

# Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

## Exit survey 2022–2024



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# Chapter 1: Summary

## 1.1 Background

Workforce shortages have long been a challenge facing the veterinary profession, recently exacerbated by the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic and changes in UK immigration policy. The RCVS Exit Surveys for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses were launched following a review of existing data and research on recruitment, retention and return in the UK veterinary profession. This research uncovered the need for a deeper understanding of why vets and nurses decide to leave veterinary practice in the UK.

The purpose of the surveys is to provide RCVS with more information about the characteristics of those who are leaving the RCVS Registers, the reasons they have for leaving, their future plans, and the possibility of returning to UK practice. The RCVS Exit Survey was launched for veterinary surgeons in April 2022 and for veterinary nurses in September 2023. The survey is sent to those who voluntarily remove themselves from the Registers or, for vets, the UK-practising category of the Register.

The RCVS is very grateful to the vets and vet nurses who participated. The survey remains in use, and additional responses are received every month.

Data from the RCVS Registers shows that relatively few vets and nurses leave each year. In 2024 3.8% of veterinary surgeons (1,461 vets) left either the UK-practising category or left the Registers altogether. For nurses, the figure was 3.2% (761 vet nurses). More details are available in Appendices A and B.

## 1.2 Recipients and respondents

### Recipients and response rates

The exit survey was rolled out to vets in April 2022 and to vet nurses in September 2023. An exit survey is sent to:

- vets who voluntarily leave the RCVS Register;
- vets who voluntarily leave the UK-practising category of the RCVS Register (but remain on the Register in another category, for example Non-practising or Overseas-practising);
- vet nurses who voluntarily leave the RCVS Register.

Table 1 shows the number of vets and nurses choosing to leave the Register (or UK-practising category) in 2022, 2023 and 2024 while the exit survey was being made available. In total, 2743 vets chose to leave, with an additional 590 removed for non-payment. Only professionals who actively choose to leave receive an exit survey. Almost as many nurses were removed from the Register for non-payment (n=426) than removed themselves voluntarily (n=582).

**Table 1.1: Exit Survey response rates**

	Responses	Survey invitations	Response rate	Non-payment exits (no survey invitation)
Vets leaving the RCVS Register altogether (April 2022–end 2024)	306	339	77%	590
Vets leaving the UK-practising category (April 2022–end 2024)	643	2344	27%	N/A
Vet nurses leaving the Register (Sept 2023–end 2024)	202	582	35%	753

The figures presented in Table 1.1 show three very different populations.

- Relatively few vets voluntarily leave the RCVS Register (n=399), and those who do seem motivated to tell the RCVS about their decision (77% response rate). However, a further 590 left the RCVS Register by non-payment, which means that more than half of those who leave do not receive an exit survey.
- It is more common for vets to choose to stay on the RCVS Register but leave the UK-practising category. They are staying in touch with the RCVS, and are less motivated to fill in the exit survey (27% response rate).
- Like vets who leave the Register altogether, vet nurses are very likely to leave the Register by non-payment and so a smaller proportion receive the exit survey. However, they have a much lower response rate (35% compared to 79%) than vets who leave the Register altogether.

### **Demographic differences and the effect of offering multiple Register categories**

The two veterinary populations differ by key demographic characteristics.

- Respondents leaving the UK-practising category were more likely to be younger, and earlier in their careers, than those leaving the Register altogether. Nevertheless, the majority of both groups were within 15 years of qualification.
- Reflecting this age distribution and ongoing changes in the percentage vets who are female, respondents leaving the UK-practising category were more likely to be female (63%) than those leaving the Register altogether (59% female).
- A slightly higher percentage of those leaving the Register qualified outside of the EU (17%) compared to those leaving the UK-practising category (10%);
- Respondents leaving the Register were slightly more likely to have attended a school outside the UK (48%) than those leaving the UK-practising category (40% attended school outside the UK);

- While broadly similar percentages of each group of respondents qualified in the EU, there was a slightly higher percentage of those leaving the Register that qualified outside of the EU (17%) compared to those leaving the UK-practising category (10%).

In comparison, vet nurse respondents were almost all female (99%), white (99%) and under 50 (78%). The majority had been registered and qualified for fewer than 15 years. Only 7% had attended school outside the UK and less than 1% qualified outside the EU.

These descriptions reveal something about the nature of the Registers, and how they are used. Vets have a choice of Register categories, which nurses do not. Vets can be registered:

- UK-practising (the majority, 80%)
- Overseas-practising (9%)
- Non-practising (6%)
- Non-practising 70+ (4%)
- Other smaller categories (1%)

Vets are not required to register with RCVS if they are not practising in the UK, so the three smaller categories represent a way to keep in touch with RCVS at a lower price point with no requirements for continuing professional development (CPD). A move into the Overseas-practising or Non-practising categories may therefore represent a future hope or intention to return to practice in the UK, or perhaps a recognition of the significance of the postnominals MRCVS. A move to Non-practising 70+, on the other hand, probably represents an acceptance of a retired status. This last explains why there are older vets in both Exit Survey categories: retirement can be signalled by leaving the Register altogether, or by moving to Non-practising 70+.

### Three very different survey populations

In short, we can see three very different groups, with different histories and motivations. Older, and slightly more likely to be male, than their counterparts who were leaving the UK-practising category, vets leaving the Registers altogether have the highest response rate, perhaps reflecting the importance of the MRCVS post-nominals as part of the veterinary identity. Respondents who left the UK-practising category were making a choice to retain their MRCVS postnominals, even though they did not need to maintain their Registration. Vet nurses did not have this option, though, and some felt the lack keenly. One nurse respondent said:

**“I’m against having to ‘leave’ a register that I worked hard to support for over twenty years... There should be a retired list instead.”<sup>1</sup>**

## 1.3 Results

The full results for each survey population are available in three chapters of the Exit Survey ([Chapter 2](#), [Chapter 3](#) and [Chapter 4](#)) report below, as well as in [Appendices A to M](#).

The most frequent explanations given by vets for leaving the RCVS Register or UK-practising category are moving or remaining overseas, and retirement. Together, these account for 69% of the explanations given by vet surgeon respondents. Those leaving clinical practice and those leaving the profession altogether were most likely to cite chronic stress as their top reason. However, those leaving to move or remain overseas cited being near friends and family and a desire for a career change or new challenge as their top reasons.

Responses to the free text questions tell a more vivid story. Most retirees were leaving before state pension age, and one third of those mentioned health and wellbeing. Some vets,

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<sup>1</sup> For the full quote, see section 4.3, **Retiring**.

particularly those retiring, told us they were struggling with the corporatisation of the sector, using emotive language about ethics and profit. On the other hand, those UK graduates who were leaving to move overseas mentioned travel (“it’s a big world”) and adventure. Finally, at the end of the survey, vets were given the opportunity to provide more detail for their decisions. Those leaving the UK-practising category were most likely to mention health and wellbeing issues, closely followed by issues in the profession such as the demands of working in clinical practice. A third of the comments left by those leaving the Registers altogether mentioned issues to do with RCVS regulation, such as cost and CPD.

For vet nurses, on the other hand, the single biggest explanation for leaving the Register was to leave the profession and work in another field (54%). A further 12% were planning to retire. Of the reasons given for leaving the Register, vet nurses were most likely to choose pay and chronic stress as the top reason. Their free text responses mentioned burn-out and the weight of responsibility carried by Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) but were dominated comments about financial stress.

## 1.4 International mobility

International mobility is baked into the UK veterinary profession. Roughly one third of all vets on the Registers have a primary veterinary qualification which they earned overseas. The College does not hold data on the schooling location of vets on the Register, but the data collected from the Exit Survey shows that more than 90% of those who qualified outside the UK also went to school outside the UK. The following analysis from the exit survey looks at why veterinary surgeons are moving (n=317) or remaining (n=46) overseas. For this analysis, all vets who responded to the exit survey, whether they were leaving the UK-practising category or leaving the Registers altogether, are considered together.

Around two-fifths (41%) of vet surgeon respondents leaving the Registers or the UK-practising category (n=892) said that they were moving or remaining overseas (n=363). This was the single most frequently cited reason for leaving. This reflects patterns identified in Register data (see flowcharts in Annex A). In 2023 and 2024, a little over 3.5% of vets on the UK-practising Register left that category each year and around a third of these moved sideways onto the Overseas-practising Register. This is also true for UK graduates. For example, of the 2019 UK graduating cohort, 10% (92 vets) had left the UK-practising category by the end of 2024. Of these, 51, or a little over half the total, moved to the Overseas-practising category.

The most common destination for vets who stop practising in the UK is outside the country and not outside the profession.

