) are registered VNs and just under a third (32%) are student VNs. Status varies significantly with age, as shown in the table, and almost all VNs aged under 20, and just under half of those in their 20s, are student VNs.

**Table 1.1: VN status by age: percentages within each age group**

	16-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 plus	All ages
Registered VN	2.2	52.4	86.3	79.5	78.5	69.4	63.6
Listed VN	0.0	0.3	4.8	13.2	18.7	27.8	4.2
Student VN	96.7	46.5	8.4	7.0	2.8	2.8	31.5
Other (including period of supervised practice)	1.1	0.8	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.6
N=	361	2500	1575	674	214	36	5,402

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 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 under a quarter of respondents (22%) 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. The majority (71%) of respondents to the survey indicated that they attended a non-selective state-run or state-funded school between these ages, while 17 per cent attended a selective state-run or state-funded school, and six per cent were educated at an independent or fee-paying school.

Respondents were also asked whether their household received income support, or they received free school meals, at any point during their school years. Fourteen per cent of respondents stated that they lived in households that were in receipt of income support at some point during their school years, and 13 per cent of respondents stated

that they received free school meals during their school years. There was considerable overlap between the two groups.

## 1.2 Work status

The proportion of respondents in full-time work (67%) has decreased markedly since 2010, while the proportion in clinical work experience has more than doubled to nine per cent. This is partly a reflection of the changing age profile of respondents, with an increase in the proportion aged under 20, the vast majority of whom are student VNs.

Full-time working was most common among respondents in their 20s (75%), and declines with age from 30 onwards, while part-time work becomes more common among the older age groups.

**Table 1.2: Work status by age: percentages within age group**

	16-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 plus	All ages
Full-time work	23.2	75.1	67.8	62.5	60.1	38.9	67.1
Part-time work	13.8	8.3	27.4	33.9	35.2	47.2	18.9
Clinical work experience	44.7	11.9	1.3	0.8	0.0	0.0	9.0
Other (voluntary work/ not working)	18.4	4.5	3.7	2.6	4.7	13.9	5.1
N=	349	2,454	1,565	669	213	36	5,286

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

Nearly all VN respondents work in the UK, and nearly all are British nationals. The main reasons for non-British national VNs coming to the UK are to study, to work abroad, or because of marriage or their partner.

Just under one in five VNs (18%) have a second job, and around half of these work in an animal or veterinary related field in their second job, although student VNs with second jobs commonly did retail, catering or bar work.

## 1.3 Working outside the veterinary profession

Two hundred and seventy three respondents (5%) are currently working outside the veterinary nursing profession (i.e. in a role that does not require a veterinary qualification or the use of veterinary skills), and half of these are working within non-animal-related organisations.

Half of respondents currently working outside the veterinary profession intend to seek employment in the veterinary nursing profession in the future, while a third of

respondents (33%) are undecided about whether they will (re-)enter the profession, and 16 per cent state that they have no intention of (re-)joining the profession.

## 1.4 Working within the veterinary profession

Over two thirds of those working within the profession in the UK work in small animal/exotic practices (69%), while 18 per cent of respondents work in mixed animal practices and 11 per cent work in referral practices/consultancies.

Outside of clinical practice, the most common types of organisation that respondents are employed in are charities and trusts, and education organisations.

### 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 VNs working in small animal/exotic practices work an average of 36 hours per week, those working in mixed practice work 35 hours per week, and those working in referral practices/consultancies work 34 hours per week. Working hours have decreased since 2010 when average working times in these practice areas were 39-40 hours per week. VNs working outside of clinical practice tended to have shorter hours than those in clinical practice.

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. On call hours off the premises were longer than those on the premises, at 18-20 hours for those in clinical practice compared with 13-15 hours on call on the premises among clinical practice VNs. These on call hours are broadly similar to those in 2010.

**Table 1.3: Average hours per week worked and on-call by different areas of practice (UK VNs)**

	Hours worked	On call (off premises)	On call (on premises)
Mixed practice	34.6	17.8	12.7
Small animal/exotic practice	35.7	18.4	13.9
Equine practice	34.6	21.4	11.2
Farm practice/production animal practice	23.3	-	-
Other first opinion practice	33.0	-	7.8
Referral practice/consultancy	34.4	20.4	14.9

Source: VN survey, 2014

## Employer benefits

Respondents were asked whether their practice provided them with certain provisions or benefits. Nearly nine out of ten respondents stated that they received uniform or work clothing and training or CPD support (in terms of time or financial support) from their employer, and just under three quarters said they received no or reduced vet fees.

## Career intentions

When asked about their future career plans, more than four-fifths of UK-practising VNs said that they plan to stay in the profession for the foreseeable future, up from three quarters in the 2010 survey.

Pay was the most common reason for leaving the profession given by those respondents who intend to leave the profession for non-retirement reasons, followed by not feeling rewarded or valued in non-financial terms.

## 1.5 Working within clinical practice

Around nine out of ten (89%) VN respondents working in the UK are working in clinical practice.

### Position in practice

The most common position held by VNs in clinical practice was 'Nurse' (44%), followed by 'Student nurse' (31%) and 'Head nurse (inc. deputy & senior)' (22%).

One in ten VNs work in more than one practice, and this proportion rises to 58 per cent of locum VNs.

### Work undertaken

The most common tasks undertaken by VNs are clinical cleaning and administering medicines by injection, with more than three quarters of respondents stating they do these tasks every day. Other tasks undertaken every day by most VNs include caring for hospitalised animals, dispensing medications to clients, administering anaesthetic pre-medication, monitoring anaesthesia, and general domestic cleaning. Tasks rarely or never undertaken by VNs included performing minor surgical procedures, and dental extraction or dental hygiene work.

Almost three quarters of VNs (73%) are involved in some nursing clinics, most commonly nutrition, and puppy/kitten clinics. A slightly lower proportion (70%) say

they have particular areas of expertise, with weight management and nutrition/diabetes the most commonly mentioned.

Three quarters of VNs' working time is spent on dogs and cats on average, with most of the rest spent on either practice management or administration, or on rabbits.

## Visits

Fifteen per cent of VN respondents say they undertake visits to clients, around half the proportion in the 2010 survey of 28 per cent. The vast majority of visits take place during clinical hours.

## Working time arrangements

Around four-fifths (79%) of respondents currently working in a UK clinical practice manage to have a minimum rest period of 11 hours in each 24-hour period. Of those that don't, relatively few have signed up to a workforce agreement that provides other compensatory rest, or discussed a workforce agreement with their employer.

Ninety four per cent of UK-practising VNs reported that they have at least two rest days in every 14-day period, while a similar proportion (91%) have at least 20 days' paid holiday each year (plus bank holidays).

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

Registered and listed VNs in the UK were invited to answer questions about any CPD activity. These questions were not asked of student VNs as they are not required to do CPD.

### CPD methods and funding

Seventy per cent of VNs had spent some time away from the workplace to receive CPD in the previous 12 months.

The most commonly used methods of CPD provision are lectures by external providers (70%); distance learning via webinars (64%); and ad hoc, undocumented private study (61%).

On average, respondents who had engaged in CPD activities in the past year stated that 43 per cent of this provision had been funded by their employer, and 41 per cent had been undertaken at no cost. There has been a big shift from employer-funded provision towards free provision since 2010.

## Further education

With regards to respondents current and past engagement in further education, around a quarter of respondents (26%) currently hold a veterinary qualification in addition to their primary VN qualification, most commonly a BA degree or RCVS Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (DipAVN). Twelve per cent of VNs are currently studying for an additional qualification, and 28 per cent plan to study for one in the next five years, with RCVS DipAVN the most common qualification being studied for or planned.

### 1.7 Electronic communications and use of the internet

Twenty nine per cent of all VN respondents stated that they use smart phones or tablets for work purposes, and there was little variation by age with 26 per cent of those in their 50s using smart phones or tablets.

Survey respondents were also asked which social networking sites they use for professional purposes. The most common sites used professionally are Facebook, and [www.vetnurse.co.uk](http://www.vetnurse.co.uk).

### 1.8 Students and recent qualifiers

Around half (52%) of the current number of 1,363 student respondents intend to remain employed in their training practice when they qualify, although this is below the proportion from the 2010 survey of 61 per cent, and a higher proportion now intend to move to another practice (31% compared with 23% in 2010).

Just over a third (36%) of student VNs obtained a training position in the first practice they approached, although one in five (20%) had to approach more than 20 practices before they were taken on.

Among those respondents who had become qualified as VNs from 2012 onwards (N = 553), nearly two thirds (65%) remained employed in their training practice. This proportion is above that of current students who intend to remain in their training practice, but that was also the case in the 2010 survey.

Three-quarters of recent qualifiers (78%) are still in their first post-qualification position, although this is below the proportion in the 2010 survey of 88 per cent.

Day-release courses are the most common course structure, with 55 per cent of students and recent qualifiers studying in this way. However, those doing block-release courses are less satisfied with the quality of their training practice and

college/university experiences than are those studying block-release or full-time degree courses.

## 1.9 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. Views are very positive about VN work giving job satisfaction and variety, but VNs are dissatisfied with pay and with stress levels in the job. However, views have generally become more positive since the 2010 survey about most aspects of working life.

Younger respondents and students are generally more positive than others about their job satisfaction and satisfaction with a career in the profession.

Three-fifths of respondents (60%) would still opt to become a VN if they could start their career again, up from 54 per cent in 2010, and these respondents were more positive about the profession than those who had doubts or who would not opt to be a VN again.

Survey respondents were also asked to consider the best aspects of the profession, possible improvements and the challenges it currently faces. VNs stated that the best aspects of their work are working with animals and job satisfaction, while the main challenges and suggestions for areas for improvement centred around pay and getting respect and recognition from the public.

## 1.10 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 VN sample is 47.5, below the average population mean but very close to the average score in the 2010 survey. Compared with the 2010 results, VNs now feel more useful, are thinking more clearly and are dealing with problems better, but feel less relaxed and less loved.

Female respondents have a lower average score than male respondents (47.5 compared with 49.3), and respondents aged under 20 (48.9) had higher scores than older respondents.

## 2 Introduction

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### 2.1 Background

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

The 2014 survey of veterinary nurses (VNs) is the fourth survey carried out by the RCVS; VNs were also surveyed in 2003, 2008 and 2010. Throughout this report, where possible and appropriate, results are compared with those of previous surveys.

The aim of these surveys is to provide the RCVS, and other interested parties, with an evidence-based view of the VN profession and the changes taking place within it.

This survey is the second to include questions about respondents' well-being, their rest periods and holiday, and detailed comparisons of these responses and the 2010 responses are presented.

For the purposes of this survey, unless otherwise specified, VN is shorthand for qualified (listed and registered) and student veterinary nursing staff.

### 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 members.

Both the VN and VS surveys were 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 11,516 registered/listed and student VNs for whom the RCVS held valid email or postal addresses, via email or post as appropriate.

## 2.3 Response

By the time the survey closed on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014, IES had received 5,496 completed VN questionnaires; of these 3,612 were from registered/listed VNs, and 1,792 were from student VNs.

Comparing the response from registered/listed VNs with the number of invitations emailed or posted out gives an overall response rate of 31 per cent. This is the same as that achieved in the 2010 survey, although in 2008 a response rate of 35 per cent was achieved.

A response analysis was carried out to compare survey respondents to the RCVS database of registered/listed and student VNs for whom the RCVS holds a valid email or postal address.

The results are shown in Table 2.1, and show that the sample achieved was broadly similar to the RCVS database in terms of gender and age.

**Table 2.1: VN Survey 2014 response analysis for registered/listed VNs (%)**

		Survey respondents	RCVS mailout	Over/under response
Female	Under 20	0.2	0.2	Equal
	20s	35.4	34.8	Slightly over
	30s	38.8	41.5	Slightly under
	40s	17.0	16.0	Slightly over
	50+	6.6	5.5	Slightly over
	Total	98.0	98.0	Equal
Male	Under 20	0.0	0.0	Equal
	20s	0.9	0.8	Equal
	30s	0.8	0.9	Equal
	40+	0.2	0.3	Equal
	Total	1.9	2.0	Equal

Source: VN 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?'), but often with an 'other' option to capture new responses.

When carrying out the analysis, IES used key variables to provide breakdowns such as age group, student status 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 practice
- Continuing professional development and further education
- Electronic communication and use of the internet
- Student VNs and recent qualifiers
- Views about the VN profession
- Well-being.

A separate report details the findings from the survey of VSs, and a synthesis report draws together the key findings from both surveys.



## 3 Demographics

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This chapter gives details of the characteristics of respondents to the VN survey, including details of gender, age, ethnicity, responsibility for dependants, disabilities, indicators of social mobility and qualifications prior to veterinary nursing study.

### 3.1 Chapter summary

- Ninety-eight per cent of respondents are female.
- The average age of VN respondents is 30.6 years.
- The proportion of VN respondents who are from an ethnic minority group is 1.7 per cent.
- Just under a quarter of respondents have dependent children living with them, while three per cent provide care to a dependent adult.
- Four per cent of respondents have a disability or medical condition that limits the work they can do.
- The demographic profile is very similar to that found in the 2010 survey.
- Nearly three in five VN respondents do not hold membership of any VN organisation, up from around half in 2010.
- The median year of qualification is 2006, or eight years before the survey; in the 2010 survey the median year of qualification was 2003, ie seven years earlier.
- Almost all VN respondents qualified in the UK.
- Just under a quarter of VN respondents (22%) stated that their parents or guardians had been degree-educated.
- Only six per cent of VN respondents indicated that they attended an independent or fee paying school, and 71 per cent said they were educated at a non-selective state-run or state-funded school.
- Fourteen per cent of VN respondents stated that they lived in households that were in receipt of income support at some point during their school years, while 13 per cent said they had received free school meals.

### 3.2 Gender

Nearly all respondents (98%) were women, as they were in earlier surveys (Table 3.1). Given that the proportion of male respondents is so low, gender comparisons have not routinely been made throughout the report; however, any areas where gender differences are statistically significant have been highlighted.

**Table 3.1: Demographic characteristics**

		Frequency	%	2010 %	2008 %
Gender	Male	131	2.4	2	2
	Female	5,298	97.5	98	98
	Prefer not to disclose	5	0.1	-	-
Age	16 to 19	367	6.8	3.0	4
	20 to 29	2,527	46.6	47.8	52
	30 to 39	1,596	29.4	33.9	31
	40 to 49	681	12.5	11.0	10
	50 to 59	220	4.1	4.0	3
	60 plus	36	0.7	0.4	0.3
Ethnicity	White	5,345	98.3	98.8	98.9
	Mixed	51	0.9	0.7	0.6
	Asian/Asian British	16	0.3	0.1	0.1
	Black/Black British	13	0.2	0.2	<0.1
	Chinese	8	0.1	0.1	0.1
	Other	3	0.1	0.1	0.2
	Total	5,436	100	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

### 3.3 Age

Just over half of respondents were aged under 30 (53%, Table 3.1). The age breakdown of respondents is broadly similar to that in 2010, although there are slightly more respondents aged under 20 and in their 40s, and slightly fewer in their 20s and 30s.

The mean age of all respondents was 30.6 years, very similar to the figures in the previous surveys in 2010 and 2008 of 31 years and 30 years respectively. Men were younger than women on average, 28.6 years compared with 30.7 years for women. This was also the case in the 2010 survey.

Table 3.2 shows average age by employment status. The average age of full-time workers was below that of part-time workers, as it was in 2010, and the average age of those undertaking clinical work experience was in the early 20s, again similar to the

2010 survey. Unemployed respondents were slightly younger on average than they were in the 2010 survey (22 compared with 25).

**Table 3.2: Mean age by employment status**

	Mean age	N	Mean 2010
Full-time work	30.8	3,546	30
Part-time work	35.6	999	36.4
Clinical work experience (paid)	22.2	91	23
Clinical work experience (unpaid)	21.4	384	21
Voluntary work	25.2	24	-
Unemployed	22.3	150	25
Taking a career break	33.7	82	32.2
Retired	57.4	10	57.3
Total	30.7	5,286	31

Source: VN survey, 2014

The average age of respondents who are currently working in a practice varies with their position in the practice, as it did in earlier surveys, from 24 for student nurses up to 41 for practice owners, partners or directors (Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3: Mean age by position in practice, for those working within clinical practice**

	Mean age	N	2010	2008
Student nurse	24.1	1,287	24	23
Nurse	31.8	1,883	31	30
Head nurse (inc. deputy & senior)	35.2	946	33	35
Assessor/training manager	33.8	403	33	-
Practice manager/administrator	38.8	177	36	36
Locum	33.7	114	33	32
Practice owner or partner/director	40.9	30	38	37
Other	37.5	56	34	32

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 3.4 Ethnicity

Nearly all respondents described their ethnicity as white, although the proportion of non-white respondents has increased slightly since 2010, to 1.7 per cent compared with 1.2 per cent in 2010 (Table 3.1).

The proportion of non-white respondents was higher among those aged under 30 (2.1% compared with 1.1% among those aged 30 and older).

### 3.5 Caring responsibilities

The proportion of respondents with caring responsibilities was broadly in line with those found in the earlier surveys. Just under a quarter of respondents had dependent children living with them (23%), which compares with 24 per cent in 2010 and 22 per cent in 2008 (Table 3.4). Very few respondents (2.6%, compared with 2% in 2010 and 1.5% in 2008) had caring responsibilities for an adult dependant.

**Table 3.4: Caring responsibilities**

		Frequency	%	2010 %	2008 %
Have dependent children	Yes	1,239	22.8	24	22
	No	4,194	77.2	76	78
Provide care to adult dependent	Yes	142	2.6	2	1.5
	No	5,287	97.4	98	98.5
	Total	5,433	100	100	100

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

Over half (53%) of those with dependent children are aged in their 30s, and just over a quarter (27%) are in their 40s. This is slightly higher than the proportion found in the 2010 survey, of 78.5 per cent. An alternative way of looking at age and childcare responsibilities is that 41 per cent of respondents in their 30s, and 49 per cent of those in their 40s, had dependent children living with them.

Respondents who provide care to an adult dependant tend to be older on average than those who do not provide adult care. Nearly half (49%) of those with adult care responsibilities are aged 40 or older, compared with just 16 per cent of those without adult care responsibilities.

### 3.6 Disability

The prevalence of disability or limiting medical conditions among respondents was around four per cent, the same as the figure in 2010 and slightly higher than the three per cent found in the 2008 survey (Table 3.5). The proportion increases with age, from 2.5 per cent of those aged under 30, to around five per cent of those aged in their 30s and 40s, and around 11 per cent of those aged 50 and older.

**Table 3.5: ‘Do you consider yourself to have a disability or medical condition that limits the work you can do?’**

	Frequency	%	2010 %	2008 %
Yes	212	3.9	4	3
No	5,229	96.1	96	97
Total	5,441	100	100	100

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

### 3.7 VN status

Almost two thirds of respondents (64%) were registered VNs, and just under one third (32%) were student VNs, as Table 3.6 shows. The proportion of registered VNs is very similar to that found in the 2010 survey (64%) while there are more student VNs and fewer listed VNs than in 2010 (when 17% were listed VNs and 19% were student VNs), although the wording of this question, and the available options, changed slightly from the 2010 survey and so the comparisons are not direct.

**Table 3.6: RCVS membership category**

	Frequency	%
Registered VN	3,438	63.6
Listed VN	229	4.2
Student VN	1,701	31.5
Undergoing ‘Period of Supervised Practice’	5	0.1
Other	29	0.5
Total	5,402	100

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

Status varied significantly with age, as shown in Table 3.7. Student VNs are mainly found among those aged under 30, while the proportion of registered VNs peaks among those in their 30s, at 86 per cent, and the proportion of listed VNs increases with age from 30 onwards.

**Table 3.7: VN status by age: percentages within age group**

	16 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 plus
Registered VN	2.2	52.4	86.3	79.5	78.5	69.4
Listed VN	0.0	0.3	4.8	13.2	18.7	27.8
Student VN	96.7	46.5	8.4	7.0	2.8	2.8
Other (including period of supervised practice)	1.1	0.8	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.0
N=	361	2,500	1,575	674	214	36

Source: VN survey, 2014

### 3.8 VN qualification

Among qualified VNs, the most common qualification was a Level 3 Diploma (34%) followed by NVQ qualification (28%, Table 3.8).

**Table 3.8: Primary VN qualification**

	Frequency	%
Degree	709	13.3
Foundation degree	367	6.9
Level 3 Diploma	1,811	34.0
NVQ	1,490	28.0
Certificate (pre-2000)	840	15.8
Other	113	2.1
Total	5,330	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

VN qualification varies significantly with age, reflecting changes to the qualification landscape over time (Table 3.9). The majority of respondents aged 40 and older hold a Certificate, although there are small proportions with a Level 3 Diploma or NVQ. Just over half of respondents (54%) in their 30s hold NVQ qualifications, while just under half of respondents aged under 30 hold Level 3 Diplomas, and Degrees or Foundation Degrees are most likely to be held or studied towards by the under 30s.

**Table 3.9: Primary VN qualification by age (%)**

	16 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 plus
Degree	27.5	19.7	6.2	2.3	3.3	0.0
Foundation degree	23.3	10.5	1.1	0.6	0.0	0.0
Level 3 Diploma	46.4	48.7	19.7	15.9	9.0	5.9
NVQ	0.3	19.8	54.0	18.3	14.2	2.9
Certificate (pre-2000)	0.0	0.2	16.5	60.5	66.0	82.4
Other	2.5	1.2	2.5	2.4	7.5	8.8
N=	360	2,484	1,544	656	212	34

Source: VN survey, 2014

### 3.9 Year of qualification

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of registered or listed VNs qualified in 2001 or later (Table 3.10). The median year of qualification was 2006. Listed VNs generally qualified earlier than did registered VNs, which is to be expected given that the List closed to new entrants in 2007.

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

	Frequency	%
Pre-1970	12	0.3
1971-1980	68	1.9
1981-1990	194	5.3
1991-2000	715	19.5
2001-2010	1,755	47.9
2011-2014	918	25.1
Total	3,662	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

### 3.10 Country of qualification

Qualified VNs were asked the country of their qualification, and, as in earlier surveys, almost all respondents had qualified in the UK (97.8%, compared with 98.7% in 2010 and 98.5% in 2008). Respondents who qualified elsewhere in the EU made up 1.1 per cent of the total, and those who qualified outside the EU accounted for 1.2 per cent.

### 3.11 Membership organisations

Just under two fifths (37%) of respondents were members of the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA), but nearly three fifths (58%) were not members of any VN organisation (Table 3.11). Membership of BVNA is lower than in the 2010 survey, when 49 per cent of respondents said that they were BVNA members, and 49 per cent said that they did not hold membership with any VN organisation.

**Table 3.11: ‘Of which VN organisations are you currently a member?’**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
None	3,113	58.0	49
BVNA	2,001	37.3	49
Other UK associations	410	7.6	4
Other non-UK associations	79	1.5	1
Total	5,367	100	100

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

### 3.12 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.

The first question asked respondents whether any of their parents or guardians had completed a university degree course or equivalent. Table 3.12 shows that just under a quarter (22%) of VNs said that they had degree-educated parents or guardians, while just under three quarters (73%) said that their parents or guardians had not completed a university education, and four per cent said that they did not know. This is below the proportion among veterinary surgeon respondents of 51 per cent who had university educated parents or guardians.

Data on the background of doctors in training were also collected from the General Medical Council’s National Training Survey 2013, which 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/guardians complete a university degree course?’**

	Frequency	%	VS %	GMC %
Yes	1,182	22.2	51.2	65.0
No	3,922	73.6	48.3	31.4
Don't know (incl. Prefer not to say in GMC survey)	227	4.3	0.5	3.5
Total	5,331	100	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014; GMC October 2013

The second question asked respondents the type of school that was mainly attended between the ages of 11 and 16. Table 3.13 shows that the majority of respondents, 71 per cent, attended a non-selective state school, while 17 per cent attended a state school that was selective on academic, faith or other grounds, and only six per cent of VNs attended a fee-paying school in the UK. Among VS respondents just over a quarter (26%) had attended a non-selective state school, while just under a quarter (24%) had attended a fee-paying school in the UK, and 30 per cent had attended school outside the UK. Around one in three doctors in training (34%) had attended an independent or fee-paying school. Information from the 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 (*Barristers' Working Lives: A second biennial survey of the Bar, 2013, Bar Standards Board and Bar Council*).

Respondents were also asked whether their household received income support, or they received free school meals, at any point during their school years. Around one in seven VNs (14%) grew up in a household that received income support, which compares with eight per cent of VS respondents, and is slightly higher than the proportion among doctors in training of 12 per cent (Table 3.14).

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

	Frequency	%	VS %	GMC %
A state-run or state-funded school in the UK - selective on academic, faith or other grounds	880	16.5	19.8	23.7
A state-run or state-funded school in the UK - non-selective	3,803	71.3	26.3	38.8
Independent or fee-paying school in the UK	313	5.9	23.7	33.7
Attended school outside the UK	222	4.2	30.0	-
I don't know (incl. Prefer not to say in GMC survey)	119	2.2	0.2	3.9
Total	5,337	100	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014; GMC October 2013

Table 3.14 also shows that the proportion of respondents who received free school meals at some point during their school years was, at 13 per cent, similar to the

proportion whose household received income support. The proportion was higher than that found among VS respondents, of ten per cent, and was higher than the proportion among doctors in training of eight per cent. There was considerable overlap between the two groups, with around half of those who were in receipt of income support also receiving free school meals, and vice versa.

**Table 3.14: ‘Did your household receive, at any point during your school years, ...?’**

		Frequency	%	VS %	GMC %
Income support	Yes	748	14.0	7.8	11.5
	No	3,973	74.3	87.8	78.6
	Don't know (incl. Prefer not to say in GMC survey)	625	11.7	4.4	10.0
Free school meals	Yes	711	13.3	9.6	8.3
	No	4,414	82.6	86.6	84.9
	Don't know (incl. Prefer not to say in GMC survey)	220	4.1	3.9	6.9
Total		5,346	100	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014; GMC October 2013

### 3.13 Qualifications prior to VN study

Table 3.15 shows the highest educational level of respondents prior to their embarking on their veterinary nursing qualification. The wording of the question has changed since the 2010 survey so direct comparisons are not possible, although the proportion of respondents with at least an undergraduate degree is similar to earlier surveys (9.6%, compared with 9.5% in 2010 and 8.7% in 2008). One in four respondents (25%) held two or more A levels or equivalent as their highest qualification, and a further 12 per cent had an NVQ Level 3 or equivalent. Just over one third of respondents (36 per cent) held qualifications equivalent to 5+ GCSEs (A\* to C)/apprenticeship/NVQ Level 2 as their highest qualification.

**Table 3.15: Highest qualification of respondents before entering veterinary nursing**

	Frequency	%
Master's degree (eg MA, MSc)	36	0.7
Undergraduate degree (eg BA, BSc)	473	8.9
Professional qualifications (eg teaching, nursing, accountancy)	60	1.1
NVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher Level	142	2.7
2+ A levels/VCEs, 4+ AS levels, Higher School Certificate, Progression/Advanced Diploma	1,337	25.1
NVQ Level 3, Advanced BNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma	624	11.7
5+ O levels (passes/ CSEs (grade 1)/ GCSEs (grades A* to C)), School Certificate, 1 A Level/ 2 to 3 AS levels/VCEs, High	1,567	29.4
Other vocational/work-related qualifications	105	2.0

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	Frequency	%
Apprenticeship	21	0.4
NVQ Level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC First/ General Diploma, RSA Diploma	213	4.0
1 to 4 O levels/CSEs/GCSEs (any grades), entry Level, Foundation Diploma	607	11.4
NVQ Level1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic Skills	11	0.2
Non-UK qualifications	105	2.0
No qualifications	29	0.5
Total	5,330	100

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

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## 4 Work Status

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This chapter presents information on the current employment status of all respondents in the VN survey.

### 4.1 Chapter summary

- Two-thirds of VN respondents are employed on a full-time basis, and one in five are employed on a part-time basis.
- Full-time respondents worked on average 39 hours a week excluding overtime and on-call hours, and these hours were the same regardless of whether they worked in clinical practice or not, or outside of the profession. However, part-time respondents working outside the profession worked on average 16 hours a week, compared with 22 hours worked by those within the profession.
- Three per cent of respondents are unemployed, and two per cent are on a career break, mostly commonly parental leave or time spent looking after children.
- Only a handful of respondents (0.2%) are fully retired.

### 4.2 Employment status

The current employment status of all respondents, regardless of whether they were in veterinary or non-veterinary employment, is shown in Table 4.1. Two thirds (67%) were working full-time at the time of the survey, and one fifth (19%) were working part-time. Just under one in ten (9%) were undertaking clinical work experience, and most of those were doing unpaid work experience.

The proportion of respondents working full-time is considerably lower compared to 2010 (67% compared with 75%), while the proportion in part-time work is slightly higher (19% compared with 18%). The proportion in clinical work experience is notably higher (8.9% compared with 3.2%) as is the proportion unemployed (2.8% compared with 1.1%). The increase in the proportion in clinical work experience is partly driven by the change in the age profile since 2010, with an increase in the proportion of respondents aged under 20, the vast majority of whom are students.

**Table 4.1: Employment status**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Full-time work	3,570	67.0	74.7
Part-time work	1,010	19.0	18.0
Clinical work experience (paid)	91	1.7	0.6
Clinical work experience (unpaid)	385	7.2	2.6
Voluntary work	25	0.5	-
Unemployed	150	2.8	1.1
Taking a career break	84	1.6	2.9
Retired	10	0.2	0.1
Total	5,325	100	

Source: VN survey, 2014

There are markedly different patterns in employment status by age group (Table 4.2). Just under half (45%) of respondents aged 16-19 were undertaking clinical work experience (mostly unpaid), while 23 per cent were in full-time work, 14 per cent were in part-time work, and 16 per cent said that they were unemployed; respondents under 20 who said they were unemployed were predominantly students VNs on degree or foundation degree courses. Full-time working was most common among respondents in their 20s, at 75 per cent, and part-time working was least common, at just eight per cent, while 12 per cent were undertaking clinical work experience. Among those 30 and older, full-time working decreases with age and part-time working increases: 68 per cent of those in their 30s worked full-time and 27 per cent worked part-time, whereas among those 60 and older these proportions were 39 per cent and 47 per cent respectively. Just over one in ten respondents aged 60 and over (11%) stated that they were retired.

**Table 4.2: Employment status by age: percentages within age group**

	16-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 plus
Full-time work	23.2	75.1	67.8	62.5	60.1	38.9
Part-time work	13.8	8.3	27.4	33.9	35.2	47.2
Clinical work experience (paid)	6.9	2.4	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.0
Clinical work experience (unpaid)	37.8	9.5	1.0	0.4	0.0	0.0
Voluntary work	2.0	0.5	0.1	0.3	0.0	2.8
Unemployed	15.5	3.1	1.2	0.0	0.5	0.0
Taking a career break	0.9	0.9	2.3	2.2	2.3	0.0
Retired	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	1.9	11.1
N=	349	2,454	1,565	669	213	36

Source: VN survey, 2014

Caring responsibilities also had a significant impact on employment status, with over half (55%) of those with dependent children, and nearly one third (31%) of those with

adult caring responsibilities, working part-time, while the proportions working full-time were 39 per cent and 61 per cent respectively.

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

Looking at the characteristics of those working full-time, just over nine out of ten (91%) were working in clinical practice, while five per cent worked outside clinical practice but within the veterinary profession, and three per cent worked outside the profession, and these patterns are very similar to those found in the 2010 survey. Full-time VNs worked an average of 39 hours per week excluding overtime and on-call hours, regardless of where they worked.

Turning now to the characteristics of those working part-time, only four-fifths (80%) were working in clinical practice, while seven per cent worked outside clinical practice but within the veterinary profession, and 13 per cent worked outside the profession. There has been an increase in the proportion of part-time VNs working outside the profession, and a decrease in the proportion of those working in clinical practice, since the 2010 survey. Those working within the profession worked an average of 22 hours per week excluding overtime and on-call hours, the same hours as in 2010, while those working outside the profession worked an average of 16 hours, below the figure of 20 hours from the 2010 survey.

### 4.4 Unemployment

The 150 unemployed respondents were asked how long they had been out of work, whether they were seeking work, and if so whether that was within or outside the VN profession. It should be noted that the composition of the unemployed has changed markedly since the 2010 survey in terms of the proportion of the unemployed who are student VNs, which has increased from 52 per cent in 2010 to 82 per cent in the current survey.

All but one unemployed respondent were aged under 40, with those in their 20s comprising 51 per cent of the total, those aged under 20 comprising 36 per cent, and those in their 30s making up 12 per cent of all unemployed respondents.

The duration of unemployment among unemployed respondents ranged from 0 months up to 230 months ie over 19 years, with the second longest duration being 48 months. Excluding this extreme outlier case, which has a disproportionate effect on the mean duration of unemployment, gives a mean duration of eight months, similar to the mean duration in the 2010 survey. The median duration was six months, slightly longer than the four months found in 2010. The modal duration was also six months.

Respondents appear less active in their job seeking than they have been in the past. Two fifths of unemployed respondents (40%) were seeking work at the time of the questionnaire, which is below the figures found in the 2010 and 2008 surveys of 50 per cent and 88 per cent respectively (Table 4.3). Unemployed registered VNs were more likely to seek work than were unemployed student VNs (69% compared with 33%, similar to the position in 2010 when 61% of registered VNs and 38% of student VNs were looking for work).

**Table 4.3: 'Are you seeking work?'**

	Frequency	%	2010 %	2008 %
Yes	58	39.5	50.0	87.5
No	89	60.5	50.0	12.5
Total	147	100	100	100

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

Of those unemployed respondents who were seeking work, just over two-thirds (68%) were seeking work within the VN profession, and a further quarter (26%) said they may seek VN work in the future, and these accounted for 27 per cent and ten per cent of all unemployed respondents respectively (Table 4.4). In 2010, those seeking VN work comprised a similar proportion of those looking for work (71%), but a larger proportion of all unemployment VNs (36%).

**Table 4.4: 'Are you seeking veterinary nurse-related work?'**

	Frequency	% of those looking	% of all unemployed	2010 % of those looking	2010 % of all unemployed
Yes	39	68.4	26.5	71.4	35.7
No, but may do in future	15	26.3	10.2	23.8	11.9
No, and do not intend to	3	5.3	2.0	4.8	2.4
Total	57	100	38.7	100	50.0

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

Two-fifths (40%) of unemployed respondents who were seeking work were looking for work outside the VN profession, and just over a quarter (28%) said they may do in the future, and these proportions are slightly below those in the 2010 survey (Table 4.5). However, as a proportion of all unemployed, those looking for, or considering looking for, work outside the profession make up 27 per cent, below the 2010 figure of 36 per cent.

**Table 4.5: 'Are you seeking non-veterinary nurse-related work?'**

	Frequency	% of those looking	% of all unemployed	2010 % of those looking	2010 % of all unemployed
Yes	23	39.7	15.6	42.9	21.4
No, but may do in future	16	27.6	10.9	28.6	14.3
No, and do not intend to	19	32.8	12.9	28.6	14.3
Total	58	100	39.5	100	50.0

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 4.5 Career breaks

The 84 respondents who were on a career break were asked for what purpose they had taken a career break, and the results are shown in Table 4.6.

The most common reason, mentioned by 45 per cent of those on a career break, was parental leave or looking after children. This was also the most common reason in 2010, but with a much higher proportion of VNs, 77 per cent, citing this reason. The proportions mentioning travel and study have increased substantially since 2010, as has the proportion citing 'any other reason'.

**Table 4.6: 'For what purpose have you taken your current career break?'**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Travel	13	15.5	1.7
Study	12	14.3	7.0
Illness (self)	5	6.0	8.7
Sabbatical	4	4.8	0.9
Parental leave/looking after children	38	45.2	76.5
Looking after adult dependant	1	1.2	0.0
Other reason	11	13.1	5.2
Total	84	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Respondents on a career break were asked how long they expected it to last from start to finish. The mean duration across all reasons was 20 months, although parental leave breaks were expected to be longest, at 30 months, with study breaks expected to last 22 months, and travel breaks expected to last nine months.

## 4.6 Retirement

Only 0.2 per cent of VN respondents reported that they are retired, so no statistical analysis can be carried out on the data.

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

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This chapter gives details of the location and other work characteristics of the 95 per cent of respondents who are in current work (ie omitting those who are unemployed, taking a career break or retired).

### 5.1 Chapter summary

- Nearly all (98.5%) of those in current employment, or undertaking clinical work experience, work in the UK.
- Furthermore, nearly all (97.7%) are British nationals.
- The most common reasons for overseas VNs coming to the UK are ‘to study or study further’, ‘to work abroad’ and ‘marriage/partner’. Their average (median) year of arrival in the UK was 2009 (mean year was 2006).
- Eighteen per cent of respondents have a second job, and around half of these were working in an animal or veterinary related field in their second job.
- Nearly all (95%) VN respondents in employment or undertaking clinical work experience say that their employment was within the VN profession.

### 5.2 Country of employment

Table 5.1 shows that nearly all respondents currently in work or undertaking clinical work experience were working in the UK (98.5%, similar to the proportions in 2010 and 2008<sup>7</sup> of 98.8% and 99% respectively). Of those working outside the UK, the largest numbers were in Australia, followed by Ireland and New Zealand.