### **Who is moving overseas?**

Exit survey findings highlight that many of those moving overseas were already internationally mobile. Of those who said that they were leaving to move or remain overseas, 55% percent (n=191) were schooled overseas between the ages of 11 and 16 and also qualified overseas. A further 13% (n=43) were either schooled or qualified overseas. That is, some two-thirds of those leaving to move or remain overseas have lived or studied abroad previously and therefore have ties to countries other than the UK.

In comparison, a much smaller percentage of respondents moving or remaining overseas were educated in the UK between the ages of 11 and 16 (26%, n=124), and less than a third (30%, n=153) qualified in the UK. Only one quarter of respondents who were educated entirely in the UK were leaving the Register or the UK-practising category to move or remain overseas.

### **Where are people moving to?**

Looking at those who said they were leaving the Register or UK-practising category to move or remain overseas and were schooled overseas between the ages of 11 and 16, over two-

thirds (69%, n=137) were moving back to their home country. The percentage of those educated overseas between the ages of 11 and 16 who were moving to countries in the EU and non-EU countries were similar. In comparison, those educated in the UK and leaving to move overseas were much more likely to be moving outside of the EU (96%, n=52 with 57 responses missing). Of those who qualified overseas and were moving or remaining overseas, 68% (n=127) of respondents were returning to their home country.

### **Why are they moving overseas, what will they do, and will they come back?**

Among those who said they were leaving the Register or UK-practising category to move or remain overseas and were educated abroad between the ages of 11 and 16, the most frequently given 'most important' reason for moving was 'to be near friends and family' (30%, n=59). Reasons for moving abroad were different among those educated in the UK, with the most important reason being 'career change or new challenge' (28%, n=31). Location of schooling made little difference to the likelihood of continuing veterinary practice outside of the UK. Of those who said they were leaving the Register or the UK-practising category to move or remain overseas and were schooled abroad between the ages of 11 and 16, 86% (n= 67) said they were planning to continue practising outside of the UK. This is similar to those educated in the UK, 81% (n=44) of whom said they would continue practising overseas.

Of those who said they were leaving the Register/UK-practising category to move or return overseas and were schooled or qualified abroad, 21 percent (n=48) said they had plans to return. This was roughly half the percentage of those educated in the UK that were planning to return (43%, n=50). There was, however, a lot of uncertainty around this decision.

### **Veterinary nurses**

The veterinary nurse exit survey and Register data show different patterns to those identified among vets, with only five vet nurse respondents stating that they were moving overseas. Three of these were schooled outside of the UK between the ages of 11 and 16.

## **1.5 Conclusions**

The workforce challenges reported here are not evenly spread across the professions. We know anecdotally that some locations and specialisms struggle more than others to recruit, and we can see from the answers provided to the free text questions that some vets and vet nurses have struggled in the profession and feel forced to leave before their time. However, most of the movement off the veterinary surgeon Registers is associated with international mobility, and secondly with retirement.

The **workforce model**, developed for the RCVS by the Institute for Employment Studies highlights the need for more vets working in public health. A total of 63 exit survey respondents reported that they were leaving a UK government agency (such as the Food Standards Agency, or DAERA). A little over half of these vets were retiring, and a further 16% were moving overseas. The issues raised in the this survey report are relevant to our whole society, as well as to the veterinary profession and the professionals who are leaving.

# Chapter 2: Respondents leaving the UK-practising category

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will first outline the demographic and employment characteristics of individuals that responded to the exit survey after voluntarily leaving the UK-practising category of the Register, before presenting data showing reasons for leaving, and plans for restoring registration in the future. There were many more respondents who were leaving the UK-practising category (n=643) than leaving the Registers altogether (n=306). Not every respondent answered every question: this is reflected in the figures in this report.

## 2.2 Profile of respondents

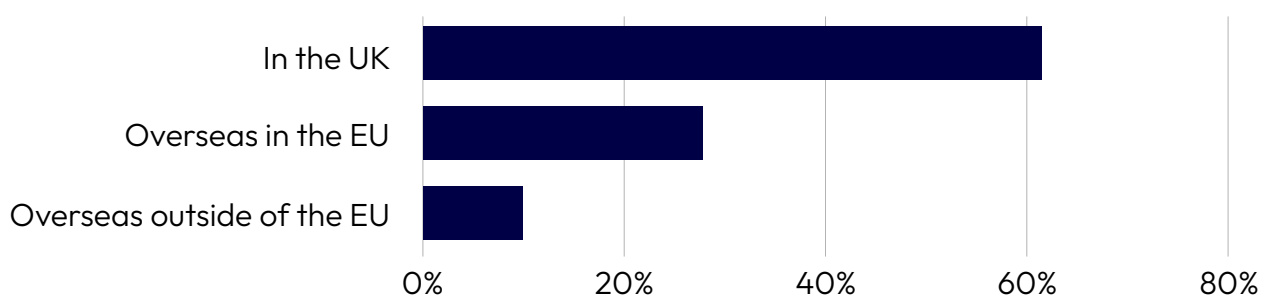
### Demographics

Over half (63%) of respondents who were leaving the UK-practising category (as opposed to the RCVS Register) were female. Half of respondents leaving this category were under the age of 40, with almost one-third of these (29%) being between the ages of 30 and 29. A further fifth (21%) of all respondents leaving this category were between the ages of 60 and 69. The majority (93%) of respondents were white. Additionally, around two-thirds (41%) of respondents had been registered for less than ten years, and a further 15% had been registered for over 40 years. The distribution patterns for years qualified was similar, with just over a third (36%) of respondents leaving the UK-practising category having been qualified for less than ten years, and a further 16% having been qualified for over 40 years. The singular largest group was those who had been qualified for less than five years at the time of survey completion, with this group comprising 19 of respondents leaving the UK-practising category.

Respondents were then asked about their caring responsibilities, to which just over one-fifth (22%) said that they had dependent children living with them, and only 5% said that they were providing care for an adult dependent. The survey then went on to ask about limiting disabilities or health conditions, in response to which 12% of respondents said that they did have a physical or mental health condition that limits their work. Finally, respondents were asked a series of questions around their schooling and whether their families received financial support during these years. Over half (59%) of respondents said that their parents or guardians had completed a university degree course or equivalent, and over two-fifths (42%) said that they had attended either a selective or non-selective state-funded school in the UK (15% and 27% respectively). 10% of respondents said that their household had received income support during their schooling years, and 9% had received free school meals.

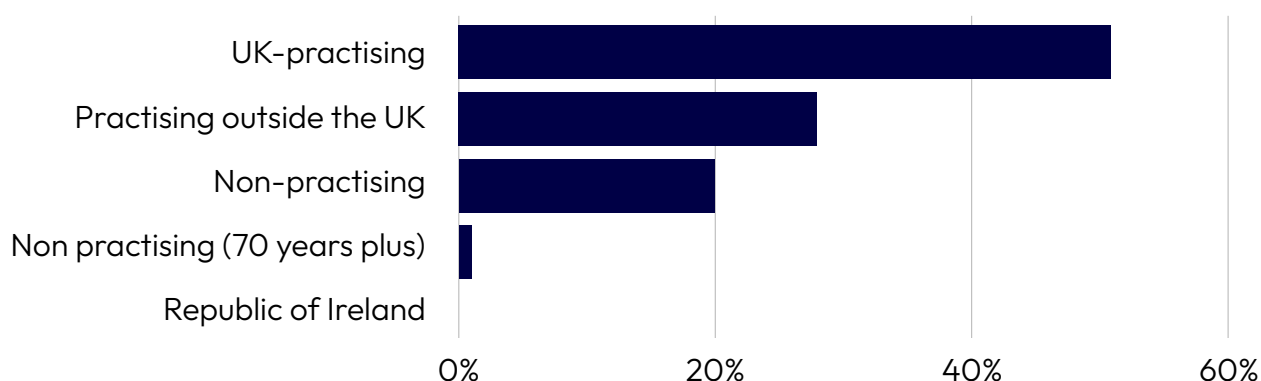
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**Figure 2.1. Percentage of respondents that qualified in each location (n=617)**



The survey then asked respondents to provide further information about their route into the veterinary profession, alongside their current status. Over half (62%) of respondents qualified in the UK, and a further 28% qualified overseas in the EU. In addition, only 2% of respondents indicated having done a one-year access course to enable them to access their veterinary degree. At the time of survey completion, around half (51%) of respondents were UK-practising, 28% were practising outside of the UK, and 20% were non-practising.