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

	Frequency	%
UK	4,957	98.5
Ireland	9	0.2
Other EU	6	0.1
Europe, outside EU	3	0.1
Australia	24	0.5
New Zealand	7	0.1
Canada	3	0.1
USA	1	0.0
South Africa	6	0.1
Other	17	0.3
Total	5,033	100

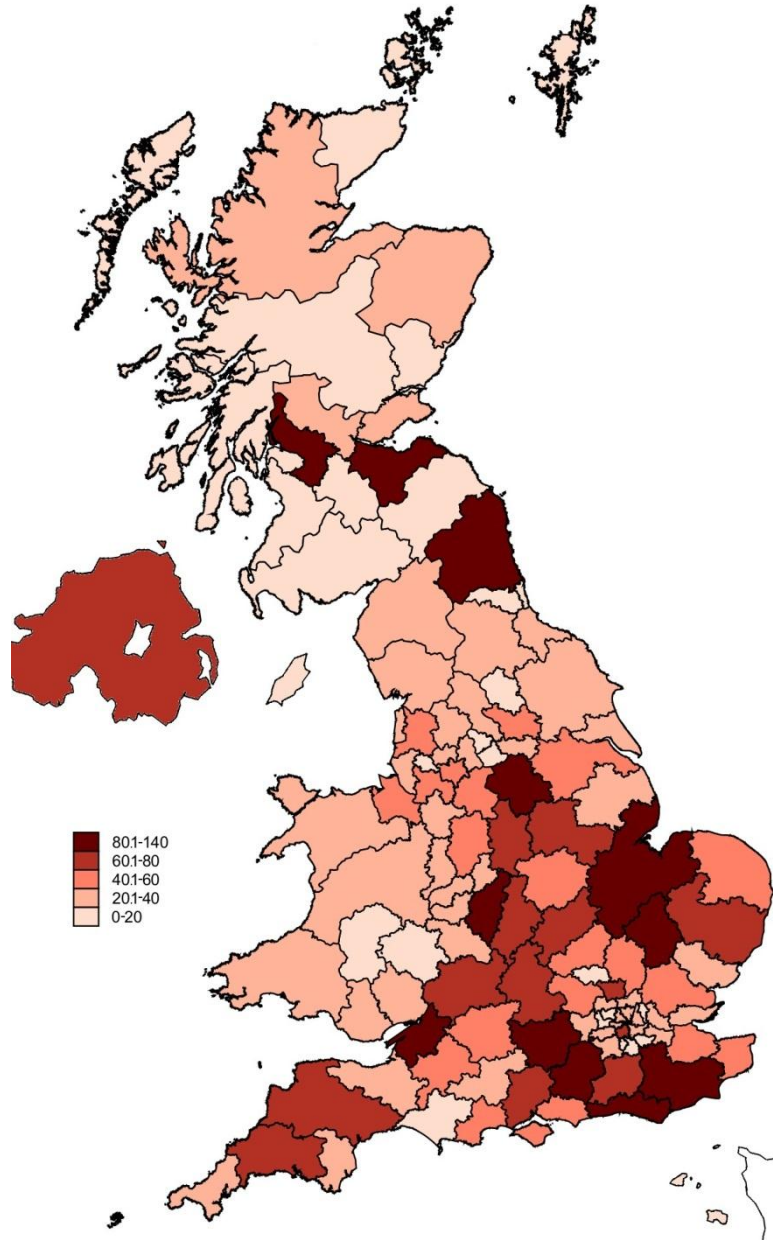
Source: VN survey, 2014

### 5.3 Location of main workplace

Figure 5.1 shows the geographical distribution of VN respondents 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>1</sup>. Table A in the Appendix presents the number of VNs and VSs in each postcode area.

<sup>1</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, VN respondents



Source: VN survey, 2014

## 5.4 British nationals/moving to the UK

Overall, just over two per cent of VNs were not British nationals, slightly above the proportion from the 2010 survey (Table 5.2).

**Table 5.2: 'Are you a British national?'**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Yes	4,818	97.7	98.7
No	113	2.3	1.3
Total	4,931	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Respondents who were not British nationals gave a variety of reasons for coming to the UK, as Table 5.3 shows. The most common reasons were to study or study further (31%), to work abroad (29%) or due to marriage/partner (28%). Although the way the question has been asked has changed since 2010 (when respondents were asked to write in one reason), it would appear that there has been a large increase in the proportion coming to the UK to study (further) to be a VN, up from eight per cent in 2010.

**Table 5.3: 'If you are not a British national, why did you come to the UK, this time?'**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
To work abroad	32	29.1	33.3
Due to marriage/partner	31	28.2	25.5
To gain experience	26	23.6	9.8
As never left after studying	11	10.0	15.7
To study/study further	34	30.9	7.8
Due to better pay and conditions	15	13.6	0.0
Due to lack of work in home country	23	20.9	3.9
To learn English	13	11.8	2.0
Other reason	15	13.6	2.0
Total	110	100	100

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

The average (mean) year of arrival in the UK was 2006. VNs who had never left after studying had arrived earliest on average, in 1999, while those coming here for better pay and conditions were the most recent arrivals, coming in 2011 on average (Table 5.4).

**Table 5.4: ‘In what year did you come to the UK, this time?’**

	Mean	Median	N=
To work abroad	2008.5	2010	32
Due to marriage/partner	2005.5	2008	31
To gain experience	2008.1	2009	26
As never left after studying	1999.6	2003	11
To study/study further	2007.2	2010	34
Due to better pay and conditions	2011.0	2013	15
Due to lack of work in home country	2009.2	2012	23
To learn English	2003.0	2005	13
Other reason	2002.6	2006	15
Total	2006.0	2009	110

Source: VN survey, 2014

The intended length of stay of non-British VNs was on average 19 years, with those coming here to learn English having the longest intended stays (31 years) followed by those coming due to marriage/partner (23 years), while those coming here to gain experience, for better pay and conditions or because of a lack of work in their home countries had the shortest intended stays, at around 16 years (Table 5.5).

**Table 5.5: ‘How long, from now, do you plan to stay in the UK?’**

	Mean	Median	N=
To work abroad	18.3	10	26
Due to marriage/partner	23.4	10	24
To gain experience	16.2	10	21
As never left after studying	22.1	20	7
To study/study further	16.8	7	26
Due to better pay and conditions	16.3	10	14
Due to lack of work in home country	15.7	10	20
To learn English	31.1	25	9
Other reason	24.2	20	11
Total	18.6	10	87

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 5.5 Second jobs

The proportion of respondents who had a second job has increased slightly, from 16 per cent in 2010 to 18 per cent currently. Student VNs undertaking unpaid clinical

work experience (31%), respondents doing voluntary work (24%), and qualified VNs working part-time (23%), were most likely to have a second job.

**Table 5.6: 'Do you have a second job (including voluntary/unpaid work)?'**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Yes	881	17.5	16.1
No	4,147	82.5	83.9
Total	5,028	100	100

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

Just over half (52%) of respondents with second jobs were working in an animal-related field in their second job, mainly working for another veterinary practice, or doing other animal-related work such as pet sitting or dog walking, although this is below the proportion in 2010 of 58 per cent (Table 5.7). Students were more likely than qualified VNs to be doing non-animal-related work, most commonly retail (20%; 22% in 2010), bar work (16%; 25% in 2010) or catering (11%; 5% in 2010).

**Table 5.7: Nature of second job**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Working for another veterinary practice	170	19.4	24.9
Assessor/internal verifier	16	1.8	6.1
Voluntary work for a veterinary-related charity (eg PDSA, RSPCA)	50	5.7	1.8
Farm work (non-veterinary)	46	5.3	5.2
Other animal-related work (eg pet sitting, dog walking)	171	19.5	19.7
Bar work	55	6.3	8.7
Catering	42	4.8	2.6
Childcare (eg baby-sitting)	11	1.3	0.7
Health and beauty	20	2.3	3.9
Non-veterinary voluntary work	77	8.8	3.1
Office work	28	3.2	4.2
Retail	70	8.0	6.1
Teaching	51	5.8	5.9
Other	68	7.8	7.0
Total	875	100	100

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

The average hours worked in their second job was 8.7 hours per week (this is slightly below the figure of 9.8 hours in 2010, although in the current survey a handful of cases who said they worked more than 50 hours per week in their second job were excluded as it was felt it was unlikely these hours were actually worked). The median figure was seven hours, and a quarter of respondents worked less than four hours, and a further quarter worked ten hours or more. Respondents doing farm work had the longest

average hours in their second job, at 14.3, followed by those doing catering work (10.4 hours) and bar work (9.6 hours). Respondents who worked in another veterinary practice in their second job did so for an average of 8.7 hours per week.

## 5.6 Working within or outside the profession

Of the respondents who were working at the time of the survey (ie not those who were unemployed, taking a career break or retired), 95 per cent said that their main employment was within the VN profession. This is slightly below the proportion in 2010 of 97 per cent.

**Table 5.8: ‘In your MAIN employment are you working within or outside the VN profession?’**

	Frequency	%
Within VN profession	4,779	94.6
Outside the VN profession	273	5.4
Total	5,052	100

*Source: VN survey, 2014*



## 6 Working outside the Profession

This chapter presents information on the five per cent of respondents who stated that they were working outside the VN profession. The routing of the questionnaire changed slightly from the 2010 survey so comparisons with the earlier survey are not always possible.

### 6.1 Chapter summary

- Half of VN respondents working outside of the profession work in an organisation which is animal-related.
- Three-quarters (77%) had worked in the VN profession at some time in the past. Nearly all of these had worked in clinical practice, and the average time spent working in the profession was 11 years.
- Half of VN respondents currently working outside the profession are considering a return to veterinary related work in the future, although 16 per cent said they had no intentions of joining or returning to the profession.

### 6.2 Type of organisation

Around half of respondents working outside the profession stated that they were working in an animal-related organisation (Table 6.1).

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

	Frequency	%
Animal-related	132	49.4
Non-animal-related	135	50.6
Total	267	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Table 6.2 shows the type of organisation in which respondents outside the profession were working. The list of industrial sectors is based on the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) used by the Office for National Statistics and other government

departments. The most common type was 'other services' (22%), followed by wholesale and retail (18%), education (18%) and professional, scientific and technical services (12%). Respondents who said they were working in animal-related organisations were concentrated in the 'other services', education, professional services, and agriculture sectors, while those who were working in a non-animal-related organisation were concentrated in the wholesale and retail, 'other services', health, and hotels and restaurants sectors.

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

	Frequency	%	Animal-related %	Non-animal-related %
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	13	5.1	10.5	0.0
Production	1	0.4	0.8	0.0
Construction	2	0.8	0.0	1.5
Wholesale and retail trade	46	18.0	8.1	27.5
Transport and storage	2	0.8	0.8	0.8
Hotels and restaurants	22	8.6	0.0	16.8
Financial and insurance	10	3.9	4.8	3.1
Professional, scientific and technical	30	11.8	19.4	4.6
Other business services	5	2.0	3.2	0.8
Public administration and defence	1	0.4	0.0	0.8
Education	45	17.6	25.8	9.9
Human health and social work activities	23	9.0	0.0	17.6
Other services	55	21.6	26.6	16.8
Total	255	100	124	131

Source: VN survey, 2014

Just under half (47%) were working in the public sector, and nine per cent were working in the charity/voluntary sector, with the remaining 44 per cent working in private sector organisations (Table 6.3).

**Table 6.3 Sector of organisation**

	Frequency	%
The private sector	115	44.2
The public sector	122	46.9
The third sector (charities)	23	8.8
Total	260	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

### 6.3 Ever worked in the profession?

Just over three quarters (78%) of respondents currently working outside the VN profession had worked within the profession at some time in the past.

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

	Frequency	%
Yes	206	77.7
No	59	22.3
Total	265	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Those who had worked in the veterinary profession had worked in it for an average of 11 years, and nearly all had worked within clinical practice (96%, Table 6.5).

**Table 6.5: Type of work within veterinary profession**

	Frequency	%
Clinical practice work	196	96.1
Other VN work outside clinical practice	8	3.9
Total	204	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

### 6.4 Lost to the profession?

Around half (51%) of those working outside the profession felt that they would seek employment within the profession in the future, and 20 per cent felt they would seek work within the profession within the next year. Around one third of respondents were unsure of their intentions regarding future employment within the profession, while 16 per cent said that they had no intention of (re-)joining the profession (Table 6.6).

**Table 6.6: ‘Do you intend to seek employment in the veterinary profession in future?’**

	Frequency	%
Yes, within the next year	54	20.4
Yes, longer term	82	30.9
No	43	16.2
Unsure	86	32.5
Total	265	100

Source: VN survey, 2014



## 7 Working within the Profession

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This chapter gives details of the VNs who are in current work within the profession, within the UK. This chapter therefore omits those:

- who are unemployed, taking a career break or retired
- who are working outside the profession, and
- who are working outside the UK.

### 7.1 Chapter summary

- Nearly all (94%) VN respondents working within the veterinary profession in the UK work in clinical practice (although some combine this with roles outside of clinical practice as well).
- Around two-thirds (66%) consider their main employment to be in small animal/exotic practice.
- VN respondents working in mixed, small animal/exotic, or referral practice work an average of around 35-36 hours a week, down from around 39-40 hours a week in 2010.
- VN respondents in mixed and small animal/exotic practice are on call but off-the-premises for 18 hours a week, and on call on-the-premises for 13-14 hours a week.
- VN respondents receive many benefits from their employers, most commonly uniform or work clothing (87%), training or CPD support (86%), and no or reduced vet fees (73%).
- More than four-fifths (83%) of VNs working in the profession in the UK intend to stay in the VN profession for the foreseeable future.
- Pay is the most commonly cited reason for planning to leave the profession, mentioned by 71 per cent of those intending to leave the profession for reasons other than retirement, followed by not feeling rewarded or valued in a non-financial way (54%), dissatisfaction with veterinary work eg hours or stress (48%), a career change or new challenge (46%), or lack of career opportunities (40%).

## 7.2 Type of practice

Overall, 94 per cent of VNs working within the profession within the UK were working in clinical practice, possibly alongside a role outside clinical practice as well, and six per cent of VNs were working outside of clinical practice.

Table 7.1 shows the breakdown by type of organisation in which VNs working in the UK were employed. Just over two thirds (69%) were working in small animal/exotic practice, while 18 per cent were working in mixed practice, and 11 per cent were working in referral practice/consultancy. Outside clinical practice the most common types of organisations were charities and trusts, and educational organisations (FE and HE). These findings are broadly in line with those from the 2010 survey.

**Table 7.1: ‘What kind of organisation are you employed in?’**

	Frequency	%
Mixed practice	823	17.6
Small animal/exotic practice	3,225	68.8
Equine practice	120	2.6
Farm practice/production animal practice	27	0.6
Other first opinion practice	92	2.0
Referral practice/consultancy	523	11.2
DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)	4	0.1
AHVLA	0	0.0
Other UK government	3	0.1
VN education HE	130	2.8
VN education FE	134	2.9
Other education	41	0.9
Commerce and industry	21	0.4
Charities and trusts	158	3.4
Research Council	3	0.1
Other	52	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,686</b>	

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

Table 7.2 shows the main area of employment for VNs working in the profession in the UK, and shows that 93 per cent stated that their main employment was in clinical practice.

Table 7.2 Respondents' MAIN employment

	Frequency	%
Mixed practice	765	16.6
Small animal/exotic practice	3,064	65.9
Equine practice	65	1.4
Farm practice/Production animal practice	3	0.1
Other first opinion practice	55	1.2
Referral practice/consultancy	360	7.8
Other UK government	1	0.0
VN education - Higher Education	59	1.3
VN education - Further Education	74	1.6
Other education	11	0.2
Commerce and industry	16	0.4
Charities and trusts	110	2.5
Research Council	2	0.0
Other	43	1.0
Total	4,628	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

### 7.3 Hours of work and on call time

The average basic working week (including overtime but excluding on call) of respondents working in small animal/exotic practice in the UK was 36 hours, while those working in mixed practice or referral practice/consultancy worked a slightly shorter week of 35 hours<sup>2</sup>. It would appear that working hours have decreased since 2010, when respondents working in small animal/exotic practice worked 40 hours per week and those in mixed practice and referral practice/consultancy worked 39 hours per week. This continues the general decline in the average number of hours worked between 2008 and 2010.

Student VNs worked slightly longer hours in mixed and small animal/exotic practice than did registered and listed VNs, although they worked fewer hours in VN education. Student VNs worked 36.2 hours in mixed practice and in small animal/

<sup>2</sup> Outlier respondents who stated that their hours worked per week were greater than 70 were excluded, as they were in the 2010 survey.

exotic practice, while registered and listed VNs worked 33.8 hours in mixed practice and 35.5 hours in small animal/exotic practice. However, student VNs worked 22.7 hours in VN education HE and 19.2 hours in VN education FE, whereas average hours of registered and listed VNs in these practice areas were 31.4 and 28.7 respectively.

**Table 7.3: Average number of hours in different areas of practice**

	Worked		On-call off premises		On-call on premises	
	Mean	N=	Mean	N=	Mean	N=
Mixed practice	34.6	779	17.8	209	12.7	224
Small animal/exotic practice	35.7	3,114	18.4	570	13.9	571
Equine practice	34.6	89	21.4	45	11.2	35
Farm practice/production animal practice	23.3	11	-	-	-	-
Other first opinion practice	33.0	72	-	-	7.8	12
Referral practice/consultancy	34.4	464	20.4	94	14.9	70
VN education HE	26.7	106	-	-	-	-
VN education FE	26.9	118	-	-	-	-
other education	18.0	30	-	-	-	-
Commerce and industry	33.7	18	-	-	-	-
Charities and trusts	32.5	144	-	-	24.7	14
Other	34.0	48	-	-	-	-

Note: figures based on fewer than 10 respondents have been suppressed

Source: VN survey, 2014

Respondents were also asked to give their on-call hours, if applicable, split between available but not on the premises, and available and present on the premises. Those respondents in small animal/exotic practice who were on-call but not on the premises were available for an average of 18 hours per week, while small animal/exotic practice VNs who were on-call and on the premises were available for an average of 14 hours per week. On-call hours were slightly shorter among respondents in mixed practice, but slightly longer among those in referral practice/consultancy. These findings regarding on-call hours are broadly in line with the picture from the 2010 survey.

**Table 7.4: 'If you have indicated you are required to be on-call and present are you normally?'**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Awake all night	387	21.2	15
Asleep when not working	1,437	78.8	85
Total	1,824	100.0	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Of those respondents who indicated that they were required to be on-call and present on the premises, 79 per cent said they were normally asleep when not working and 21 per cent said they were awake all night (Table 7.4). In 2010, 85 per cent were normally asleep and 15 per cent were awake all night.

## 7.4 Employer benefits

Respondents were asked whether their practice provided them with certain provisions or benefits. Table 7.5 shows that the vast majority of VNs received a uniform or work clothing and training/CPD support (87% and 86% respectively), while just under three quarters (73%) received no/reduced vet fees, and just under half (46%) had their RCVS retention fees paid in whole or part. These four benefits were also the most common in 2010.

**Table 7.5: ‘Does your employer provide you with the following?’**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Uniform/work clothing	3,843	86.6	90.6
Training/CPD support (time and/or cost)	3,827	86.3	82.7
No/reduced vet fees	3,234	72.9	80.7
RCVS retention fees paid (whole or part)	2,040	46.0	46.6
Pension	1,292	29.1	17.8
Access to scientific literature and research papers	1,073	24.2	-
Professional subscriptions (eg BVNA)	688	15.5	18.9
Professional indemnity insurance	677	15.3	7.3
Health insurance	287	6.5	6.8
Free/reduced pet insurance	287	6.5	7.1
Accommodation	249	5.6	6.8
Membership of a technical/scientific library	168	3.8	-
Car	42	0.9	0.9
Other	57	1.3	2.3
Total	4,437		

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 7.5 Career intentions

When asked about their future career plans, more than four-fifths of VNs working in the UK (83%) said that they planned to stay in the VN profession for the foreseeable future (Table 7.6). VNs seem more likely to want to stay in the profession than in the

past, as in the 2010 survey 76 per cent said they would stay for the foreseeable future, up from 73 per cent in 2008.

**Table 7.6 Career plans regarding the VN profession**

	Fre- quency	%	2010 %
Stay in VN profession for the foreseeable future	3,804	82.9	76.3
Leave the profession in the next five years (other than retirement)	499	10.9	15.7
Leave the profession within the next year (other than retirement)	119	2.6	4.8
Leave the profession as soon as possible (other than retirement)	87	1.9	2.1
Fully retire in the next five years	66	1.4	1.1
Fully retire in the next year	11	0.2	0.0
Total	4,586	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Those respondents who indicated that they intended to leave the profession for non-retirement reasons were asked to give their reasons for planning to leave the profession, and these are presented in Table 7.7. Pay is the most commonly reported reason for planning to leave, as it was in 2010, mentioned by 71 per cent of respondents (70% in 2010), followed by not feeling valued, dissatisfaction with veterinary work, and seeking a career change or new challenge.