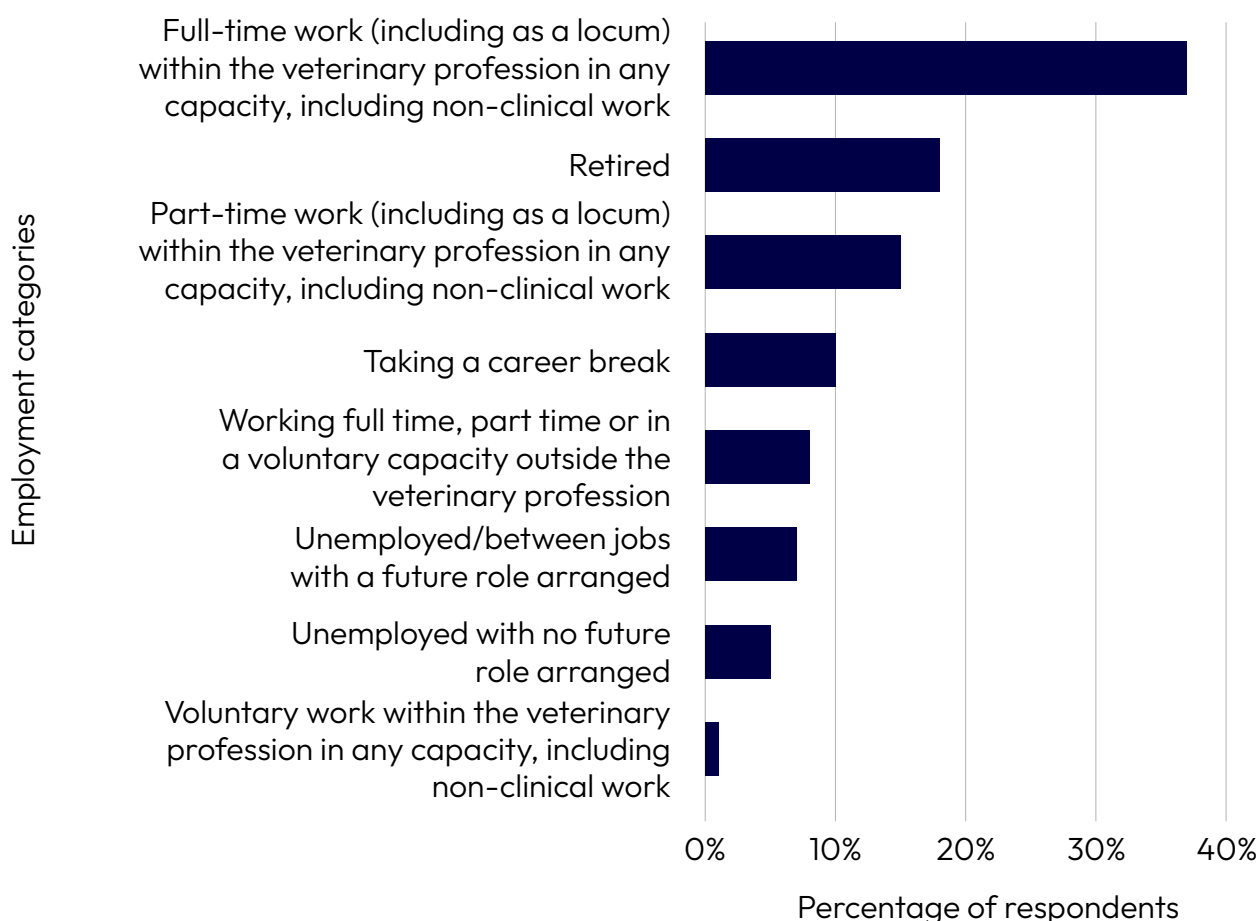
**Figure 2.2. Percentage of respondents in each membership category (current or most recent) (n=629)**



## Employment

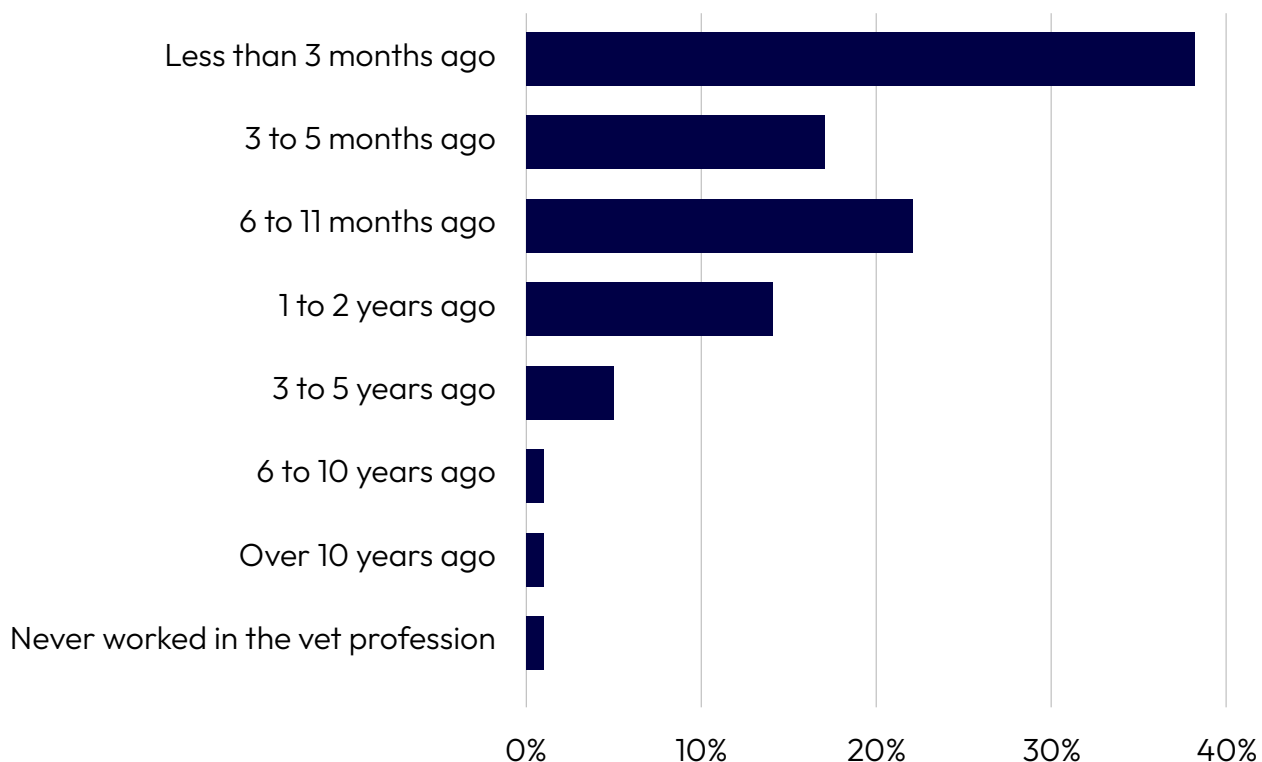
Respondents were then asked about their current employment status, to which around half (52%) said that they were employed within the veterinary profession, whether this be full or part-time. Almost one-fifth (18%) of respondents said that their main employment category was 'retired'.

**Figure 2.3. Employment status of respondents at the time of survey completion (n=621)**



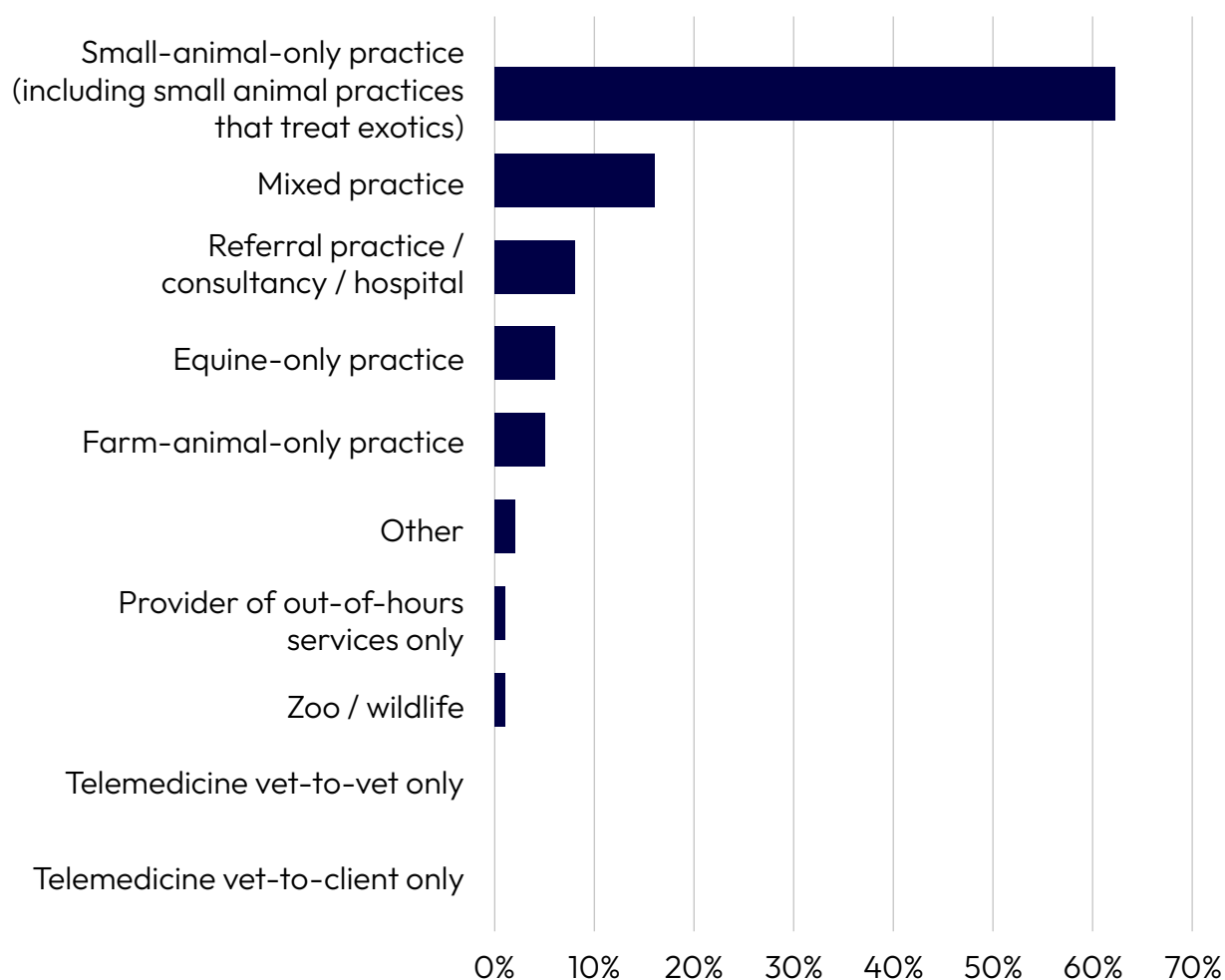
Respondents were then asked about their last employment as a veterinary surgeon, to which over three-quarters (77%) said that they had worked in the veterinary profession less than a year prior to survey completion. In relation to employment category, the percentage of respondents that had worked full- and part-time were similar, with only a slightly greater proportion of respondents stating that they were employed on a full-time basis (52%) than on a part-time basis (46%).

**Figure 2.4. For those not working in the veterinary profession, length of time since respondents last worked in the profession in any capacity, at the time of survey completion (n=294)**



The majority of respondents (76%) had worked in clinical practice during their last role in the veterinary profession, and of these, over half (62%) worked in small animal practice. In addition, half of those working in clinical practice (52%) were 'employed assistants', and a further 15% were doing locum work. Around one-third (32%) were employed by an independent, stand-alone practice, and over two-fifths (45%) were employed by a practice that was part of a corporate group. Of those not working in clinical practice, just over one-third (34%) worked for a UK government agency or department.

**Figure 2.5. Proportion of respondents working in clinical practice that worked in each practice type**

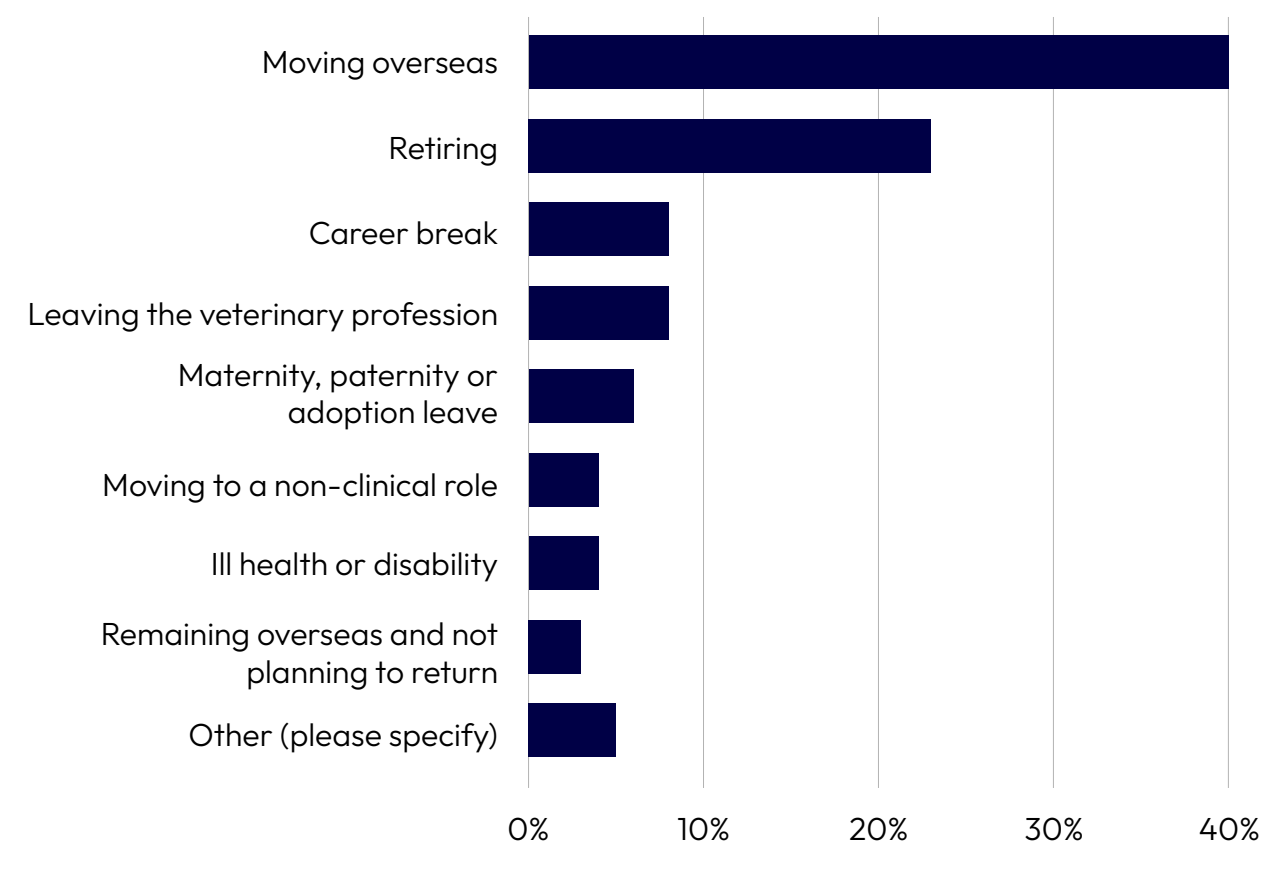


## 2.3 Leaving the UK-practising category

### Reasons for leaving the UK-practising category

The most common reason given for leaving the UK-practising category was 'moving overseas', with two-fifths (40%) of respondents selecting this. In addition, one-fifth (23%) said that they were 'retiring'.

**Figure 2.6. Reasons for leaving the UK-practising category**



Those that selected 'other' (5%) were then asked to specify their reasons for leaving the UK-practising category. Free text responses mostly related to categories included as answers to the survey question, such as 'moving or remaining overseas', 'ill health or disability', 'retiring' or 'moving to a non-clinical role'. Responses indicated a desire to add further nuance to these responses by going into greater detail than simply selecting a category. For example, many of the responses given by those leaving the UK-practising category that can be categorized as 'moving or remaining overseas' described the temporary nature of this emigration or wished to provide additional information on specific opportunities that had acted as pull factors.

### **“Temporarily practising abroad, not planning to return to UK practice until 2025”**

### **“Starting an ECVS Residency at a university overseas”**

In addition, free text answers that related to ill health or disability commonly described the diagnosis they had been given. It is also possible that those who left for reasons related to mental health issues did not self-identify as leaving for reasons related to 'ill health' nor 'disability', instead opting to self-describe by selecting 'other'.

### **“Mental health problems so on long term sick leave and mental health professionals do not know if I'll ever be able to cope with veterinary work again”**

### **“Leaving the veterinary profession before I lose my will to live”**

Amongst those free text answers that related to themes not covered through the list of pre-determined answer options included in the survey, the most frequently occurring theme was issues within the profession. Responses covered a myriad of topics within this theme, such as workplace culture, issues with remuneration, and the increasing corporatisation of the veterinary sector. Respondents described workplace culture as ‘toxic’ and highlighted feeling unsupported, particularly in the early stages of their career.

**“I haven’t received enough support that I have been promised”**

**“Toxic workplace culture”**

**“Failure of my employer to make reasonable adjustments”**

Finally, participants expressed disdain for the corporatisation of the sector, describing how corporate takeover has led to disillusionment, discontent, and poor working conditions.

**“Having worked for corporate [EMPLOYER NAME]. They nearly caused me to leave the vet profession all together. Worthless working, worthless and degrading. Thankfully I’m away from them and I’ll never be part of a corporate agenda again.”**

**“I can’t stand the UK vet sector so moving back abroad”**

Reasons for leaving the UK-practising category varied by group. For example, there was a negative correlation between age and the proportion of respondents leaving the UK-practising category to move overseas, with the largest proportion of those leaving for this reason being in the youngest age group, under 30 (38%). Over two-fifths (41%) of this group had been registered for less than five years at the time of survey completion, and over half (53%) were employed assistants.