**Table 7.7: Reason(s) for planning to leave profession**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Pay	496	70.5	69.5
Not feeling rewarded/valued (non-financial)	380	54.0	48.3
Dissatisfaction with veterinary work (eg hours, stress)	340	48.3	46.8
Career change/new challenge	326	46.3	46.6
Lack of career opportunities	284	40.3	38.0
Fed-up with the way the veterinary profession is going	202	28.7	31.5
Care of dependants/to have family	134	19.0	25.3
Burden of bureaucracy/legislation	66	9.4	10.2
Health issues	54	7.7	-
Study	44	6.3	6.4
Emigration/travel	43	6.1	9.8
Other	45	6.4	3.8
Total	704		

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 8 Working within Clinical Practice

This chapter provides details of veterinary nurses who are working in clinical practice in the UK (ie omitting those who are fully retired, taking a career break or unemployed, those who are currently in work but outside clinical practice, and those who are currently working outside the UK).

### 8.1 Chapter summary

- The most common position within practices was ‘nurse’, mentioned by 44 per cent of VN respondents, followed by ‘student nurse’ (31%) and ‘head nurse (inc. deputy & senior)’ (22%).
- One in ten respondents work in more than one practice.
- The average (median) number of full-time equivalent veterinary surgeons per practice is four, while the median number of FTE VNs is five.
- VN respondents undertake a wide range of tasks every day, including clinical cleaning (81% do this every day), administering medicines by injection (78%), caring for hospitalised animals (65%), dispensing medications to clients (64%), general domestic cleaning (57%), monitoring of anaesthesia (54%), and administering anaesthetic pre-medication (53%).
- Around three quarters of VNs are involved in nursing clinics, most commonly nutrition (54%), puppy/kitten (51%), dental (44%), and general check-ups (43%).
- More than two thirds (70%) of VNs consider themselves to have particular expertise areas, most commonly weight management (39%), nutrition/diabetes (30%), anaesthesia (26%), emergency/critical care (26%) and general/referral nurse clinics (26%).
- Three quarters of VNs’ working time is spent on dogs (42%) and cats (33%), with practice management/administration (9%) and rabbits (7%) the other main activities.
- Fifteen per cent of VNs carry out visits to clients, mostly during clinical hours.
- Twenty two per cent do not receive an 11-hour rest period every 24 hours, although only nine per cent do not have at least 20 days’ paid holiday per year (plus bank holidays) and only six per cent do not have at least two rest days every 14 days.

## 8.2 Position in practice

Just under half of VNs (44%) working in clinical practice in the UK gave their position in their practice as nurse, similar to the proportion in 2010 of 46 per cent. Just under a third (31%) said they were a student nurse (20% in 2010), and just under a quarter (22%) said they were a head nurse (32% in 2010).

**Table 8.1: ‘What is your position in the practice?’**

	Frequency	%	2010 %	2008 %
Student nurse	1,284	30.5	19.6	21.5
Nurse	1,855	44.1	45.8	47.3
Head nurse (inc. deputy & senior)	937	22.3	32.2	23.9
Assessor/training manager	403	9.6	16.9	-
Practice manager/administrator	177	4.2	5.5	3.3
Locum	107	2.5	2.5	2.7
Practice owner or partner/director	30	0.7	0.7	0.8
Other	58	1.4	3.3	7.3
Total	4,207	100	100	100

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

Around one in ten VNs (11%) were working in more than one practice, although this proportion was slightly higher among practice managers/administrators (16%), and much higher among locums (58%).

**Table 8.2: ‘Are you currently working in more than one practice?’**

	Frequency	%
Yes	439	10.6
No	3,691	89.4
Total	4,130	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

The mean number of practices worked in among those who worked in more than one was 2.7, although this was higher among locums, at 3.8, and among practice managers/administrators, at 4.8.

## 8.3 Size of practice

Respondents were asked to give the full-time equivalent (FTE) number of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses working in their practice.

Across all respondents the average practice had 6.7 FTE surgeons and 7.5 FTE VNs (Median figures of 4 and 5 respectively). Just over a quarter (27%) of respondents worked in practices with two or fewer FTE surgeons, and just under a quarter (23%) worked in practices with more than seven FTE surgeons. The proportion of respondents working in practices with two or fewer FTE nurses was 23 per cent, and 29 per cent of respondents worked in practices with seven or more FTE nurses.

## 8.4 Work undertaken

A wide range of tasks was undertaken every day by most respondents, as Table 8.3 shows. More than three-quarters of respondents stated that they administered medicines by injection and undertook clinical cleaning every day, and around two-thirds stated that they cared for hospitalised animals or dispensed medications to clients every day. Other tasks undertaken by at least half of respondents every day included administering anaesthetic pre-medication, monitoring of anaesthesia, and general domestic cleaning.

By contrast, there are some tasks that respondents report rarely or never undertaking. More than four-fifths (83%) said that they rarely or never performed minor surgical procedures, while three-quarters (76%) said they rarely or never assisted with dental extractions, and 56 per cent rarely or never undertook dental hygiene work.

These findings are broadly similar to those from the 2010 survey.

Student VNs were more likely than Registered VNs to care for hospitalised animals, do reception work, and undertake clinical cleaning and general cleaning every day.

**Table 8.3 'Please indicate which of the following clinical and non-clinical work you undertake in practice, and how often' (row percentages)**

	Every day	Several times per week	Once per week or less	Rarely	Never	N=
Caring for hospitalised animals	65.1	23.4	7.3	3.4	0.9	4,220
Nursing clinics/counselling	28.9	28.7	14.8	14.2	13.5	4,174
Nutritional advice/counselling	21.3	28.2	20.5	18.0	12.0	4,160
Administration of medicines by injection	77.9	16.2	3.3	1.6	0.9	4,218
Setting up intravenous fluids	47.7	34.7	12.3	4.2	1.1	4,213
Dispensing of medications to clients	63.7	23.2	6.3	4.3	2.6	4,208
Administration of anaesthetic pre-medication	53.0	27.0	7.7	6.8	5.5	4,205
Monitoring of anaesthesia	54.1	31.3	6.8	4.5	3.3	4,209
Assisting during surgical procedures	27.3	23.3	19.9	23.7	5.8	4,197

	Every day	Several times per week	Once per week or less	Rarely	Never	N=
Performing minor surgical procedures	3.7	3.7	9.3	29.6	53.7	4,173
Dental hygiene work	4.9	15.7	23.9	26.8	28.7	4,172
Assisting with dental extractions	3.6	8.7	12.1	19.1	56.4	4,119
Clinical cleaning (eg consulting rooms, theatre, instruments)	81.4	11.8	3.5	2.1	1.1	4,211
Taking radiographs	18.8	38.4	24.4	11.8	6.5	4,201
Processing radiographs	21.6	42.0	21.6	7.7	7.1	4,184
Assisting with ultrasound	13.6	33.7	33.1	13.7	6.0	4,200
Performing in-house laboratory tests	49.2	35.4	9.0	4.4	2.0	4,201
Taking blood samples	40.6	32.8	12.6	7.7	6.4	4,203
Teaching/supervising student VNs	29.5	14.7	10.3	11.8	33.7	4,136
Reception work	40.1	24.9	16.2	12.4	6.5	4,196
Practice administration	28.7	18.2	15.3	16.9	20.9	4,181
General domestic cleaning (eg waiting room, kitchen, corridors)	56.9	18.7	11.0	9.0	4.3	4,210

Source: VN survey, 2014

### 8.4.1 Nursing clinics

Just over a quarter of VNs (27%) said they were not involved in any nursing clinics, similar to the proportion in 2010. The nursing clinic VNs were most commonly involved in was nutrition, as it was last time (54%, 51% in 2010), while around half of VNs were involved in puppy/kitten clinics, and over 40 per cent were involved in dental or general check-up clinics.

Table 8.4: 'Which nursing clinics are you involved in?'

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Nutrition	2,237	53.6	51
Dental	1,818	43.5	44
Puppy/kitten	2,128	50.9	48
Vaccination	1,150	27.5	23
Geriatric/senior wellness	1,172	28.1	26
General check-ups	1,798	43.0	44
Other	824	19.7	29
None	1,116	26.7	28
Total	4,177		

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

Overall, 70 per cent of respondents considered themselves to have a particular area of expertise, a substantial increase on the proportion in 2010 of 53 per cent. Weight

management was the most common area of expertise (39%), followed by nutrition/diabetes (30%), anaesthesia (26%), emergency/critical care (26%), general/referral nurse clinics (26%) and VN assessor/verifier (21%). In 2010, VN assessor/verifier was the most common area of expertise (23%), followed by weight management (21%) and nutrition/diabetes (15%).

**Table 8.5: 'Which expertise areas have you provided to clients or your employer(s) in the past 12 months?'**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
VN assessor/verifier	866	21.3	23.2
Nutrition/diabetes	1,196	29.5	15.0
Behavioural management	777	19.2	11.2
Dentistry	677	16.7	8.4
Emergency/critical care	1,061	26.2	9.9
General/referral nurse clinics	1,045	25.8	13.5
Management/office specialist	537	13.2	9.1
Specific animal specialist (eg Exotics)	326	8.0	5.2
Dermatology	85	2.1	0.6
Physio/hydrotherapy	255	6.3	3.9
Anaesthesia	1,070	26.4	11.1
Weight management	1,572	38.7	21.0
Other	189	4.7	5.4
None	1,218	30.0	47.0
Total	4,057		

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 8.5 Breakdown of work by species/discipline

Table 8.6 shows the average working time spent with various species or on various activities at the time of the survey, along with the current average on-call time, and the expected working time five years from now (excluding on-call time). Note that although respondents were asked to ensure their percentages summed to 100%, there were many responses which summed to more of less than 100% and often by a considerable margin; therefore we have limited the analysis to responses within the range 90-110%. Also the wording of the question changed significantly from the 2010 questionnaire so direct comparisons with the earlier survey are not possible.

Around three-quarters of current working time (75%) is spent on dogs and cats, and a further ten per cent of working time is spent on other small animals. The other major

activity is practice management and administration, which accounts for nine per cent of working time.

**Table 8.6: Breakdown of working time during a typical week**

	Working time now (excl. on-call)	On-call time now	Working time 5 years from now (excl. on-call)
	Mean %	Mean %	Mean %
Time spent on dogs	41.9	47.6	38.4
Time spent on cats	33.2	35.0	31.4
Time spent on rabbits	6.9	3.7	6.8
Time spent on birds	1.6	0.8	1.8
Time spent on other small animals (eg tortoises, gerbils)	2.2	0.9	2.5
Time spent on exotics	1.2	0.6	1.9
Time spent on horses	2.4	4.8	3.4
Time spent on beef	0.1	0.1	0.2
Time spent on dairy	0.1	0.2	0.2
Time spent on sheep	0.2	0.1	0.2
Time spent on pigs	0.0	0.0	0.1
Time spent on poultry	0.3	0.1	0.3
Time spent on laboratory animals	0.0	0.0	0.0
Time spent on meat hygiene	0.0	0.0	0.0
Time spent on fish for food	0.0	0.0	0.0
Time spent on practice management/admin	8.9	2.9	10.8
Time spent on other activities	1.2	3.0	2.1
N=	3,078	1,272	2,112

Source: VN survey, 2014

Turning to on-call time, a slightly higher proportion (88%) is spent on small animals compared with working time, and a lower proportion (3%) is spent on management/administrative tasks. Nearly five per cent of on-call time is spent on horses, double the proportion of working time.

Five years from now, respondents felt that around four-fifths (81%) of their working time would be spent on small animals, below the current figure of 86 per cent, and they would be spending slightly more time on practice management and administration, and on other activities.

## 8.6 Visits

The proportion of VNs in clinical practice who undertake visits to clients has fallen substantially since 2010, from 28 per cent to 15 per cent currently (Table 8.7).

**Table 8.7: 'Do you personally carry out any visits to clients?'**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Yes	627	14.9	28
No	3,580	85.1	72
Total	4,207	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Among those VNs who do carry out visits to clients, the vast majority (92%) carry them out during clinical hours.

**Table 8.8: Are these visits wholly or mainly**

	Frequency	%
During clinical hours	574	91.5
Outside clinical hours	53	8.5
Total	627	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

The average one-way distance to a call during clinical hours was 5.9 miles, and VNs travelled up to 30 miles on average, although only a quarter travelled an average of eight miles or more (Table 8.9). The maximum one-way distance to a routine call was 60 miles, and the average maximum distance was 13.2 miles, with three quarter of VNs travelling no further than 15 miles. The distances to out-of-hours calls tended to be longer, with an overall average of 8.7 miles and the maximum distance was on average 15 miles.

**Table 8.9: Distances to visits in miles**

	Mean	Median	Max.	25 <sup>th</sup> %ile	75 <sup>th</sup> %ile	N=
Average (one-way) distance travel to a call during clinical hours	5.9	5	30	3	8	535
Maximum (one-way) distance travel to a call during clinical hours	13.2	10	60	7	15	449
Average (one-way) distance travel to an out-of-hours call	8.7	6	50	5	10	191
Maximum (one-way) distance travel to an out-of-hours call	15.0	11.5	60	7	20	180

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 8.7 Working time arrangements

VN respondents were asked a number of questions about rest periods and paid holiday. Almost four-fifths (79%) of respondents said that they received an 11-hour rest period every day, down from 83 per cent of respondents in 2010. Of the 21 per cent who did not receive an 11-hour rest period every day, 11 per cent had signed up to a workforce agreement that provides compensatory rest, the same proportion as in 2010, while 55 per cent had not and 34 per cent did not know. Of those who had not signed up to an agreement, only six per cent had discussed an agreement with their employer (21% in 2010).

**Table 8.10: ‘Do you have 11-hour rest period every day?’**

	Frequency	%	2010%
Yes	3,327	78.5	83
No	910	21.5	17
Total	4,237	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

**Table 8.11: ‘Have you signed up to a workforce agreement that provides other compensatory rest?’**

	Frequency	%	2010%
Yes	103	11.3	10.5
No	495	54.5	61.8
Don't Know	310	34.1	27.8
Total	908	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

**Table 8.12; ‘Have you discussed a workforce agreement with your employer?’**

	Frequency	%	2010%
Yes	29	5.9	21
No	460	94.1	79
Total	489	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

The vast majority of VNs, 94 per cent, said that they have at least two rest days every 14 days, similar to the proportion in 2010 of 95 per cent, while a slightly lower proportion of VNs, 91 per cent, said that they have at least 20 days' paid holiday per year (plus bank holidays), pro-rata for part-time staff, again similar to the 2010 figure of 93 per cent.

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**Table 8.13: 'Do you have at least two rest days every 14 days?'**

	Frequency	%	2010%
Yes	4,006	93.9	95
No	261	6.1	5
Total	4,267	100	100

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

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**Table 8.14: 'Do you have at least 20 days' paid holiday per year?'**

	Frequency	%	2010%
Yes	3,882	91.1	93
No	379	8.9	7
Total	4,261	100	100

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

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## 9 CPD and Further Education

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This chapter presents information on continuing professional development (CPD) and further education issues for respondents working in clinical practice in the UK. Student VNs did not complete these questions as they are not required to undertake CPD.

### 9.1 Chapter summary

- Thirty per cent of VN respondents did not spend any time away from work receiving CPD over the past 12 months.
- One in four respondents (26%) hold a work-related qualification in addition to their primary VN qualification, and 28% plan to study for a further qualification over the next five years.
- The most common CPD method used is lectures by external providers (70%), followed by distance learning via webinars (64%) and ad hoc, undocumented private study (61%).
- Just over half (52%) use the RCVS Professional Development Record to record their CPD online, with usage greater among younger VNs.
- VN respondents spend an average of 18.7 minutes reading veterinary literature per day, with a quarter (26%) spending half an hour or more.
- Most CPD undertaken by VNs was either funded by their employer (43% of CPD activity) or free (41%).

### 9.2 Days away from workplace

Table 9.1 shows the average number of days respondents had spent away from the workplace in the previous 12 months due to CPD (giving and receiving), holidays, veterinary politics, illness, maternity/paternity leave, compassionate leave, or for other reasons.

Respondents spent on average 3.2 days receiving CPD away from the workplace, with 70 per cent of VNs having some time away from work to receive CPD. Very few respondents spent time away from work giving CPD (0.3 days on average across all

respondents). The most common reason for being away from work was holidays, with an average time away from work of 19.5 days. The average figures for time off for CPD or holidays are very similar to those found from the previous two surveys, suggesting consistent patterns over time.

**Table 9.1: Average days away from work by reason**

	Mean	2010 Mean	2008 Mean
CPD (giving)	0.3	0.3	0.5
CPD (receiving)	3.2	3.0	3.1
Holidays	19.5	19.4	19.5
Veterinary politics, committees, etc	0.2	0.3	0.3
Ill	3.4	3.8	3.4
Maternity/paternity leave	10.1	6.8	-
Compassionate leave	0.3	0.5	0.4
Caring for dependants	0.7	0.4	-
Other activities	0.2	1.7	0.8
N=	2,466		

Note: No data available for maternity/paternity leave and caring for dependants in 2008

Source: VN survey, 2014

Respondents spent on average 10.1 days on maternity/paternity leave, which shows a considerable increase since 2010 when the figure was 6.8 days. The proportion of respondents with dependent children has fallen slightly since the 2010 survey, from 24 per cent to 23 per cent, therefore the implication is that those taking maternity/paternity leave are taking longer than they did in 2010.

### 9.3 Further work-related qualifications

Overall, 26 per cent of VNs in clinical practice in the UK held a qualification in addition to their primary VN qualification, with veterinary-related Bachelor's degrees (8%) and RCVS DipAVN (5%) being the most common additional qualifications held (Table 9.2). The proportion of VNs currently studying for an additional qualification was much lower, at 12 per cent, with RCVS DipAVN being the most commonly studied for qualification (2%).

More than one in four VN respondents (28%) planned to study for an additional qualification in next five years, most commonly RCVS DipAVN (12%), although six per cent had plans for veterinary nursing degree (top-up).

**Table 9.2: ‘Other than your primary VN qualification, which of the following qualifications do you hold, are studying for, or plan to study for in the next five years?’**

	Hold this qualification		Studying for this		Plan to study for in next 5 years	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bachelor’s degree (veterinary-related)	202	7.9	12	0.5	21	0.8
Master’s degree (veterinary-related)	16	0.6	12	0.5	62	2.4
PhD or other professional doctorate	5	0.2	2	0.1	13	0.5
RCVS DipAVN	136	5.3	54	2.1	297	11.6
Veterinary nursing degree (top-up)	43	1.7	31	1.2	163	6.4
Other veterinary-related qualification	391	15.3	203	7.9	403	15.8
Any qualification	674	26.3	309	12.1	722	28.3
Total	2,554	100	2,554	100	2,554	100

Note: Percentages sum to more than the total for any qualification as respondents could select more than one category

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 9.4 CPD methods

Table 9.3 shows the different CPD methods used by VNs in clinical practice in the UK. The most commonly used CPD provision method was a lecture by an external provider, used by 70 per cent of VNs, followed by webinars (64%), ad hoc undocumented private study (61%), in-house training (55%) and planned and documented private study or reading (45%). Formal and informal online distance learning were each used by just under a third of VNs.

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

	Frequency	%
Ad hoc, undocumented private study	1,487	60.7
Clinical audit activity	198	8.1
Discussion group - informal learning set	566	23.1
Distance learning - online/formal (assessed and/or moderated by a third party)	752	30.7
Distance learning - online/informal (not assessed)	769	31.4
Distance learning - webinar	1,562	63.7
Lecture by external provider	1,711	69.8
Mentoring or being mentored	440	18.0
Practical - clinical skills lab	163	6.7
Practical - wet lab	55	2.2
Preparing a new lecture/presentation	253	10.3
Project - working on a new project/in a new area of work	200	8.2

	Frequency	%
Reading - planned and documented private study/reading	1,103	45.0
Research - clinical	167	6.8
Research - scientific	64	2.6
Research - veterinary businesses	51	2.1
Secondment to another workplace	43	1.8
Seeing practice - work-based observation	150	6.1
Seminar/workshop - external	726	29.6
Studying for an external qualification	352	14.4
Training - in-house	1,335	54.5
Training as examiner/assessor	534	21.8
Other	37	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,451</b>	

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

Just over half (52%) of VNs in clinical practice in the UK had used the RCVS Professional Development Record to record their CPD online. Use of the RCVS Professional Development Record decreased with age, from around two-thirds of VNs aged under 30, to one third of those aged 50 or more.