The second most frequently given reason for leaving the UK-practising category, namely 'retiring', was mostly comprised of those between the ages of 60 and 69 with the majority (70%) of those leaving the UK-practising category for this reason being in this age group. Similarly, over half (59%) of this group had been registered for over 40 years, and a further quarter (25%) had been registered for between 35 and 39 years. Appendix B provides a full breakdown of reasons for leaving the UK-practising category by age, gender, years of registration and job role.

Respondents were then given the opportunity to describe in more detail their reasons for leaving the UK-practising category using a free-text box. Throughout free-text responses, the most frequently occurring theme was issues within the profession, such as the demands of clinical practice, the corporatisation of the sector, and workplace culture.

**“Very poor remuneration (UK pay for the same role is less than HALF what I earn abroad and less than the minimum award) compared to abroad”**

**“General clinical practice has become a minefield: people are overworked, verbally or even physically assaulted daily”**

**“Poor working conditions (contract inclusions which are illegal in other countries).”**

Participants described the extreme pressure faced by veterinarians working in clinical practice in the UK, highlighting risks to the mental and in some cases, physical wellbeing of clinicians. This is seemingly linked to remuneration, which participants felt did not appropriately compensate them for the pressure they faced in their daily roles.

**“General clinical practice has become a minefield: people are overworked, verbally or even physically assaulted daily”**

**“Prior to Covid I worked a 60-hour week every week but during Covid we reduced it to a 40 - 50-hour week with dedicated OOH support. However, exhaustion overtook us and reluctantly we eventually sold our practice to another solo vet.”**

**“Poor working conditions (contract inclusions which are illegal in other countries).”**

Some participants then went into detail about the ways in which corporate take-over throughout the sector has impacted their roles. Particularly, participants felt that the values of management had shifted, now focusing on profits rather than providing high-quality care for clients. Answers relating to the corporatisation of the profession were particularly emotive in comparison to other themes, with vets drawing upon concepts of ethics, morals and values, highlighting the emotional attachment that they have to their work.

**“UK veterinary is on its knees thanks to the decision of the RCVS to allow this shambolic mess in the first place. I’m now in New Zealand working at an independent practice. I’ll never return to be a Vet in the UK. Fact.”**

**“The UK sector is over corporatised. Because of this there is a sole emphasis on profit, nobody cares about their staff or the patients. (...) Also, staffing is kept to a minimum which makes caseloads unsustainable”**

**“There is an expectation that I will compromise my health in order to provide dividends for shareholders as well as my values”**

Others also highlighted issues with practice management and workplace culture, with many describing experiences of deteriorating mental health, feeling underappreciated, and workplaces failing to accommodate neurodiversity, mental health issues, and childcare needs.

**“Finally, there is no interest in managing how practices treat their employees/service suppliers: I was pushed beyond breaking point when I accepted to do dental work for a practice”**

**“Tired of bureaucracy, bitching, being underappreciated/undervalued and public opinions of veterinary holidays/salaries”**

**“My place of work wasn’t able to accommodate changes to workflow I required, and my mental health deteriorated.”**

**“Despite no longer having to work out-of-hours I do not think it is a family-friendly or an inclusive profession. I have not ruled out returning to practice in the future, but do not feel able to be myself at work or use my skills to best effect. I have an autistic child, and I may or may not be neurodivergent myself. I think that the veterinary profession is becoming an increasingly difficult environment for people like myself, which is a shame because we have a lot to offer.”**

To provide further insight into the circumstances and factors behind individual decisions to leave the UK-practising category, respondents were asked a series of questions prompting further information on their decisions. Responses to these questions are presented in the following sections of this report.

### **Retiring**

Among those leaving the UK-practising category due to retirement (n=136), over half (59%) were retiring earlier than their state pension age. When asked why they decided to retire prior to their state pension age, respondents selected as many as applied from a range of answers set out in Table 1. The most frequently selected reason was due to being ‘financially able to retire’, followed by ‘to spend time on other interests’ and due to the ‘demands of the job, stress and burnout’. Responses are set out in detail in Table 2, below, using the number of respondents as opposed to the proportion of respondents. This is due to the question being multiple choice.

**Table 2.1. Reasons for retiring earlier than state retirement age**

<b>Why did you decide to retire earlier than state retirement age?</b>	<b>Count</b>
Caring for a spouse or partner	0
Sold practice to an independent	0
Ill health, disability or injury, including mental health issues	5
Spend time with family	9
Sold practice to a corporate	9
Reached an appropriate retirement age	10
Demands of the job, stress and burnout	12
Spend time on other interests	14
Financially able to retire	24
Other (please specify)	2

Those who indicated that they were retiring before state pension age were also asked to detail why they decided to take an early retirement. Free-text responses among this group mostly focused on issues within the profession. However, expectedly, a number of responses also related to health issues in old age. The financial ability to retire early was most frequently mentioned, however this was almost always given as a ‘secondary’ reason, with issues within the profession (most commonly corporatisation) being given as their primary reason for early retirement.

In comparison to other sub-groups, the effects of corporatisation were more frequently mentioned by those retiring early. As seen below, a number of responses centred around selling practices to corporates, however others also highlighted disillusionment, the sentiment that profit came above animal welfare, and increasing demands.

**“Small animal practice bought by corporate (...) and felt that profit came before animals”**

**“Disillusion with working within the corporate world which has produced significantly higher charges for clients with a consequent reduction in the ability for lower-income clients to afford veterinary care for their animals. I feel as vets, we have lost our position of being a caring and compassionate member of the local community and become, in a significant number the general public’s eyes, more concerned with making as much money out of them as possible.”**

As seen in the below quotes, other reasons given by early retirees included wanting to spend time with their spouse or family, or a desire to pursue other interests.

**“My wife had retired from teaching after 40 years. I had been in clinical practice for 41 years am in good health and have many other interests and offspring in various parts of the world and wanted to be able to travel with my wife”**

**“Enjoyed veterinary practice for 37 years, but I wished to spend more time with family and pursue other interests that I never had enough time for when I was working”**

**“Have reached financial goals”**

### **Career break and taking parental leave**

Among those taking a career break (n= 50), almost two-fifths (38%) were planning to take a break of one year, and a further 38% were planning to take a break for two years or more.

Among those leaving the UK-practising category due to parental leave (n=33), two-fifths (41%) were planning to take a break of less than a year, and a further 47% were planning to take a break for one year.

When asked the main purpose for taking their career break, over one-fifth (22%) selected “parental leave or looking after children”. In addition, a further fifth (20%) selected ‘travel’ as the main reason for their career break. However, the most frequently selected category was ‘other (please specify)’, with over one-third (34%) selecting this. Among free-text answers, responses relating to indecision on their ‘next steps’ and issues within the profession were of equal frequency, with responses relating to health and wellbeing being the second most frequent.

Respondents described feelings of indecision regarding the next steps in their career. The free-text responses highlight that considering retirement or moving industries was common.

### **“Considering retiring fully”**

### **“Career break, undecided if I will return to work or retire”**

### **“Assessing moving industries”**

Additionally, issues with the profession covered general disillusionment such as being ‘fed up’ or not enjoying the role, as well as a lack of support and understanding within the profession.

### “Fed up with Veterinary”

### “Lack of understanding in the profession.”

### “Lack of support as a new graduate”

Finally, among those who gave responses that could be categorized as relating to health and wellbeing, burnout was the most common issue raised.

### “Burnout”

### “Combination of burnout and travel”

**Table 2.2. Main purpose for taking a career break**

	Count	%
Physical health issue/illness	1	2%
Study	2	4%
Sabbatical	4	8%
Mental health issue/illness	5	10%
Travel	10	20%
Parental leave/looking after children	11	22%
Other (please specify)	17	34%
<b>Total (n=)</b>	<b>50</b>	

### **Moving or remaining overseas**

Among respondents moving overseas (n=244), over half (56%, n=136) were educated overseas between the ages of 11 and 16, and half (50%, n=) qualified overseas. Just over half (61%) of all respondents leaving the UK were moving to a different country as opposed to returning to their home country. When asked the most important factor in determining their decision to move overseas, the most frequently chosen was 'career change or a new challenge', chosen by 22% of respondents. A further 20% said that they were moving to be near friends and family. Furthermore, over three-quarters (81%) of these respondents said that they planned to continue working in the veterinary profession outside of the UK, and a further 15% expressed uncertainty. These findings highlight the importance of international mobility in shaping the cohort of vets leaving the UK-practising category, with the most frequently cited reason for leaving being made up of individuals who had been schooled or qualified abroad, thus having previously been internationally mobile.

However, among those remaining overseas and no longer planning to return (n=17), the majority ((n=10, 59%) were currently residing in their home country. Of this group, the majority (82%) also qualified outside of the EU. All of this group said that they planned to continue working in the veterinary profession outside of the UK. When asked the most important factor in determining their decision to move overseas, the most frequently chosen was 'to be near friends and family', chosen by almost one-quarter (24%) of respondents. A further 18% said that they had always planned to stay in the UK for a limited time. Finally, a further 24% of respondents selected 'other' reasons as being most important.

When those respondents who were moving or remaining overseas and selected 'other' as the most important factor behind this decision were asked to specify further, most free-text responses centred around the desire to pursue other interests, with a number of respondents stating that they simply wanted to travel for recreation.

**“An adventure”**

**“Just to travel whilst working”**

**“Want to travel, it’s a big world”**

Another common theme was issues with the UK<sup>2</sup>, including the weather, Brexit<sup>3</sup>, healthcare and the standards of living.

**“The UK appears to be in a downward spiral both economically and socially, at least in part due to Brexit. This does not seem a safe country as a choice for the end of my career and eventually retirement.”**

**“Mainly due to nature and good weather, I want to live in the mountains”**

**“Poor opportunities for children to develop independently, poor education for children unless private”**

Finally, respondents noted that opportunities abroad had acted as a determining factor in their decision to move. Some respondents also noted a lack of opportunities within the UK, relating to a shortage in demand for their services.

**“More opportunities for solely exotics practice abroad”**

**“Easier to get an internship overseas straight after graduating”**

**“Thoroughbred sales clientele changed so no longer demand for my services in the UK”**

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<sup>2</sup> Most responses relating to the UK were given between January and May of 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Responses relating to Brexit continued to be given between 2022–24, highlighting the lasting effects of leaving the EU on the profession.

### **Moving to a non-clinical role or a new field**

Among respondents moving to a non-clinical role (n=23), over one-quarter (26%) were moving into academia, a further fifth (22%) were moving into 'industry', and 13% were moving into research. The majority of respondents (95%) said that their new role would not require formal retraining. When asked what the most important factor was in shaping their decision to leave clinical practice, over one-third (37%) said that 'chronic stress' was the main determinant. A further 16% said that they wanted a career change or a new challenge.

Those who indicated that they were leaving the UK-practising category due to moving to another field (n=47) were asked a series of questions to further understand their reasons for leaving the profession, and which sector they were moving to. When asked what field(s) they had moved to, or planned to move to, the most frequently selected response options were 'professional, scientific and technical activities', and 'other service activities'. A full breakdown of which field(s) respondents planned to move to can be found in Appendix C, using the number of respondents as opposed to the proportion of respondents. This is due to the question being multiple choice.

Respondents were then asked why they were leaving the profession, and subsequently to select which factor was most important in shaping their decision. The reason most frequently cited as 'most important' was 'Chronic stress', with one-fifth (20%) of respondents selecting this. 6% of respondents said that a career change or new challenge was the most important factor in their decision to leave, and 9% of respondents gave both not feeling rewarded/valued, and dissatisfaction with career opportunities as the most important reasons. A full breakdown of the most important factors in shaping respondents' decisions to leave the profession can be found in Appendix D.

16% of respondents moving to a non-clinical role, and 22% of respondents leaving the profession to work in another field said that 'other' factors were most important. Among these

groups, almost all free-text answers focused on issues within the profession. However, unlike early retirees, whose main issue with the sector was corporatisation, those moving industries focused mainly on culture.

**“Toxic work culture. (...) Veterinary is not protected at all legally as it is such a small group of people you cannot take a boss to a tribunal without making yourself unemployable.”**

**“Impossible to plan the bare minimum of a life.”**

**“No love for the job anymore, joy gone”**

Respondents described toxicity within the profession and feeling unprotected legally. They also noted that the inflexibility of the sector led to poor work-life balance, and that the change in ethics and values left them feeling disillusioned with the profession.

## 2.4 Returning to the UK-practising category

In addition to being asked about leaving the UK-practising category, respondents were asked about their plans to return, any concerns they had around returning and support needs upon returning (if relevant). Responses to these questions are outlined in the following sections of this report.

### Plans to return

When asked whether they had plans to return to the UK-practising category in the future, respondents most frequently said that they were ‘not sure’ (46%).

**Table 2.3. Plans to return to the UK-practising category in the future**

	Count	%
Yes	152	25%
No	171	28%
I'm not sure	279	46%

Those that said they did have plans to return to the UK-practising category (n=152) were then asked when they expected to return, to which around half (52%) said that they planned to return after a year or more, but within five years.

**Table 2.4. Time expected to return to the UK-practising category**

	Count	%
Within the next 6 months	16	11%
In 6 months or more, but less than a year	46	31%
In a year or more, but less than five years	79	52%
In five years or more	10	7%

Plans to return to the UK-practising category differed by reasons for leaving the UK-practising category. For example, of those leaving the UK-practising category due to moving overseas, over one-third (35%) said that they did have plans to return to the UK-practising category in the future, and half (52%) expressed uncertainty. Over half of those remaining overseas (55%) said they were not sure whether they would return in the future, and almost one-third (30%) said that they had no plans to do so. In contrast, 52% of those leaving the veterinary profession to work in another field said that they had no plans to return, and a further 46% expressed uncertainty. A full breakdown of whether respondents planned to return to the UK-practising category by their reasons for leaving can be found in Appendix E.

### Concerns

To gain insight into how transitions to work can be made easier for those who have left the UK-practising category, respondents were asked whether they had any concerns about returning. The most frequently occurring theme arising from responses to this was ‘skills’, with participants expressing concerns around regression of practical skills, as well as the loss of sectoral knowledge and difficulties in keeping up to date with changes to regulations.

**“Legislation in the veterinary industry in the UK is becoming a mine field that everyone struggles to understand, so returning from not being engaged in it for over a year will be very difficult”**

**“I am concerned regarding changes in legislation that the UK is experiencing specifically the under-care legislation”**

Most responses that can be categorized as relating to ‘skills’ centred around the expected difficulty in understanding key changes to legislation that had taken place during their absence, with participants citing a few specific regulations or legislation such as RCVS ‘under care’ guidance, the Veterinary Medicine Regulations, and changes to the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. Participants also felt that the divergence between UK regulations and regulations abroad would add to this difficulty.

**“Receiving a clear comprehensive document about RCVS updated when I return would be very grateful”**

**“Finding ways of getting back up to speed before returning to work tends to be very expensive. If I want to cover a big chunk of content it could cost me thousands when I’m not being paid to be in practice, so funding it can prove difficult. Getting up to speed in practice can be impossible as we are not given time to learn or get our bearings in a new”**

**“I want more support in surgery and diagnostic imagining. I felt so far, I did not have support or enough training in this field. (...) I will add that, working with equines has in my opinion, additional risks than small animals. Therefore, not having proper training put in danger not only the horse, the owner but the vet’s own sake too. I have therefore invested money in many self-funded cpds this year with the aim to acquire more skills.”**

The second most common theme arising from free-text responses relating to concerns around returning to practice was ‘culture’, which mainly related to the demands of clinical practice.

**“Main concerns will be the change in quality of life and work life balance which is a lot more achievable in other countries”**

**“Better work/life balance”**

**“Constantly being busy/fully booked diaries.”**

Participants also expressed concerns around their ability to find a role that would be suitable for their specific needs in relation to disabilities, health conditions and caring responsibilities. Concerningly, stigma and discrimination within the profession was mentioned by one respondent, who felt that their disability acted as a barrier to employment, leading to concerns around their ability to find work if they were to return to practice in the UK.

**“When explaining that because of this [dyslexia] I need to work half days to work at my best to potential employers they believe I am either diseased, incapacitated or not committed enough. So, an understanding of dyslexia and other neurodiversities would be helpful.”**

**“Suitable role taking health problems into account, flexible working hours suitable for lone parent”**

#### **Support needs**

Respondents were then asked if there were any factors that would help them consider returning to the profession, to which a much larger number of responses were given. When respondents were asked what would help them to consider returning, the overwhelming majority of responses related to cultural shifts and changes. Among responses relating to this theme, most centred around the demands of clinical practice, followed by poor management and discrimination. Whilst some participants simply stated a shift towards improve work-life balance would help them to return, several responses provided anecdotal evidence of the detrimental impacts of workplace stress.