**Table 9.4: 'Are you using the RCVS PDR to record your CPD online?'**

	Frequency	%
Yes	1,293	52.4
No	1,173	47.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,466</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: VN survey, 2014

Just over a quarter of VNs (26%) spent half an hour or more per day reading veterinary literature, while one in five (21%) spent fewer than ten minutes (Table 9.5). The average time spent reading veterinary literature per day was 18.7 minutes, and there was little variation by age in the amount of time spent reading.

**Table 9.5: Average number of minutes spent per day reading veterinary literature**

	Frequency	%
Under 10	495	20.8
10-14	654	27.5
15-19	288	12.1
20-29	325	13.6
30 plus	619	26.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,381</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 9.5 CPD funding

There has been a shift in the funding of CPD since 2010 away from employer funding and towards free training, as shown in Table 9.6. In 2010, 57 per cent of CPD received by VNs was funded by employers (and in 2008 it was even higher at 84%), but in the current survey this had fallen to 43 per cent, while the proportion of CPD that was free has risen from 29 per cent in 2010 to 41 per cent currently. The proportions from other sources have remained broadly stable.

**Table 9.6: Average percentage of CPD in the past year funded by the following means:**

	%	2010 %
Being free	40.8	29
Self	9.9	10
Commercial sponsorship	6.0	5
Employer	42.6	57
Grant	0.2	1
Other	0.6	1
N=	2,395	

*Source: VN survey, 2014*



## 10 Electronic Communications and the use of the Internet

All respondents to the VN survey were asked questions about their use of electronic communications and the internet, and the findings are presented in this chapter, which includes responses from respondents who were not working at the time of the survey and those who were working overseas.

### 10.1 Chapter summary

- Twenty nine per cent of VN respondents use smart phones or tablets for work purposes.
- The majority of respondents who use a tablet or smart phone for work purposes (54%) stated that they use apps for professional purposes, while one in ten respondents who do not use a tablet or smart phone did use apps.
- Nine out of ten VNs use the RCVS website, with 35 per cent of all VNs using it a few times a month, and six per cent using it several times a week. The most common reason for using the website is to find information (60% of those who use it).
- Thirty one per cent of respondents use Facebook for professional purposes, while 23 per cent use [vetnurse.co.uk](http://vetnurse.co.uk).
- Three quarters of VNs stated that they would prefer to receive RCVS communications via email, a substantial increase from 47 per cent in the 2010 survey.
- Forty-seven per cent of respondents stated that the RCVS website is their best source of information about the Royal College, while a fifth felt *RCVS News* was the best source, and a further fifth felt the vet/VN press was the best source.

### 10.2 Use of smart phone or tablet

Around three out of ten respondents (29%) had used a smart phone or tablet for work purposes (Table 10.1). There was little variation by age among those of working age, and over a quarter (26%) of respondents in their 50s said they had used a smart phone or tablet for work. Usage tended to increase with seniority at the practice – 20 per cent of student nurses had used them, compared with 27 per cent of nurses, 34 per cent of

head nurses, 43 per cent of practice managers/administrators, and 59 per cent of practice owners, partners or directors.

**Table 10.1: ‘Do you use a smart phone or tablet for work purposes?’**

	Frequency	%
Yes	1,309	29.3
No	3,159	70.7
Total	4,468	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Apple phones were the most common type of smart phone or tablet, used by 55 per cent of respondents, followed by Android phones (31 per cent) and Apple tablets (25%).

**Table 10.2 Type of phone/tablet used**

	Frequency	%
Android phone	405	31.0
Android tablet	135	10.3
IOS (Apple) phone	723	55.4
IOS (Apple) tablet	321	24.6
Blackberry	27	2.1
Other	43	3.3
Total	1,306	

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

Just under a quarter (23%) of respondents said they had used applications (apps) for professional purposes. Among users of smart phones and tablets a slight majority, 54 per cent, had used apps, but even among those who did not use smart phones or tables, one in ten (10%) had used apps.

**Table 10.3 ‘Do you use apps for professional purposes?’**

	Frequency	%	Use Tablet/smart phone %	Do not use Tablet/smart phone %
Yes	1,044	23.4	54.4	10.4
No	3,417	76.6	45.6	89.6
Total	4,461	100	1,304	3,137

Source: VN survey, 2014

Use of apps declined among respondents in their 50s (11%) and 60s (6%), and around one third of practice managers/administrators and practice owners/directors/partners said they had used apps.

The mean number of apps downloaded in the last 12 months was 3.3, while the median and mode were two. Table 10.4 shows that 17 per cent of respondents had downloaded five apps or more in the last 12 months. Although older VNs were less likely than younger ones to use apps, those that did use apps tended to download more apps than their younger counterparts; VNs aged 40 and older had downloaded more apps on average (4.6) than those in the 30s (3.5) and those under 30 (2.9).

**Table 10.4: ‘How many such apps have you downloaded in the last 12 months?’**

	Frequency	%
0-1	249	24.1
2	344	33.3
3-4	265	25.7
5+	174	16.9
Total	1,032	

Source: VN survey, 2014

### 10.3 RCVS website

Use of the RCVS website has increased slightly since the 2010 survey, from 86 per cent of respondents to 89 per cent, although frequent use, ie several times a week, had stayed the same (Table 10.5).

Student VNs were more likely than other VNs to use the website frequently or occasionally, with 11 per cent of those aged 16 to 19, and nine per cent of student VNs overall, using it frequently, and 43 per cent using it occasionally, although the proportions who said they never used it were close to the overall figure.

**Table 10.5: ‘In the past 12 months, how frequently have you used the RCVS website?’**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Frequently eg several times a week	284	6.3	6.5
Occasionally eg a few times a month	1,574	35.1	33.1
Rarely eg a few times over the year	2,133	47.6	46.9
Never	493	11.0	13.5
Total	4,484	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

The most common reason to use the RCVS website was to find some information (60%), followed by using Check the Register (35%), to check the Code of Professional Conduct and Supporting Guidance (30%), to read a news story (24%) or to register or renew registration (24%, Table 10.6). Fifteen per cent of VNs used the Find A Vet service on the RCVS website, while very few VNs used it to subscribe to RCVS e-News.

**Table 10.6: ‘For what purposes have you used the RCVS website over the last 12 months?’**

	Frequency	%
To register or renew my registration	946	23.8
To pay a fee	395	9.9
To read a news story	962	24.2
To use Find a Vet	574	14.5
To use Check the Register	1,374	34.6
To subscribe to RCVS e-News	88	2.2
To read a publication	744	18.7
To find some information	2,378	59.9
To check the Code of Professional Conduct and Supporting Guidance	1,190	30.0
Other	533	13.4
Total	3,971	

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 10.4 Social networking

Nine out of ten VNs regularly use social networking sites, most commonly Facebook (85%), YouTube (32%), Twitter (19%) and [www.vetnurse.co.uk](http://www.vetnurse.co.uk) (18%). Just over half (53%) of VNs who used social networking sites regularly said that they had used them for professional purposes, and again Facebook was the most commonly used site (31%), followed by [www.vetnurse.co.uk](http://www.vetnurse.co.uk) (23%), Google+ (10%) and YouTube (7%). The number of VNs using [www.vetnurse.co.uk](http://www.vetnurse.co.uk) for professional purposes is greater than the number who use it regularly, suggesting that for some VNs it is a useful resource that they only occasionally need to turn to.

Regular usage of social networking sites decreased with age, from 98 per cent of under 20s to 61 per cent of VNs aged 50 and over, although use of LinkedIn increased with age (from 1% of under 20s up to 9% of those aged 50 and over), and use of [www.vetnurse.co.uk](http://www.vetnurse.co.uk) was highest among VNs in their 30s, at 20 per cent. However, the use of social networking sites for professional purposes increased with age, from 38 per cent of under 20s who regularly used social networking sites, up to 61 per cent of those aged 40 and over. Use of Facebook for professional purposes was highest among those in their 30s, at 34 per cent, compared with 18 per cent among those under 20 and 21 per cent of those aged 50 and over.

**Table 10.7: ‘Which of the following social networking sites do you use regularly (several times a week), and which do you use for professional purposes?’**

	Use regularly (several times a week)		Use professionally	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Facebook	3,765	85.3	1,169	30.6
Twitter	847	19.2	170	4.5
Flickr	22	0.5	0	0.0
Pinterest	384	8.7	8	0.2
LinkedIn	190	4.3	170	4.5
Tumblr	78	1.8	4	0.1
Google +	734	16.6	365	9.6
YouTube	1,392	31.5	259	6.8
www.vetsurgeon.org	25	0.6	37	1.0
www.vetnurse.co.uk	787	17.8	864	22.6
BVA Community	24	0.5	45	1.2
Other	76	1.7	37	1.0
I do not use social networking sites	460	10.4	1,783	46.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,416</b>		<b>3,816</b>	

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 10.5 RCVS sources of information

Three-quarters of respondents (75%) would prefer to receive RCVS communications via email, up from 47 per cent in 2010, and 22 per cent would prefer to receive them in the post, down from 52 per cent in 2010 (Table 10.8). Younger and older respondents (26% of those aged under 20 and 29% of those aged 50 and over), were more likely than average to prefer to receive communications in the post.

**Table 10.8: ‘How would you prefer to receive RCVS communications?’**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Email	3,318	74.8	47
In the post	984	22.2	52
Via social media site	52	1.2	1
Text message	84	1.9	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,438</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: VN survey, 2014

Respondents were asked at what time of the day they are most likely to check work emails, and just over two-fifths (43%) said that they checked work emails several times or day or could check them at any time, while around one in six (17%) said they were most likely to check work emails in the evening, and just over one in ten (11%) said they were most likely to check them at lunchtime (Table 10.9).

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

	Frequency	%
Any time/several times a day	1,873	42.8
Morning - first thing	298	6.8
Morning - later	123	2.8
Lunchtime	484	11.1
Afternoon - first thing	95	2.2
Afternoon - later	322	7.4
End of working day	340	7.8
Evening	757	17.3
Night (after 10 pm)	84	1.9
Total	4,376	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Just over one-third of respondents (37%) said that they received RCVS e-News, with the proportion increasing from nine per cent of those aged under 20, to 29 per cent of those in their 20s, and 48 per cent of those aged 30 and over.

**Table 10.10: ‘Do you receive RCVS e-news?’**

	Frequency	%
Yes	1,617	36.7
No	2,785	63.3
Total	4,402	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

The RCVS website is increasingly the best source of information about the RCVS among respondents, with 36 per cent of respondents citing it as the best source compared with 25 per cent in 2010 (Table 10.11). The other major sources have all become slightly less popular, particularly the *RCVS VN Standard/VN Education*, and the wider veterinary/vet nursing press.

The popularity of the RCVS website decreases markedly with age, from 63 per cent of under 20s to 12 per cent of those aged 50 and over, while the popularity of *RCVS News* and the veterinary/vet nursing press increases with age, so that among those aged 50 and over 34 per cent cite *RCVS News* as their best source and 37 per cent cite the wider vet/VN press.

Table 10.11: 'Which of the following is your BEST source of information about the RCVS?'

	Frequency	%	2010 %
RCVS News	904	21.3	23.9
RCVS VN Standard/VN Education	538	12.7	18.8
RCVS website	1,539	36.3	25.3
Other website(s)	12	0.3	0.4
RCVS Twitter feed	33	0.8	-
RCVS YouTube Channel	13	0.3	-
RCVS meetings	5	0.1	0.7
Congresses	99	2.3	-
RCVS e-News	150	3.5	3.0
RCVS Review/Facts (annual report)	18	0.4	0.5
Veterinary/Vet nursing press	844	19.9	25.8
RCVS LinkedIn feed	2	0.0	-
Other	83	2.0	1.4
Total	4,240	100	

Source: VN survey, 2014



## 11 Student VNs and Recent Qualifiers

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This chapter focuses on the training of respondents who said they were student VNs at the time of the survey, and on the post-training experience of VNs who qualified in 2012 onwards.

### 11.1 Chapter summary

- Fifty-two per cent of student VNs intend to remain employed in the training practice when they qualify.
- Just over a third of student VNs (36%) obtained a training position in the first practice they approached.
- Around two-thirds of 2012-14 qualifiers (65%) have remained employed in their training practice.
- Over three quarters (78%) are still in their first post-qualification position. The average time spent in their first post-qualification post among those who have moved on is 8.3 months.
- Day release courses are the most common among current students and recent qualifiers, with 55 per cent studying in this way, while 28 per cent are/were studying full-time degrees, and 17 per cent are/were studying block release courses.
- Although day release was the most common type of course, day release students and qualifiers are less satisfied with the quality of the training practice experience and the university/college experience than are those on other types of courses.
- Four-fifths (81%) of students/qualifiers receive appraisals or performance reviews during training/after qualification, and they are more satisfied with the quality of their training practice and college/university experiences than those who do not receive appraisals or performance reviews.

### 11.2 Student VNs

Just over half (52%) of the student VNs who answered these questions said that they intended to remain employed in their training practice when they qualified, while just under one-third (31%) intended to move to another practice, 10 per cent planned to

take up their first postgraduate position, and eight per cent had other plans. Compared with the 2010 survey results, fewer VN students plan to stay in their training practice, and more intend to move to another practice (Table 11.1). There is substantial variation by type of VN qualification, with 60 per cent of those studying Level 3 Diplomas intending to remain with their training practice compared with less than 40 per cent of degree or Foundation Degree students.

**Table 11.1: What do you intend to do when you qualify (students)?**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Remain employed in your training practice (TP)	705	51.7	61
Move from your TP to another practice	419	30.7	23
Take up your first postgraduate position	136	10.0	8
Other	103	7.6	8
Total	1,363	100.0	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Just over one third of student VNs (36%) obtained a training position in the first practice they approached, while one in five (20%) had to approach over 20 before getting a position as a student VN (Table 11.2). Those studying for a Level 3 Diploma (41%) were more likely to have found a training position in the first practice they approached than were degree students (32%) or Foundation Degree students (22%). The findings are broadly similar to those in the 2010 survey.

**Table 11.2: ‘How many practices did you approach before finding a position as a student VN?’**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
One	492	36.4	36.9
Two to five	295	21.8	21.8
Six to ten	145	10.7	12.4
Eleven to twenty	152	11.3	10.7
Over twenty	267	19.8	18.2
Total	1,351	100.0	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

### 11.3 Recent qualifiers

Just under two-thirds (65%) of recent qualifiers remained employed at their training practice, which is a substantial decrease on the proportion in 2010 of 78 per cent, while there has been a corresponding increase in the proportion who moved to another practice, from 11 per cent in 2010 to 25 per cent currently. However, the current breakdown of destinations is more similar to that in the 2008 survey, suggesting that patterns in 2010 may have been influenced by the economic climate. Patterns varied

significantly by VN qualification, with 76 per cent of those with a Level 3 Diploma remaining with their training practice employer, compared with 52 per cent of those with a Foundation Degree, and 34 per cent of those with a degree.

**Table 11.3: ‘What did you do when you qualified (recent qualifiers)’?**

	Frequency	%	2010 %	2008 %
Remained employed in your training practice (TP)	361	65.3	78.3	68
Moved from your TP to another practice	139	25.1	11.2	20
Took up your first post-graduate position	31	5.6	6.6	6
Other	22	4.0	3.8	7
Total	553	100.0	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Seventy eight per cent of recent qualifiers were still in the first post-qualification position, which is below the proportions in the 2010 and 2008 surveys of 88 per cent and 82 per cent respectively.

**Table 11.4 ‘Are you still in your first post-qualification position?’**

	Frequency	%	2010 %	2008 %
Yes	428	77.8	88	82
No	122	22.2	12	18
Total	550	100.0	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Around one quarter (26%) of those who had moved on from their first post-qualification position had stayed in that position for just three months or less, while a similar proportion (27%) stayed for between four and six months, 31 per cent stayed for between seven and 12 months, and 17 per cent stayed for more than a year. The mean time spent in their first post was 8.3 months, above the 2010 figure of 5.7 months but below the 2008 average of 9.4 months.

**Table 11.5: ‘After how many months did you leave this post?’**

	Frequency	%
0-3 months	30	25.6
4-6	31	26.5
7-12	36	30.8
13+	20	17.1
Total	117	100.0

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 11.4 Course details

Students and recent qualifiers were asked a number of questions about their course. Day-release courses were the most common type, undertaken by 55 per cent of respondents, while 28 per cent had undertaken a full-time degree, and 17 per cent did a block-release course (Table 11.6).

**Table 11.6 ‘Was/is your course ...?’**

	Frequency	%
Block-release	327	17.2
Day-release	1,048	55.0
Full-time degree	529	27.8
Total	1,904	100.0

Source: VN survey, 2014

Just over four-fifths (81%) did or do receive appraisals or performance reviews during their training or after qualification, up from 76 per cent in 2010 and 72 per cent in 2008 (Table 11.7).

**Table 11.7 ‘Did/do you receive appraisals or performance reviews after qualification/ during your training?’**

	Frequency	%	2010 %	2008 %
Yes	1,552	81.2	75.5	72
No	360	18.8	24.5	28
Total	1,912	100.0	100	100

Source: VN survey, 2014

Students and recent qualifiers were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the quality of their training practice experience, and their college/university experience. Overall, respondents were satisfied with both elements of their training – 83 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with their training practice experience, and 75 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with their college/university experience. The mean satisfaction scores were 4.13 and 3.83 respectively, where 1 represents very dissatisfied and 5 represents very satisfied.

**Table 11.8: How satisfied were you/are you with the quality of ...?**

	Training practice experience		College/university experience	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Very dissatisfied	63	3.3	82	4.3
Dissatisfied	129	6.7	221	11.5
Neither	128	6.7	185	9.7
Satisfied	779	40.6	880	46.0
Very satisfied	819	42.7	546	28.5
Total	1,918	100.0	1,914	100.0

Source: VN survey, 2014

Respondents on day-release courses were on average less satisfied than were those on block-release or full-time degree courses. Students who received appraisals or performance reviews were much more satisfied about the quality of their training practice experience than those who did not, suggesting that regular appraisals and reviews are viewed by students as an important element of the training practice experience.

**Table 11.9: Satisfaction with training experience by course and whether received appraisal**

		Quality of training practice experience		Quality of college/university experience	
		Mean	Valid N	Mean	Valid N
Type of course	Block-release	4.24	327	3.92	326
	Day-release	4.02	1,046	3.77	1,042
	Full-time degree	4.28	526	3.88	527
Received appraisals/performance reviews	Yes	4.24	1,547	3.88	1,544
	No	3.64	360	3.63	359
Total		4.13	1,907	3.83	1,903

Source: VN survey, 2014



## 12 Views about the Veterinary Nursing Profession

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This chapter presents the results of questions respondents were asked about various aspects of their profession, if they would still make the same choice if they were starting their career again, and to consider the best things about the profession, possible improvements, and challenges.

### 12.1 Chapter summary

- VNs feel their work gives them satisfaction and variety, and that they are supported by others in their practices. However, they also feel that VN work is stressful.
- They are familiar with the concept of evidence-based veterinary medicine, feel able to assess the quality of research studies, and use scientific information to inform clinical decisions.
- Views are also positive about the quality, quantity and frequency of information from the RCVS.
- VNs are dissatisfied with their salary levels, and are neutral about the profession being ‘family friendly’ and offering good opportunities for part-time work.
- Three-fifths of VNs would still choose the veterinary nursing profession if they were to start their career again, and these respondents are much more satisfied than others about many aspects of the profession.
- Working with animals, job satisfaction, and making a difference are the top three responses for the best things about being a veterinary nurse.
- Better pay and more respect/recognition from the public are the most commonly mentioned improvements which would make the VN profession a better one in which to work.
- The main challenges currently facing the profession are, in the view of VN respondents, poor financial reward, lack of respect and recognition for the profession generally, and affordability of veterinary services.

## 12.2 General views about the profession

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of attitude statements about their views of their profession. The items used a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (scoring 1) up to 'strongly agree' (scoring 5), with a midpoint of 'neither agree nor disagree' scoring 3.

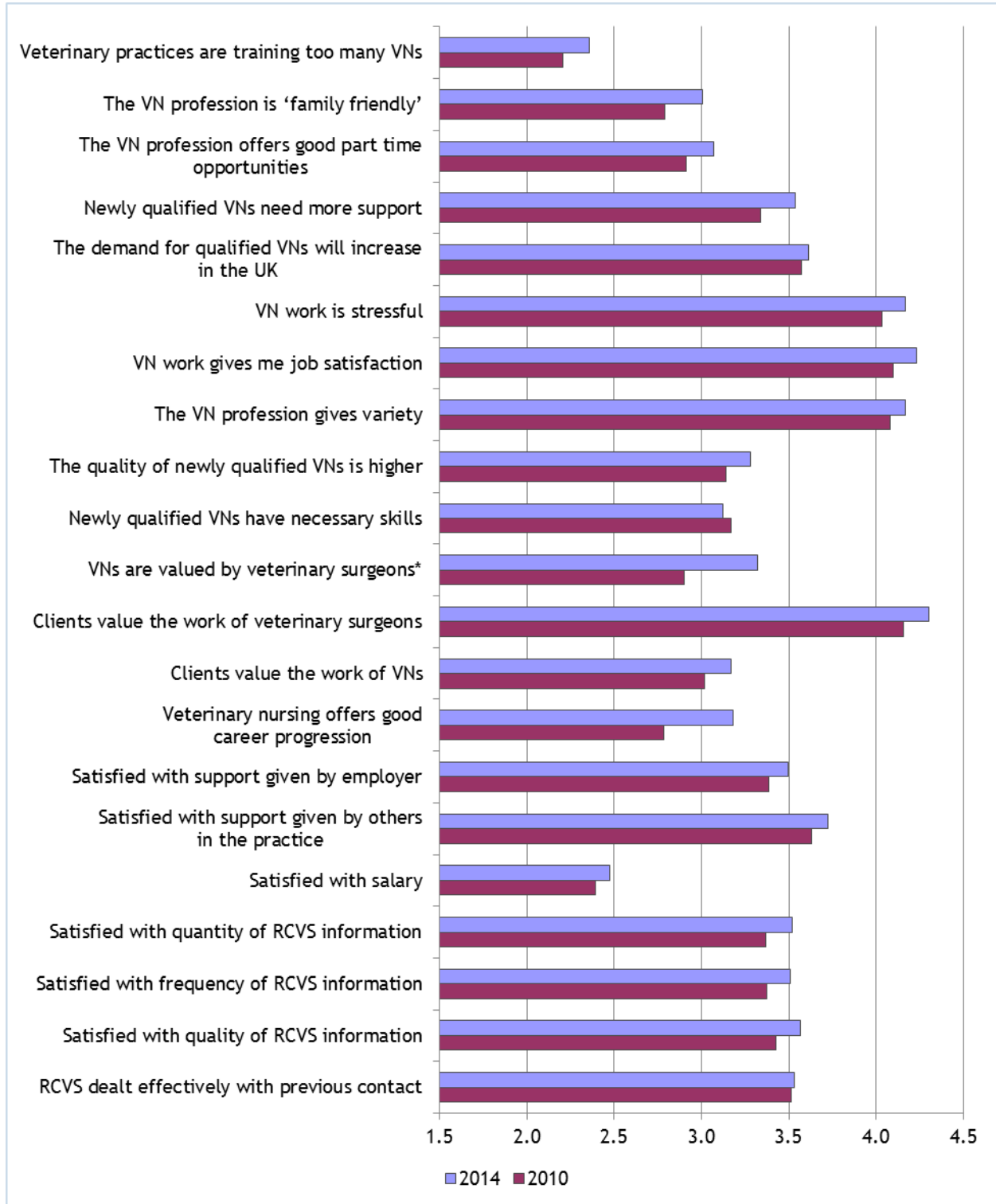
Respondents strongly agreed that 'Clients value the work of veterinary surgeons', 'VN work gives me job satisfaction', and 'The VN profession gives variety', with mean scores of 4.30, 4.23 and 4.17 respectively (Figure 12.1 and Table 12.1). However they also strongly agreed that 'VN work is stressful' (4.17), and felt lukewarm that 'Clients value the work of veterinary nurses' (3.17).

There was general agreement with most other statements, the exceptions being 'I am satisfied with my salary level' (2.47) and 'Veterinary practices are training too many VNs for available future work' (2.36) where there was disagreement, and 'The VN profession is a family friendly profession in which to work' where VNs were neutral.

The findings are broadly similar to 2010, when the four highest scoring statements were the same, and there was disagreement with salary satisfaction and practices training too many VNs for the future. However, since 2010 views have become more positive for nearly all attitude statements, particularly for the profession offering good career progression opportunities, being family friendly and offering good part-time opportunities, and VNs being valued by veterinary surgeons, although the wording for this last statement changed slightly from 2010

It would appear that views about the profession may have been driven to some extent by the economic climate; between 2008 and 2010 ie in the early part of the recession, views generally became more negative, while they have become more positive in 2014 as the economy has started to recover. Furthermore, respondents felt that work was slightly less stressful in 2010 than in 2008, possibly as a result of demand for veterinary services falling, but they feel it is slightly more stressful now than in 2010, possibly reflecting increasing demand since 2010.

Figure 12.1: Views of VNs about their profession, 2014 and 2010, mean scores



\* wording of statement changed from 'VNs are valued by the veterinary profession' in 2010 to 'VNs are valued by veterinary surgeons' in the current survey which may have influenced responses

**Table 12.1: Views about the veterinary nursing profession**

		Mean	N=	2010 Mean
1	Veterinary practices are training too many VNs for the available future work	2.36	4,214	2.21
2	The VN profession is a 'family friendly' profession in which to work	3.00	4,225	2.79
3	The VN profession offers good opportunities for those wishing to work part-time	3.07	4,218	2.91
4	Newly qualified VNs need more support now than in the past	3.54	4,158	3.34
5	Over the next 10 years, the demand for qualified VNs will increase overall in the UK	3.61	4,133	3.57
6	VN work is stressful	4.17	4,258	4.04
7	VN work gives me job satisfaction	4.23	4,261	4.10
8	The VN profession gives variety	4.17	4,233	4.08
9	The quality of newly qualified VNs is higher now than in the past	3.28	4,130	3.14
10	Newly qualified VNs have the necessary skills required for general practice employment, from day one	3.12	4,177	3.17
11	VNs are valued by veterinary surgeons (veterinary profession in 2010)	3.32	4,238	2.90
12	Clients value the work of veterinary surgeons	4.30	4,253	4.16
13	Clients value the work of VNs	3.17	4,255	3.02
14	Veterinary nursing offers good opportunities for career progression	3.18	4,160	2.78
15	I am satisfied with the support given by my employer	3.50	4,093	3.39
16	I am satisfied with the support given by others in the practice	3.72	4,053	3.63
17	I am satisfied with my salary level	2.47	4,076	2.40
18	I am satisfied with the quantity of information I receive from RCVS	3.52	4,084	3.37
19	I am satisfied with the frequency of information I receive from the RCVS	3.51	4,062	3.37
20	I am satisfied with the quality of information I receive from the RCVS	3.57	4,009	3.43
21	I am familiar with the concept of evidence-based veterinary medicine	3.69	4,052	-
22	Recent scientific information influences my clinical decisions	3.58	3,936	-
23	Current information tools (internet, scientific journals) are adequate to support veterinary practitioners	3.59	3,983	-
24	I feel able to assess the scientific quality of a research study	3.41	3,899	-
25	I feel able to assess the methodology of a research study	3.38	3,848	-
26	I feel able to identify biases in a research publication	3.47	3,822	-
27	The last time I contacted the RCVS, I was dealt with effectively*	3.53	2,672	3.52

Note: mean calculated from scale where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree

\* note this statement was only for those respondents who had contacted RCVS during the previous 12 months

Source: VN survey, 2014

The attitude statements covering respondents' 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.

The items included in each factor or theme are as follows:

**Factor 1: Research and scientific evidence**

- 21. I am familiar with the concept of evidence-based vet medicine
- 22. Recent scientific information influences my clinical decisions
- 24. I feel able to assess the scientific quality of a research study
- 25. I feel able to assess the methodology of a research study
- 26. I feel able to identify biases in a research publication

Factor 1 includes items concerned with respondents' interaction with scientific evidence and research.

**Factor 2: Career satisfaction**

- 2. The VN profession is a 'family friendly' profession in which to work
- 3. The VN profession offers good opportunities for those wishing to work part-time
- 11. VNs are valued by veterinary surgeons
- 13. Clients value the work of VNs
- 14. Veterinary nursing offers good opportunities for career progression
- 15. I am satisfied with the support given by my employer
- 16. I am satisfied with the support given by others in the practice
- 17. I am satisfied with my salary level

Factor 2 includes a range of items that are broadly related to career satisfaction: work patterns and flexibility; feeling valued by surgeons and clients; career progression; support; and pay. It is interesting that pay is included in this overall career satisfaction

factor rather than the job satisfaction factor; one inference may be that respondents view pay as a profession-wide issue rather than one related to the negotiation between individual and employer.

**Factor 3: RCVS satisfaction**

- 18. I am satisfied with the quantity of information I receive from RCVS
- 19. I am satisfied with the frequency of information I receive from the RCVS
- 20. I am satisfied with the quality of information I receive from the RCVS

Factor 3 covers satisfaction with the information respondents receive from RCVS, in terms of its quantity, quality and frequency.

**Factor 4: Job satisfaction**

- 7. VN work gives me job satisfaction
- 8. The VN profession gives variety

Factor 4 includes two items related to the day-to-day activities of VN work.

**Factor 5: New entrants**

- 9. The quality of newly qualified VNs is higher now than in the past
- 10. Newly qualified VNs have the necessary skills required for general practice employment, from day one

Factor 5 includes two items related to the skill levels and quality of newly qualified VNs.

**Factor 6: Future supply**

- 1. Veterinary practices are NOT training too many VNs for the available future work
- 5. Over the next 10 years, the demand for qualified VNs will increase overall in the UK

Factor 6 includes two items related to the future supply and demand for VNs.

Four items were not included in any factors as they were not sufficiently correlated with the other items and did not form an independent, consistent group of items. These were:

- 4. Newly qualified VNs need more support now than in the past
- 6. VN work is stressful

12. Clients value the work of veterinary surgeons

23. Current information tools (internet, scientific journals) are adequate to support veterinary practitioners

Reliability analyses were conducted on each factor to check the internal consistency of the scale, and the alpha reliability measures are presented in Table 12.2. Alpha reliability scores range between 0 and 1, with figures over 0.7 considered high. The first five factors show high scores, particularly the research and RCVS information factors, so we can be very confident of their congruence and reliability as scales. However, the reliability of the sixth factor, future supply, is weaker than that of the other factors so it may not be as relevant as a group (pair) of items, although there is an intuitive connection as both statements are concerned about the future state of the profession.

The mean factor scores are also shown in Table 12.2. VNs are very positive about job satisfaction, positive about research, RCVS information and future supply, and slightly positive about career satisfaction and new entrants to the profession.

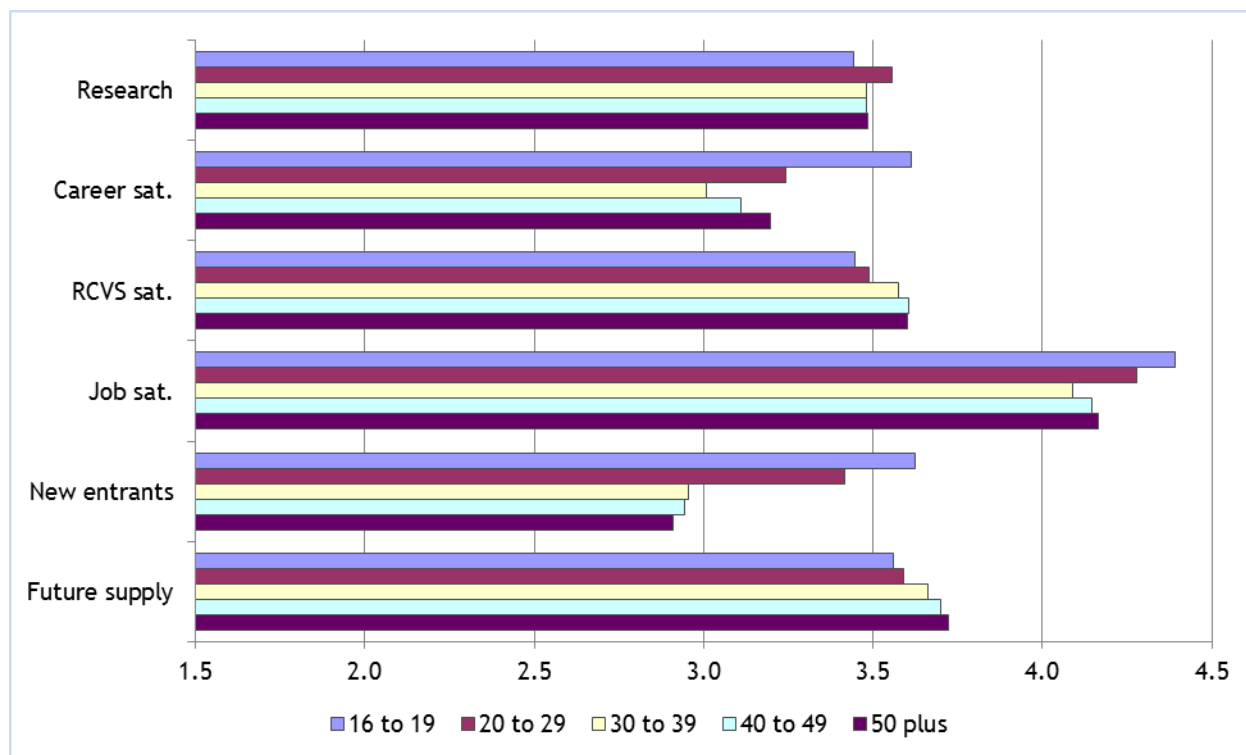
**Table 12.2: Summary statistics for the key Factors about the VN profession**

	No. of items	Alpha reliability	Valid cases N=	Mean
Research	5	0.85	3,664	3.51
Career satisfaction	8	0.77	3,825	3.17
RCVS information	3	0.93	3,993	3.53
Job satisfaction	2	0.75	4,212	4.20
New entrants	2	0.67	4,091	3.20
Future supply	2	0.47	4,103	3.63

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

Age was a significant influence on factor scores for all six factors, and Figure 12.2 shows the variation by age. Views on career satisfaction and job satisfaction were most positive among young respondents aged under 20, and were least positive among those in their 30s. Views on RCVS information and future supply to the profession became more positive as age increased. Respondents aged under 30 were much more positive about new entrants than were those aged 30 and over, while those in their 20s were slightly, but significantly, more positive about research and scientific evidence than those in other age groups.

Figure 12.2 Mean factor scores by age

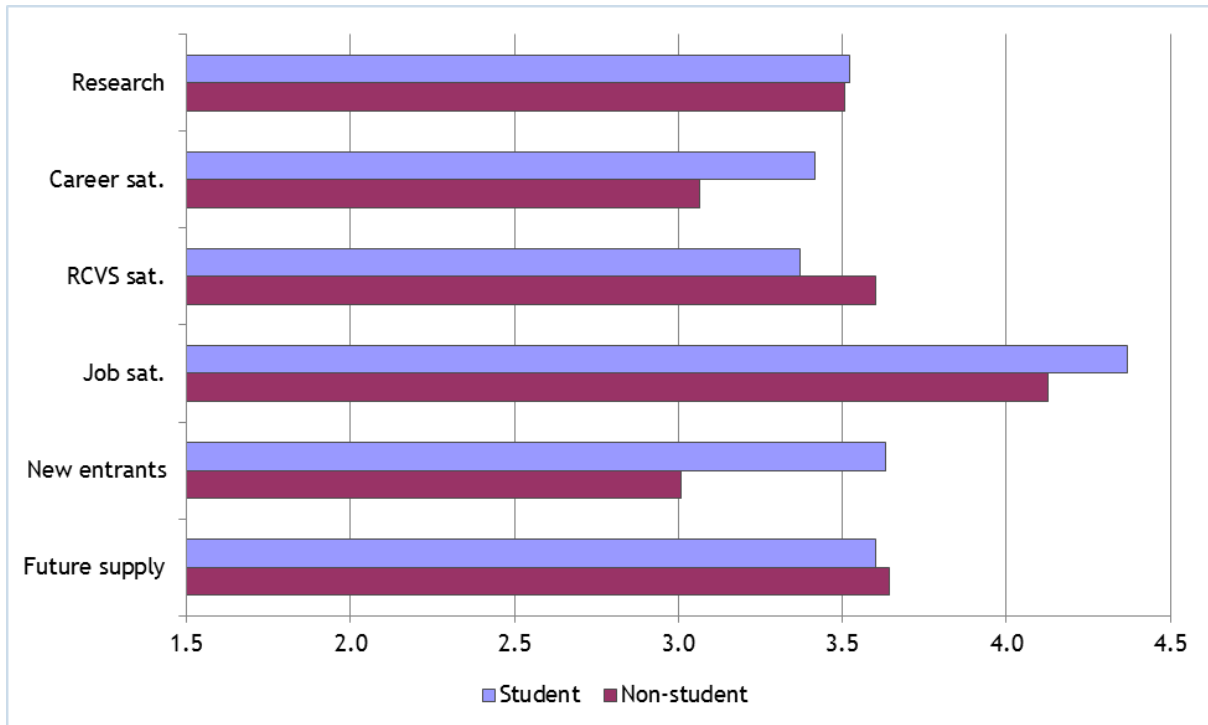


Source: VN survey, 2014

Student status was a significant influence on views about career and job satisfaction and new entrants to the profession, where students were more positive than non-students, and on views about RCVS information, where non-students were more positive than students (Figure 12.3).