**“I was not able to have any sort of work life balance whilst working as a vet due to long hours and chronic stress.”**

**“Normalisation of boundaries and good work-life balance”**

**“Lower volume of work / less chronic understaffing. In order to come back I would need to find a job with better work-life balance that allows me to leave at the end of my contracted hours (not 1-2+ hours late every day for no added pay).”**

**“In my new role I have less stress and have progression opportunities that would never be there in clinical practice. I had two miscarriages when in practice and since leaving practice I am now 6 months pregnant. I firmly believe the stress I experienced when in practice directly impacted my fertility. Unfortunately, I am not the only female vet who has experienced this.”**

In addition, respondents shared experiences of discrimination by employers or potential employers because of protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. These experiences included racism from management and peers, failure of employers to make reasonable adjustments for both neurodiversity and physical health conditions, ableism, and age discrimination.

**“I only wished the local and supporting staff were more helpful and genuine; now they are very discriminative, insidious and terrible, specially against people from Eastern Europe. (...)**

**Veterinary medicine is a very hard field to be in, many practices have their own ways of doing things, but instead of being more supportive and teaching, providing help, conveying messages and letting people be on the same page, they test you all the time in a terrible way, test not only your knowledge, skills, but patience, tolerance and the numerous traps are there for you to fall into just about any chance there is!”**

**“Reasonable adjustments for health/disability e.g. my asthma is occupationally exacerbated (...) but my manager’s view was that I just needed to take more medications (as nobody else had that problem), or alternatively, that made it me unsuitable to be a vet. Ableism is rife in our profession, and RCVS also needs to make reasonable adjustments when necessary”**

**“Due to both physical health condition and autism, I cannot service in a practice environment. No significant accommodations were ever provided for me in clinic-based work despite my best efforts.”**

**“Better work environment: I found very mean and not flexible directors that with English people were more available while with foreign colleagues more stressing, demanding and not in good moods”**

The final sub-category related to the theme of ‘culture’ was poor management, which respondents said led to them feeling underappreciated, undervalued and disrespected. Respondents provided accounts of experiencing a lack of support, and ineffective delegation from practice managers, which worsened occupational stress.

**“Poor management is rife, which has been worsened by corporate buy-up and the inclusion of non-vet management structures is giving little incentive to want to work harder. Workload is being dictated by retail managers (...) out of hours is poorly supported.”**

**“Better support as a new grad would have been key for me”**

**“Better treatment as a professional and human being within the profession.”**

# Chapter 3: Respondents leaving the RCVS Register

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter will first outline the demographic and employment characteristics of individuals that responded to the exit survey after leaving the RCVS Register between 2022 and 2024, before presenting data showing reasons for leaving the Register, and plans for restoring registration in the future. There were many fewer respondents leaving the Registers altogether (n=306) than respondents who were leaving the UK-practising category (n=643). Not every respondent answered every question: this is reflected in the figures in this report.

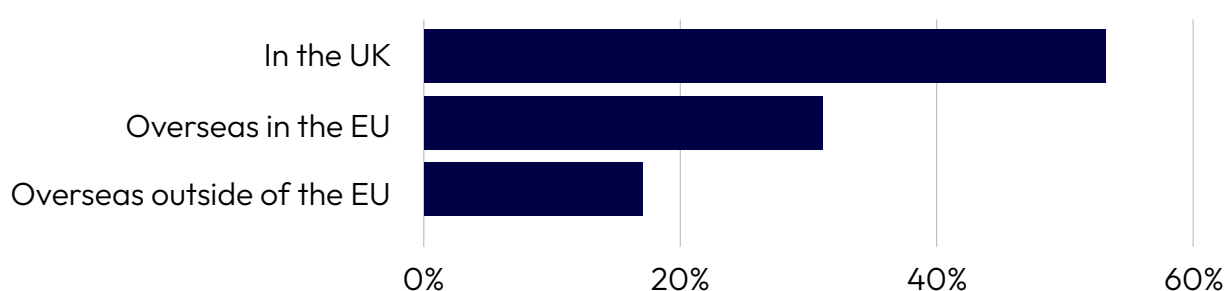
## 3.2 Profile of respondents

### Demographics

Over half (60%, 179 individual vets) of respondents leaving the RCVS Register (as opposed to the UK-practising category) were female (n=301). Almost one third of respondents were between the ages of 60 and 69, and of these, 82% said that they were leaving the Register due to retirement. A further 27% of all respondents were between the ages of 30 and 39. The majority (92%) of respondents were white. Additionally, over a third (36%) of respondents had been registered for less than ten years, and a further 36% had been registered for over 35 years, of which 22% had been registered for forty years or more. The distribution patterns for years qualified was slightly different, with 29% of respondents leaving the Register having been qualified for less than ten years, and almost half (45%) having been qualified for over 35 years. The singular largest group was those qualified 40 or more years ago at the time of survey completion, with this group comprising 23% of respondents leaving the Register.

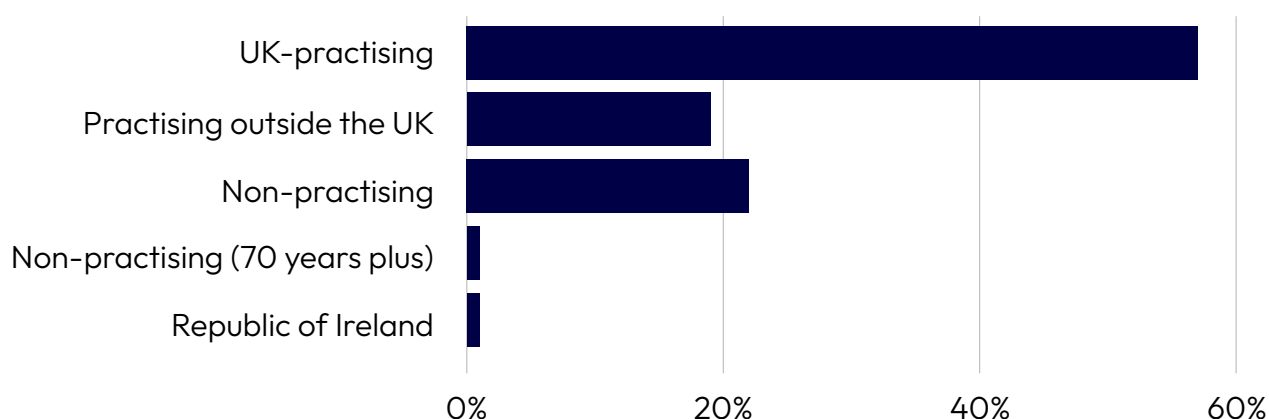
Respondents were then asked about their caring responsibilities, to which almost one-fifth (19%) said that they had dependent children living with them, and only 6% said that they were providing care for an adult dependent. The survey then went on to ask about limiting disabilities or health conditions, in response to which 16% of respondents said that they did have a physical or mental health condition that limits their work. Finally, respondents were asked a series of questions around their schooling and whether their family received financial support during these years. Over half (54%) of respondents said that their parents or guardians had completed a university degree course or equivalent (n= 295), and over a third (35%) said that they had attended either a selective or non-selective state-funded school in the UK (16% and 19% respectively) (n= 296). 12% of respondents said that their household had received income support during their schooling years, and 10% had received free school meals.

**Figure 3.1. Percentage of respondents that qualified in each location**



The survey then asked respondents to provide further information about their route into the veterinary profession, alongside their current status. Over half (53%) of respondents qualified in the UK, and a further 31% qualified overseas in the EU. In addition, only 3% of respondents indicated having done a one-year access course to enable them to access their veterinary degree. At the time of survey completion, over half (57%) of respondents were UK-practising, 22% were non-practising, and 19% were practising outside of the UK.

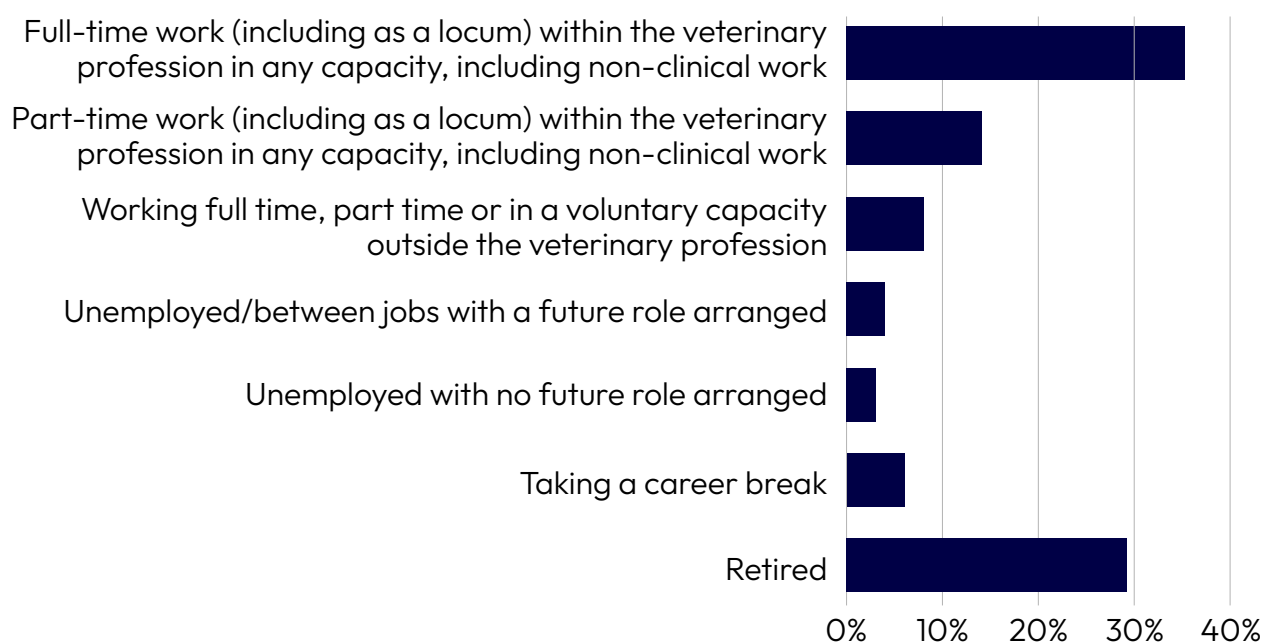
**Figure 3.2. Percentage of respondents in each membership category (current or most recent)**