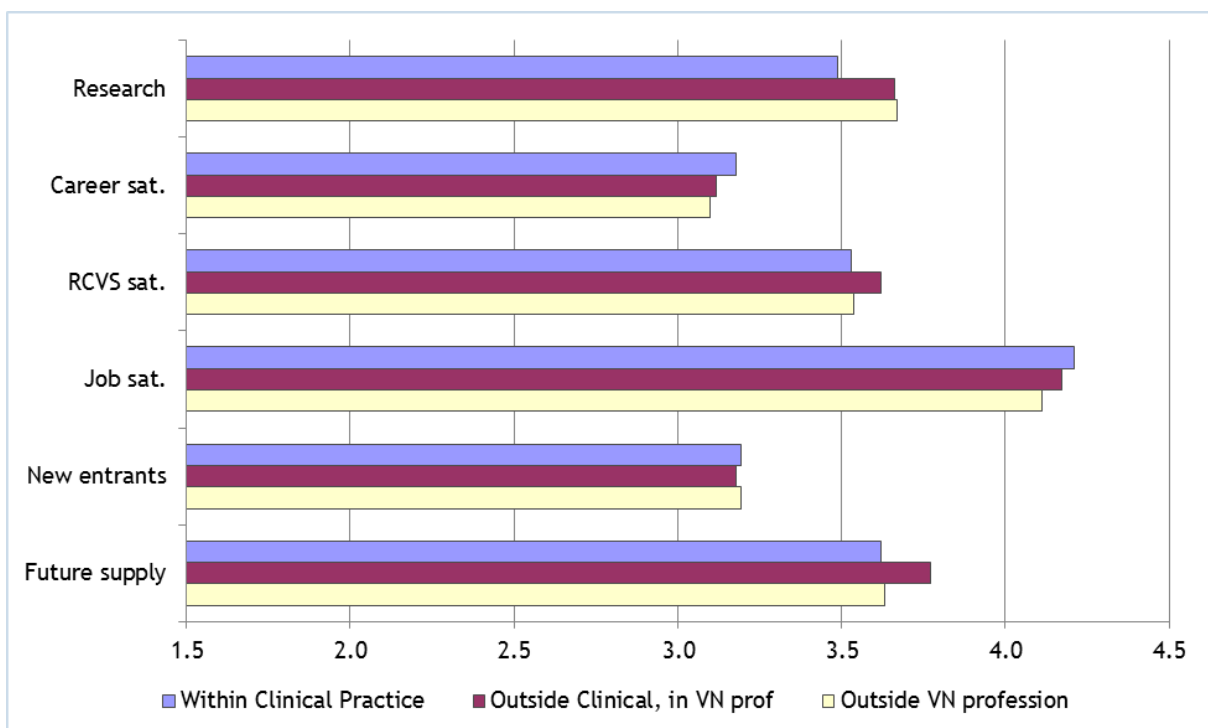
Respondents working in clinical practice had significantly less positive views about research and scientific evidence than did those outside clinical practice, while those working outside clinical practice but in work using their VN qualification were significantly more positive about future supply to the profession (Figure 12.4).

Figure 12.3: Mean factor scores by student status



Source: VN survey, 2014

Figure 12.4: Mean factor scores by work area



Source: VN survey, 2014

## 12.2.1 Research and scientific evidence

Across all respondents there is a fairly high level of agreement about familiarity with and ability to utilise research and scientific information, although respondents are less positive about assessing research studies than they are with the concept of evidence-based vet medicine and basing clinical decisions on scientific information.

Younger respondents aged 16-19 are less familiar with the concept of evidence-based vet medicine and using scientific information to inform clinical decisions than are older VNs, although they, along with respondents in their 20s, are more positive about assessing research studies than are VNs aged 30 and over. There is a similar pattern when comparing students and non-students, with students more positive about assessing research studies but less positive about the other two aspects.

Respondents in clinical practice are less positive than others about all items related to research and scientific evidence. This may reflect a degree of conflict between the work pressures of clinical practice and opportunities for reading and keeping up-to-date with research.

## 12.2.2 Career satisfaction

This factor groups together items about which respondents are positive, neutral and negative, but which all relate to satisfaction with a career as a VN. Respondents have fairly strong levels of satisfaction with the support from their employer and others in the practice, are fairly positive about being valued by surgeons and clients and about career progression opportunities in the profession, are neutral about the profession being family friendly and offering good opportunities for part-time work, and are dissatisfied on average with salary levels.

Respondents aged 16 to 19 (97% of whom are students) are most positive about all aspects of career satisfaction apart from satisfaction with salary levels, where respondents aged 40 and over have the highest level of satisfaction, or rather the lowest level of dissatisfaction. Those aged 16-19 are much more positive than their older counterparts about the profession being family friendly and about career progression opportunities, and respondents aged 30 and over are on average slightly negative about these aspects. VNs in their 30s are slightly negative about opportunities for part-time work, and those in the 20s are most negative about salary levels.

Students are more negative than non-students about salary levels, but are more positive about all other aspects, particularly career progression opportunities and family friendliness.

There are a few significant differences by work area. Respondents in clinical practice are more positive than other VNs about family friendliness, opportunities for career progression, and support from others in the practice, while respondents within the

profession but outside clinical practice are most positive about salary levels, although they are still negative overall.

### 12.2.3 Satisfaction with RCVS information

Respondents are on average satisfied with the quantity, quality and frequency of information from RCVS, with little variation in views across the three elements. However, younger students aged under 30, and student VNs of all ages, are less positive than older, non-student VNs, particularly with the frequency of information from RCVS (although it is not known whether they would prefer more frequent or less frequent information).

### 12.2.4 Job satisfaction

Respondents strongly agree that their work gives them job satisfaction and that the VN profession gives variety, and this agreement is stronger among younger respondents, particularly those who are students.

### 12.2.5 New entrants to the profession

On average, respondents are slightly positive about new entrants to the profession in terms of their quality improving over time and them having the necessary skills to hit the ground running in general practice employment, although there are stark differences by age and student status. Respondents aged 30 and over have more negative views than their younger colleagues; they are on average neutral about the quality of newly qualified VNs improving over time, and they are negative about their having the skills to hit the ground running. There is a similar pattern by VN status, with qualified VNs being less positive than student VNs about both elements, and being slightly negative about the skills of new entrants.

As most students are young, and as many young respondents are students, we examined differences by both age and status to investigate further, and it would appear that both age and student status are driving views here rather than just one variable. Student VNs are positive about both elements regardless of their age, and qualified VNs aged under 30 are also positive about both elements.

### 12.2.6 Future supply

In this factor, the score for 'Veterinary practices are training too many VNs for available future work' has been reversed, so that agreement for both elements is positive and disagreement is negative.

Overall respondents show similar, strong levels of agreement that practices are *NOT* training too many VNs (3.65), and that the demand for qualified VNs will increase over the next ten years (3.61). There was little variation in views about demand for VNs increasing by age, student status or work area. However, older VNs aged 30 and over (3.73), non-students (3.67), and those within the profession but working outside clinical practice (3.87), had stronger levels of agreement than other VNs that practices are *NOT* training too many VNs for available future work.

### 12.2.7 Elements not in any factors

There were some significant variations in the four elements that did not fall into any of the factors by age (Table 12.3) and student status of VNs (Table 12.4), but not by work area. VNs in their 20s and 30s were most likely to agree that VN work is stressful, while students were less likely than non-students to view work as stressful. As age increases, respondents were less likely to agree that clients value the work of veterinary surgeons, or that current information tools are adequate to support veterinary practitioners; students had higher levels of agreement with these statements than did non-students.

**Table 12.3: Mean element scores by age**

	Newly qualified VNs need more support now than in the past	VN work is stressful	Clients value the work of veterinary surgeons	Current information tools (internet, scientific journals) are adequate to support veterinary practitioners
16 to 19	3.48	3.99	4.41	3.64
20 to 29	3.56	4.20	4.39	3.64
30 to 39	3.54	4.20	4.25	3.54
40 to 49	3.49	4.09	4.17	3.52
50 plus	3.60	4.04	4.13	3.47
Total	3.54	4.17	4.30	3.59

Source: VN survey, 2014

**Table 12.4: Mean element scores by student status**

	Newly qualified VNs need more support now than in the past	VN work is stressful	Clients value the work of veterinary surgeons	Current information tools (internet, scientific journals) are adequate to support veterinary practitioners
Student	3.53	4.13	4.39	3.67
Non-student	3.54	4.18	4.26	3.55
Total	3.54	4.17	4.30	3.59

Source: VN survey, 2014

### 12.3 Reflections on career choice

Respondents seem slightly more sure about their career choice than they did in 2010. Table 12.5 shows that 60 per cent would still opt to become a VN if they started their career again, up from 54 per cent in 2010; and the proportion who would not still opt to become a VN fell from 20 per cent in 2010 to 15 per cent in the current survey.

**Table 12.5: ‘Still opt to become veterinary nurse if started career again?’**

	Frequency	%	2010 %
Yes	2,566	60.2	54
No	643	15.1	20
Unsure	1,056	24.8	26
Total	4,265	100.0	100

*Source: VN survey, 2014 and 2010*

There were significant differences in responses by age. Somewhat unsurprisingly, given they would have little to compare it with, respondents aged 16 to 19 were most likely to say they would still opt for a career as a VN (76%); VNs in their 30s were least likely, with around half (51%) saying they would still opt for a career as a VN, below the proportions of those in their 40s (56%) and those aged 50 and over (62%). Respondents in their 30s were most likely to say they definitely would not still opt for a career as a VN (22%).

Student VNs were much more likely than non-students to still opt to become a VN (75% compared with 54%), and much less likely to definitely say no to a career as a VN (7% compared with 19%).

Looking further to investigate the separate influences of age and student status, age was not an impact on views among students, and around three quarters of students regardless of age said they would opt for a career as a VN. However, among non-students views varied by age, and were most negative among non-students in their 30s, with 49 per cent saying they would, and 24 per cent saying they would not, opt to become a VN if they started their career again.

Views on career choice were significantly associated with views about the VN profession, as Table 12.6 shows. For all factors, respondents who would still opt to become a VN were more positive than those who were unsure, who were in turn more positive than those definitely would not opt to become a VN again, with the differences most stark for career satisfaction and job satisfaction.

**Table 12.6: Mean factor scores by whether would still opt to become a VN again**

	Research	Career satisfaction	RCVS information	Job satisfaction	New entrants	Future supply
Yes	3.54	3.38	3.56	4.41	3.32	3.70
No	3.43	2.65	3.45	3.70	2.87	3.46
Unsure	3.48	2.98	3.51	4.01	3.11	3.55
Total	3.51	3.17	3.53	4.20	3.20	3.63

Source: VN survey, 2014

## 12.4 Best things, suggestions for improvements, and challenges

Respondents were asked what the best things about being a VN were. In the 2010 survey respondents could write in three responses using their own words, whereas in the current survey respondents were given a tick list based on the top answers given in 2010, together with an 'other, please specify' option. Again respondents were asked to select up to three things, and Table 12.7 shows the responses.

Working with animals was the most common response, mentioned by nearly nine out of ten respondents (89%). This was also the most common response in 2010 and 2008, when it was mentioned by 56 per cent and 64 per cent of respondents respectively. Job satisfaction was mentioned by 59 per cent of respondents (47% in 2010, 44% in 2008), and making a difference was mentioned by 49 per cent of respondents (22% in 2010).

**Table 12.7: 'What are the best things about being a veterinary nurse?'**

	Frequency	%
Job satisfaction	2,528	59.3
Client relationships	1,044	24.5
Working with animals	3,797	89.0
Challenge/stimulus	1,587	37.2
Making a difference	2,067	48.5
Other	61	1.4
Total	4,265	

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

The most common responses under the 'Other' category were working with a good team/workplace camaraderie, variety in the job, travel opportunities, and learning new things.

Respondents were also asked what would make veterinary nursing a better profession for them, and again a tick list was developed for the survey this year based on the

written responses given in the 2010 survey. Better pay was by far the most common suggestion, mentioned by 86 per cent of respondents, and it was also the most common response in the previous surveys (82% in 2010; 81% in 2008). More respect and recognition from the public was the second most commonly mentioned improvement (46%; 31% in 2010 and 36% in 2008), followed by better work-life balance (38%; not mentioned in earlier surveys), better opportunities for career progression (33%; 15% in 2010) and more responsibility (20%; 18% in 2008, 16% in 2008).

**Table 12.8: ‘What would, for you, make the veterinary nursing profession a better profession in which to work?’**

	Frequency	%
Better pay/remuneration	3,644	85.8
More responsibility	828	19.5
Less out-of-hours/on call	555	13.1
Better work-life balance	1,616	38.0
Flexible working hours	607	14.3
Shorter hours	280	6.6
Less regulation/bureaucracy	353	8.3
More support staff	547	12.9
More respect/recognition from the public	1,943	45.7
Better opportunities for career progression	1,388	32.7
Other	76	1.8
Total	4,249	

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

The most common suggestions for other improvements were more respect/recognition from vets/colleagues/employer, better management/support, and more clinical work.

Lastly, respondents were asked to name the main challenges facing the VN profession, using a list based on responses to the previous surveys (again, with an ‘other, please specify’ option). Poor financial reward was the most commonly mentioned challenge, and appears to be increasing in importance, with the proportion of VNs mentioning it increasing from 45 per cent in 2008 and 48 per cent in 2010, to 54 per cent in the current survey. Lack of respect and recognition from the general public (48%; 21% in 2010, 27% in 2008), affordability of veterinary services (44%; not mentioned in the 2010 VN survey although was mentioned by VS respondents), and lack of respect and recognition from employers and vets (33%; 11% in 2010) were also commonly mentioned challenges facing the VN profession.

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**Table 12.9: ‘In your opinion, what are the main challenges currently facing the veterinary profession?’**

	Frequency	%
Economic climate	1,276	30.2
Client expectations/demands	1,367	32.4
Misinformation/bad PR	506	12.0
Affordability of veterinary services	1,838	43.5
Poor financial reward	2,266	53.7
Lack of respect/recognition for profession generally/by public	2,017	47.8
Lack of respect/recognition for profession from employers/vets	1,383	32.7
Changes in training	760	18.0
Other	73	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,223</b>	

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

Source: VN survey, 2014

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Challenges mentioned by those giving ‘Other’ responses included not enough practices willing to train students, limited opportunities for career progression, lay/untrained staff carrying out VN role, and issues around quality of training, particularly related to degree courses not giving enough practical experience.

## 13 Well-being

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As in the 2010 survey, respondents were asked questions about their well-being, not just in the work setting but about their feelings about their life in general. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) was used again, to track the mental well-being of the profession at a population level over successive surveys. Respondents were informed that they were not obliged to complete the questions if they preferred not to.

### 13.1 Chapter summary

- The mean well-being score across all VN respondents is 47.5, slightly below the average for VS respondents of 49, and below the mean across the whole population of 51.
- Respondents are especially positive about being able to make up their own mind about things, being interested in new things, feeling useful, and thinking clearly.
- However they are much less positive about feeling relaxed and having energy to spare.

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

The WEMWBS is a 14-item scale developed to measure mental well-being. Each of the 14 item responses in WEMWBS is scored from one (none of the time) to five (all of the time) and a total scale score is calculated by summing the 14 individual item scores. The minimum score possible is 14, whilst the maximum is 70.

*'The average population mean is around 51 and this varies according to the population group studied. The mean score for the population under study can be compared with these provisional population norms to assess whether the level of mental well-being is above or below this level.'*

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) User Guide, Version 1, 2008

In their cross-sectional study of mental health and well-being and their associations in the UK veterinary profession, Bartram et al. (2009) found that, amongst their 1,796 VS

respondents (a sample whose demographic and occupational profile was representative of the UK veterinary profession), the mean WEMWBS score for their VS sample was 48.85 (and the score was significantly higher for men than for women (49.86 versus 47.83)). This is significantly lower than the corresponding means for a representative general population sample from Scotland (48.85 versus 51.05)<sup>3</sup>. There was also a significant relationship between WEMWBS and age, whereby the score increased by 0.05 for every one-year increase in age.

### 13.3 Responses to the WEMWBS

Overall, respondents are positive about their general wellbeing. The mean score for all respondents on all 14 items was 47.5, above the mid-point of the distribution of 42, and very similar to the mean score for all respondents in 2010 of 47.4.

The well-being statements that VNs were most positive about were being able to make up their own mind about things, being interested in new things, feeling useful, and thinking clearly. At the other end of the scale, the statements that VNs were least positive about were feeling relaxed, and having energy to spare.

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<sup>3</sup> Bartram D J, Yadegarfar G, Baldwin D (2009), 'A cross-sectional study of mental health and well-being and their associations in the UK veterinary profession', *Soc Psychiat Epidemiol*, Vol. 44, pp. 1075-1085

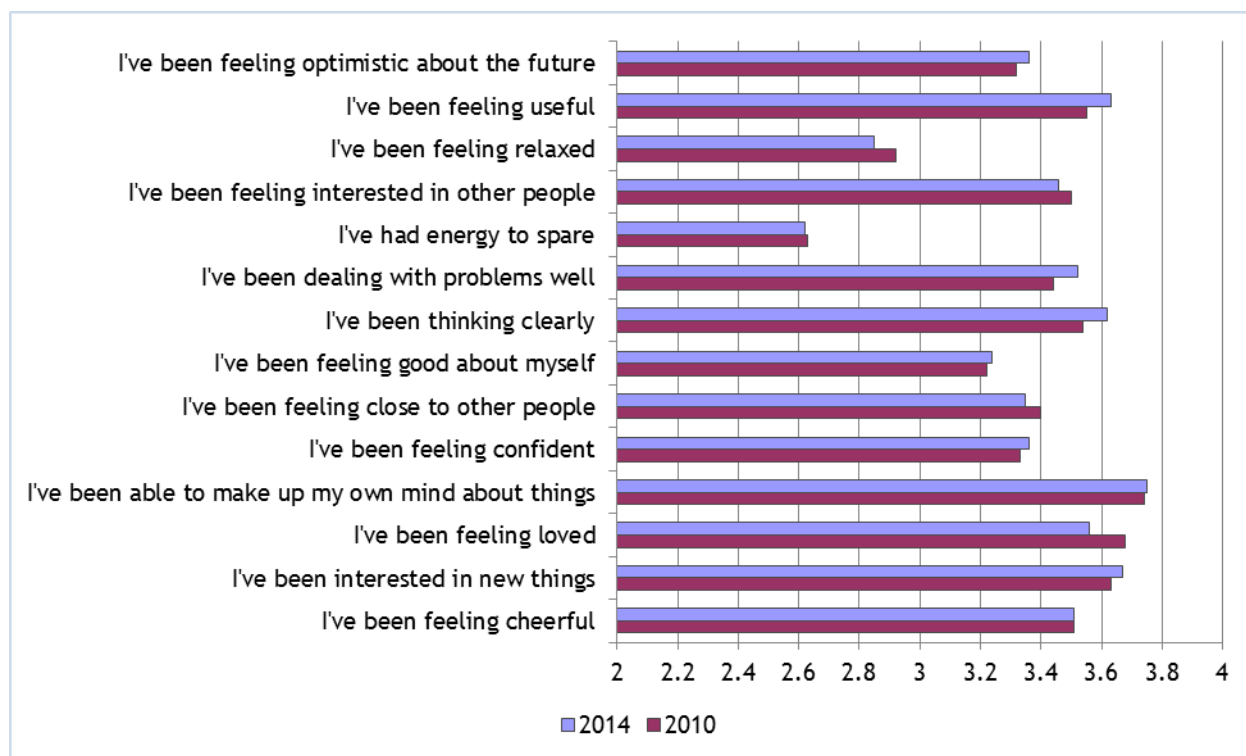
**Table 13.1: Well-being responses (row percentages)**

	Never	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time	N=
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	2.8	12.3	39.8	36.9	8.3	4,096
I've been feeling useful	1.1	7.0	30.8	50.2	10.9	4,075
I've been feeling relaxed	6.2	28.9	41.3	21.0	2.6	4,081
I've been feeling interested in other people	1.7	10.3	35.3	45.2	7.5	4,060
I've had energy to spare	10.3	37.4	33.8	16.4	2.1	4,079
I've been dealing with problems well	1.5	7.1	35.4	49.6	6.5	4,077
I've been thinking clearly	0.9	6.0	31.7	52.7	8.7	4,068
I've been feeling good about myself	3.7	16.0	38.3	36.1	5.8	4,066
I've been feeling close to other people	2.4	13.7	37.7	38.5	7.7	4,060
I've been feeling confident	2.6	13.0	37.0	41.0	6.5	4,061
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1.0	5.1	26.5	52.8	14.5	4,057
I've been feeling loved	3.2	11.2	30.0	37.6	18.1	4,047
I've been interested in new things	1.7	7.9	28.5	45.8	16.2	4,042
I've been feeling cheerful	2.1	8.1	35.7	44.5	9.5	4,043

*Source: VN survey, 2014*

Figure 13.1 shows the mean scores for each well-being statement for VN respondents in the current survey and in 2010, where 'None of the time' scores 1, 'Some of the time' scores 3, and 'All of the time' scores 5. Scores have increased significantly since 2010 for feeling useful, dealing with problems well, and thinking clearly. However, respondents have significantly lower scores than they did in 2010 for feeling relaxed, and feeling loved.

**Figure 13.1: Mean well-being scores 2010 and 2014**



Note: Mean scores where 1 = None of the time, 3 = Some of the time and 5 = All of the time

Source: VN survey, 2014 and 2010

There were a number of significant differences in mean WEMWBS scores by personal characteristics of respondents, as there were in 2010, and these are shown in Table 13.2. Male respondents scored nearly two points higher than female VNs (49.3 compared with 47.5). Those aged under 20 had the highest mean score, 48.9, compared with 47.8 among those in their 20s, 47.0 among those in the 30s and 40s, and 47.5 among those aged 50 and over. Respondents with a disability (44.2) scored much lower than those without a disability (47.7).

Respondents in full-time work had a slightly lower, but statistically significant, mean WEMWBS score than respondents in all other situations, including those who were unemployed or taking a career break. Those doing unpaid clinical work experience had the highest WEMWBS score (49.4). However, there were no significant differences between those in clinical practice, those outside clinical practice but in work using their

VN qualification, and those outside the VN profession, whereas in 2010 those outside the profession had higher scores than those inside the profession.

**Table 13.2 :Mean total well-being scores 2010 and 2014**

		2014	2010
Gender	Female	47.5	47.4
	Male	49.3	49.4
Age	16-19	48.9	49.8
	20-29	47.8	47.0
	30-39	47.0	47.7
	40-49	47.0	47.5
	50 plus	47.5	48.5
Disability	Yes	44.2	44.2
	No	47.7	47.5
Employment status	Full-time work	47.1	47.1
	Part-time work	48.2	48.3
	Clinical work experience (paid)	48.4	48.0
	Clinical work experience (unpaid)	49.4	49.9
	Unemployed	47.8	47.7
	Taking a career break	47.9	48.3
Work area	Within clinical practice	47.4	47.2
	Outside clinical practice but within profession	47.3	48.5
	Outside profession	48.7	50.0

*Source: VN survey, 2014 and 2010*

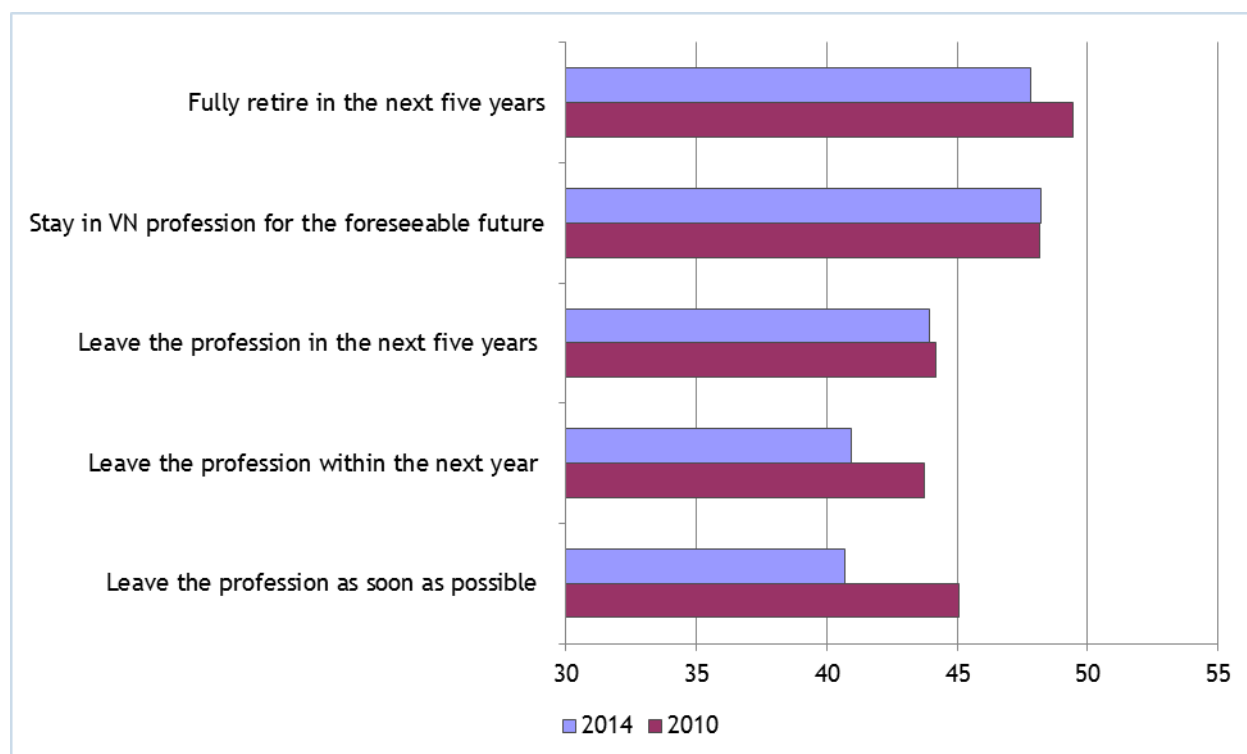
There is a significant association between career plans and well-being scores (Figure 13.2). Respondents who intend to stay in the profession for the foreseeable future have the highest mean well-being score (48.2), while those who intend to leave as soon as possible, or at least within the next year, have the lowest scores (40.7 and 40.9 respectively). This pattern was also evident in 2010, but comparing the results of the two surveys shows that those intending to leave the profession within the next year or sooner have much lower scores now than they did in 2010.

When reflecting on their career choice, those who say they would still opt to become a VN if they could begin their career again had a much higher score than those who would not, 49.3 compared with 44.2, and this was also the situation in the 2010 survey.

Availability of rest periods were linked with feelings of well-being, with respondents who had a minimum rest period of 11 hours in each 24-hour period having a much high well-being score than those who did not (48.1 compared with 44.6, Figure 13.2). Furthermore, those who had at least two rest days every 14 days had a higher well-

being score than those who did not have at least two days rest a fortnight (47.6 compared with 44.5). There were also associations between rest periods and well-being in the 2010 survey, which in addition found that respondents who had at least 20 days paid holiday per year had higher well-being scores than those who did not, but in the current survey there was no difference in well-being scores by access to 20 days paid holiday.

**Figure 13.2: Mean well-being scores 2010 and 2014**



Source: VN survey, 2014 and 2010

There were very strong associations between well-being scores and the responses to the attitude statements regarding the VN profession, as shown in Figure 13.3 for a number of statements with the strongest associations. These findings are very consistent with those from the 2010 survey.

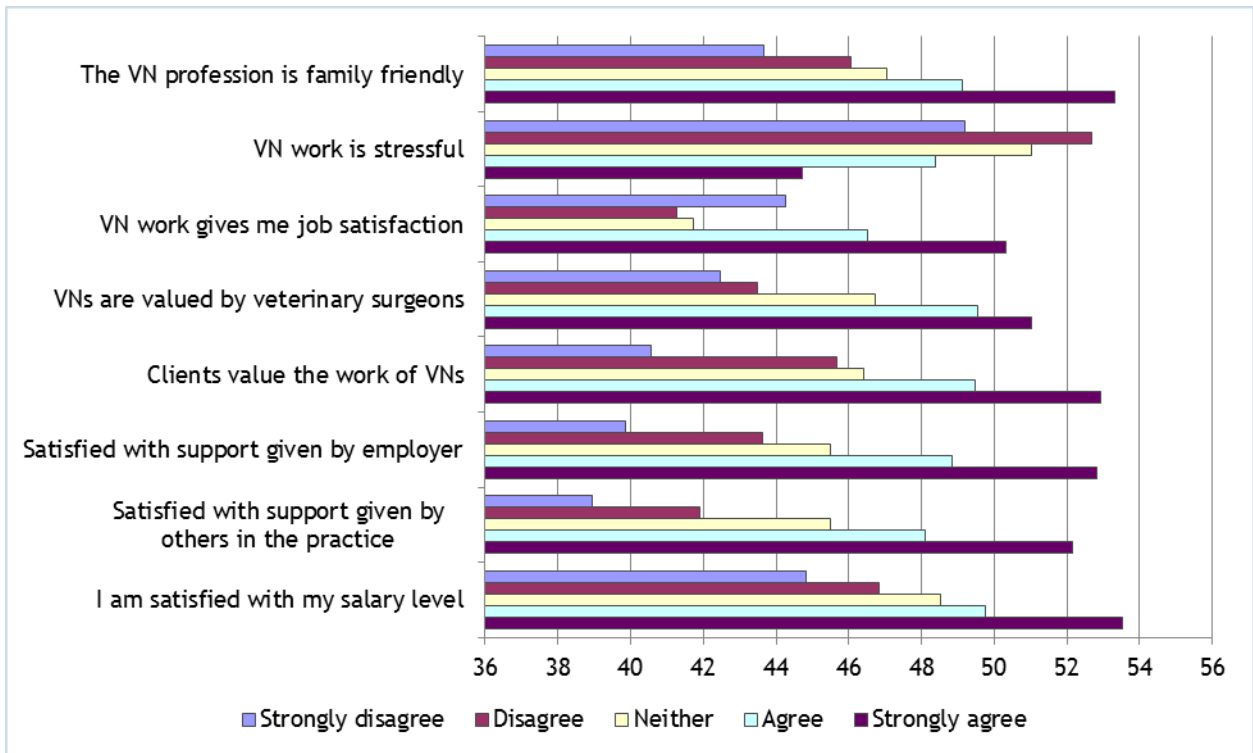
**Table 13.3: Mean total well-being scores 2010 and 2014**

		2014	2010
Have minimum rest period of 11 hours in each 24-hour period?	Yes	48.1	47.7
	No	44.6	45.3
Have at least two rest days every 14 days?	Yes	47.6	47.4
	No	44.5	44.5
Have at least 20 days' paid holiday per year?	Yes	47.4	47.4
	No	47.4	45.4

Source: VN survey, 2014 and 2010

The association was strongest for support from respondents' employers and from others in the practice, where those who strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with the support they received scored less than 40, and those who strongly agreed that they were satisfied scored more than 52. There was also a very strong association between agreement with clients valuing the work of VNs and well-being. Respondents who strongly agreed that VN work is stressful had lower well-being scores than others, although those who agreed or were neutral about this statement had well-being scores that were above the overall average.

**Figure 13.3: Mean well-being scores by views on the profession, 2014**



Source: VN survey, 2014



## 14 Conclusions

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

### 14.1 Evidence of trends

There has been a shift among VN respondents away from those in full-time work and towards those in clinical practice since the 2010 survey, which is partly driven by a shift in the age profile with an increase in respondents aged under 20. Unfortunately the survey method this year has not allowed a response analysis of student VNs and so it is not possible to see if this is a shift in response patterns, or a genuine trend in the VN profession; however, RCVS data on student enrolments show a large increase in enrolments between 2010 and 2011, although they dropped off slightly in 2012 but were still well above the 2010 level<sup>4</sup>.

Among those working within the profession, patterns by type of practice have remained broadly stable, with two out of three VNs working in small animal/exotic practice. There has been a continuation of the trend in shorter worker weeks observed between 2008 and 2010, with hours in the main clinical practice areas dropping from 39-40 hour per week in 2010 to 35-36 hours per week currently.

The activities typically undertaken by VNs are little changed since 2010, with VNs generally administering medicines by injection and doing clinical cleaning every day, but rarely performing minor surgery or assisting with dental work. Dogs and cats

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<sup>4</sup> RCVS Facts 2013

again account for the bulk of VNs working time, with some time spent on practice management/administration.

VNs' involvement in nursing clinics has remained stable, with around three quarters of respondents involved in clinics, most commonly nutrition and puppy/kitten clinics. However there has been a large increase in the proportion of VNs reporting particular areas of expertise, up from 53 per cent in 2010 to 70 per cent currently. Compared to the 2010 survey findings fewer VNs undertake visits to clients, only 15 per cent compared with 28 per cent in 2010.

The proportion of respondents who have an 11-hour rest period every day has decreased since 2010, from 83 per cent to 79 per cent, with only a small increase in those covered by a workforce agreement. There are also been small decreases in the proportions who have at least two rest days every 14 days, and at least 20 days' paid holiday per year, albeit from very high baselines.

VNs generally undertake CPD in a number of ways, although only 70 per cent spent time away from work receiving CPD in the last 12 months. Lectures by external providers, webinars, private study and in-house training are the most commonly used methods. There has been a shift away from employer funding of CPD provision towards free provision; in 2008 84 per cent of CPD provision was funded by employers, and it has fallen to 57 per cent in 2010 and 43 per cent currently, while the proportion of provision that is free is currently 41 per cent, up from 29 per cent in 2010.

There has been a shift in the intentions of current students away from staying in their training practice post-qualification, and towards moving to another practice, since 2010. However, intentions of current Level 3 Diploma students are broadly in line with those across all students in 2010, with 60 per cent intending to remain in their training practice. Similarly, the proportion of recent qualifiers who stayed in their training practice was much lower than the proportion in 2010, 65 per cent compared with 78 per cent in 2010, although the current figure is similar to the proportion in 2008 of 68 per cent and so the 2010 finding may have been driven to some extent by the economic climate.

In terms of their views of the veterinary profession, respondents are generally more positive than they were in the 2010, although the areas of high satisfaction (job satisfaction, variety) are similar as are those of lower satisfaction (pay, stress), and these are reflected to some extent in their views of the best things about working in the profession (working with animals, job satisfaction) and of the challenges/improvement areas (pay, respect from the public). However, there has been a big increase in the proportion of VNs suggesting better opportunities for career progression (33%, compared with 15% in 2010). VNs are more confident than they were in 2010 about their career choice, with 60 per cent saying they would become a VN again if starting their career over compared with 54 per cent in 2010.

## 14.2 Implications for the future

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

- The VN profession is likely to remain a young profession for the immediate future, as the responses show the age profile is younger now than in the 2010 survey.
- Patterns of employment by practice area, and the tasks VNs undertake, have been broadly stable since 2010 and so continued stability may be assumed over the coming years. Furthermore, VNs are more firm in their intentions to stay in the VN profession than they were four years ago.
- Average working hours have continued to decrease. This may reflect a shift towards more family friendly and flexible working patterns, which remain a concern for some VNs and are mentioned as a suggested area for improvement.
- More students intend to move on from their training practice post-qualification than was the case in 2010, although it may be that the situation in 2010 was affected by the economic climate and that intentions are again in line with the pre-recession picture. There is also considerable variation by qualification, with Level 3 Diploma students more likely to remain in their training practices than degree or Foundation Degree students.
- Views about the profession have generally become more positive than they were in 2010, although there are still concerns about pay and stress.
- Suggestions for improvement mainly focus on pay and respect/recognition from the public, and although the proportion of those citing lack of career progression as a reason for planning to leave the profession is similar to that in 2010, the proportion of VNs mentioning better opportunities for career progression has more than doubled. As the profession grows there may be increased opportunities for VNs to move into more senior positions, but it may be important to monitor frustration regarding lack of career opportunities.



## Appendix: Tables

Table A: Postcode areas of VS and VN respondents

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: VN survey, 2014

**Table B: Views about the veterinary nursing profession (row percentages)**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
Veterinary practices are training too many VNs for the available future work	15.3	46.0	28.1	9.3	1.4
The VN profession is a 'family friendly' profession in which to work	9.0	27.1	23.4	35.7	4.9
The VN profession offers good opportunities for those wishing to work part-time	6.3	26.7	23.9	40.2	2.9
Newly qualified VNs need more support now than in the past	1.0	13.1	29.4	44.0	12.5
Over the next ten years, the demand for qualified VNs will increase overall in the UK	0.8	7.5	31.6	49.9	10.2
VN work is stressful	0.6	3.1	8.3	55.1	32.9
VN work gives me job satisfaction	0.8	3.5	5.3	52.5	38.0
The VN profession gives variety	0.8	3.4	6.8	56.3	32.7
The quality of newly qualified VNs is higher now than in the past	3.6	15.8	40.2	30.3	10.2
Newly qualified VNs have the necessary skills required for general practice employment, from day one	4.9	26.4	26.5	36.1	6.2
VNs are valued by veterinary surgeons	4.8	18.8	22.1	47.9	6.4
Clients value the work of veterinary surgeons	0.6	1.4	3.9	55.7	38.5
Clients value the work of VNs	5.1	25.7	21.2	43.1	4.9
Veterinary nursing offers good opportunities for career progression	6.4	26.3	17.7	42.0	7.5
I am satisfied with the support given by my employer	5.1	14.4	19.7	47.3	13.4
I am satisfied with the support given by others in the practice	2.2	9.1	18.0	55.3	15.3
I am satisfied with my salary level	22.4	34.9	18.1	22.3	2.3
I am satisfied with the quantity of information I receive from RCVS	1.2	6.3	34.7	55.2	2.6
I am satisfied with the frequency of information I receive from the RCVS	1.0	6.8	35.2	54.6	2.4
I am satisfied with the quality of information I receive from the RCVS	1.0	4.8	33.6	57.6	3.0
I am familiar with the concept of evidence-based veterinary medicine	1.5	9.7	18.2	59.1	11.5
Recent scientific information influences my clinical decisions	0.6	6.5	35.1	50.3	7.6
Current information tools (internet, scientific journals) are adequate to support veterinary practitioners	0.6	8.5	28.0	57.4	5.4
I feel able to assess the scientific quality of a research study	1.3	13.9	33.9	44.3	6.6
I feel able to assess the methodology of a research study	1.4	13.8	35.9	42.9	6.0
I feel able to identify biases in a research publication	1.3	10.9	34.0	47.3	6.5
The last time I contacted the RCVS, I was dealt with effectively	2.5	6.4	35.5	46.6	9.0

Source: VN survey, 2014

**Table C: Mean factor scores by age**

	Research	Career satisfaction	RCVS information	Job satisfaction	New entrants	Future supply
16 to 19	3.44	3.61	3.45	4.39	3.62	3.56
20 to 29	3.56	3.24	3.49	4.28	3.42	3.59
30 to 39	3.48	3.01	3.57	4.09	2.95	3.66
40 to 49	3.48	3.11	3.60	4.14	2.94	3.70
50 plus	3.48	3.20	3.60	4.17	2.91	3.72
Total	3.51	3.17	3.53	4.20	3.20	3.63

Source: VN survey, 2014

**Table D: Mean factor scores by student status**

	Research	Career satisfaction	RCVS information	Job satisfaction	New entrants	Future supply
Student	3.52	3.42	3.37	4.37	3.63	3.60
Non-student	3.51	3.06	3.60	4.13	3.01	3.64
Total	3.51	3.17	3.53	4.20	3.20	3.63

Source: VN survey, 2014

**Table E: Mean factor scores by work area**

	Research	Career satisfaction	RCVS information	Job satisfaction	New entrants	Future supply
Within clinical practice	3.49	3.18	3.53	4.21	3.19	3.62
Outside clinical, in VN profession	3.66	3.12	3.62	4.17	3.18	3.77
Outside VN profession	3.67	3.10	3.54	4.11	3.19	3.63
Total	3.51	3.17	3.54	4.20	3.19	3.63

Source: VN survey, 2014