### Employment

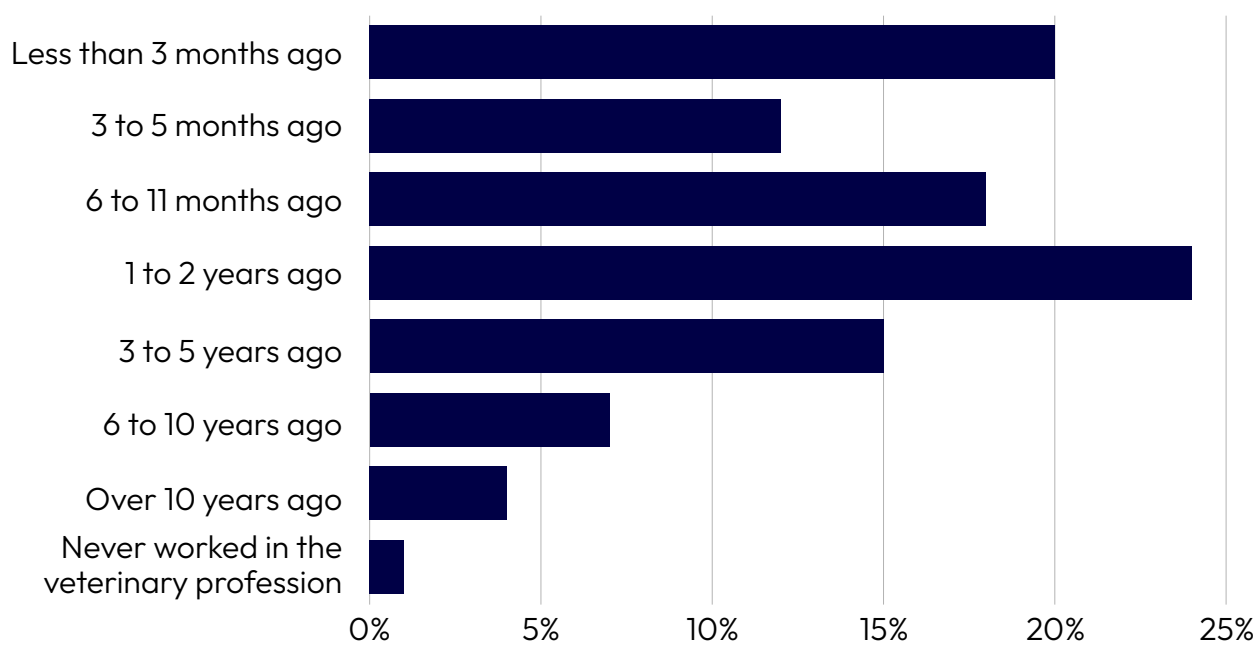
Respondents were then asked about their current employment status, to which almost half (49%) said that they were employed within the veterinary profession, whether this be full or part-time (n=297). Almost a third (29%) of respondents said that their main employment category was 'retired'.

**Figure 3.3. Employment status of respondents at the time of survey completion**



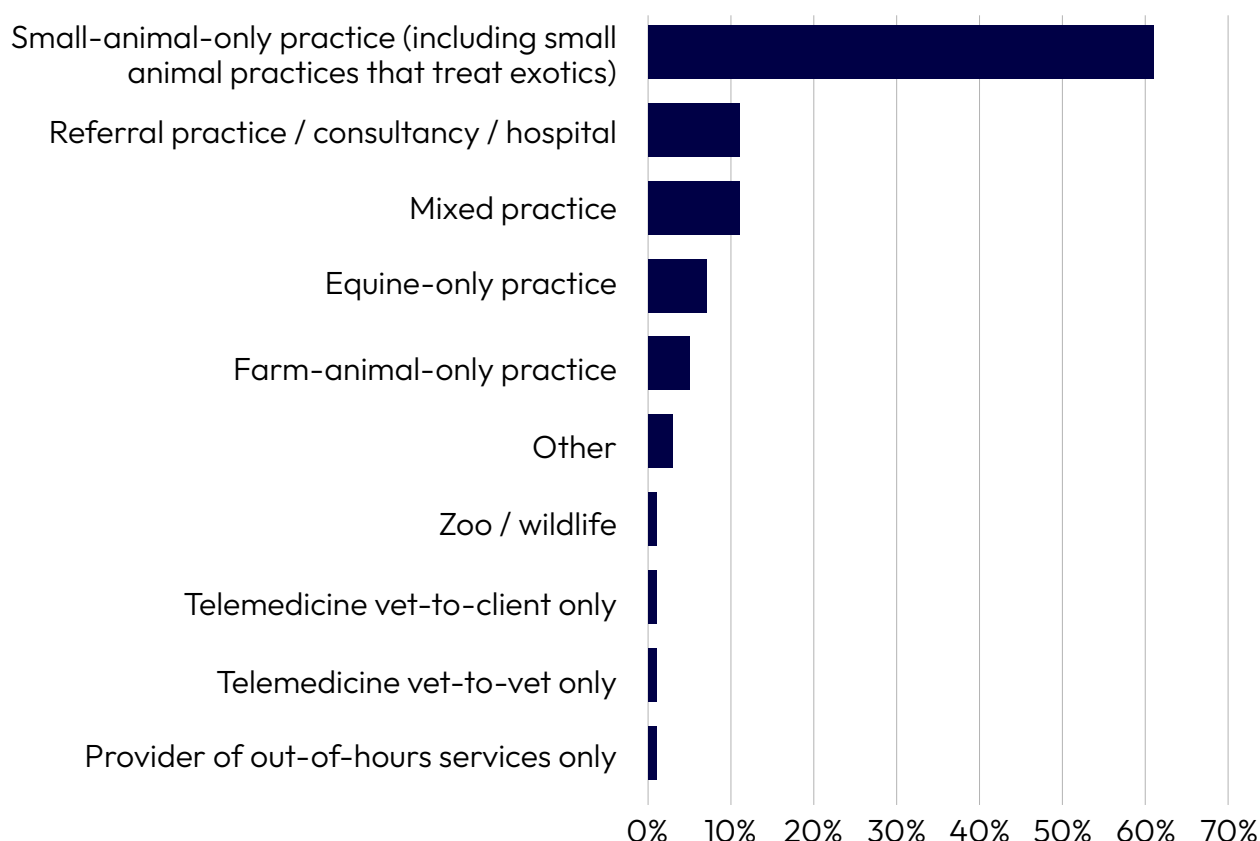
Respondents were then asked about their last employment in the veterinary profession, to which around half (49%) said that they had worked in the veterinary profession less than a year prior to survey completion, and around a quarter (24%) said that they had worked in the veterinary profession between one and two years prior (out of n=153). In relation to employment category, the percentage of respondents that had worked full- and part-time were similar, with only a slightly greater proportion of respondents stating that they were employed on a part-time basis (53%) than on a full-time basis (46%).

**Figure 3.4. Length of time since respondents last worked in the veterinary profession in any capacity, at the time of survey completion**



The majority of respondents (71%) had worked in clinical practice during their last role the veterinary profession (out of n=293) and of these, over half (61%) worked in small animal practice. In addition, half of those working in clinical practice (49%) were ‘employed assistants’, and a further 15% were doing locum work. Two fifths (43%) were employed by an independent, stand-alone practice, and over a third (36%) were employed by a practice that was part of a corporate group (n= 206, 3 missing). Of those not working in clinical practice, around one-third (32%) worked for a UK government agency or department (out of n=66, 18 missing).

**Figure 3.5. Proportion of respondents working in clinical practice that worked in each practice type**

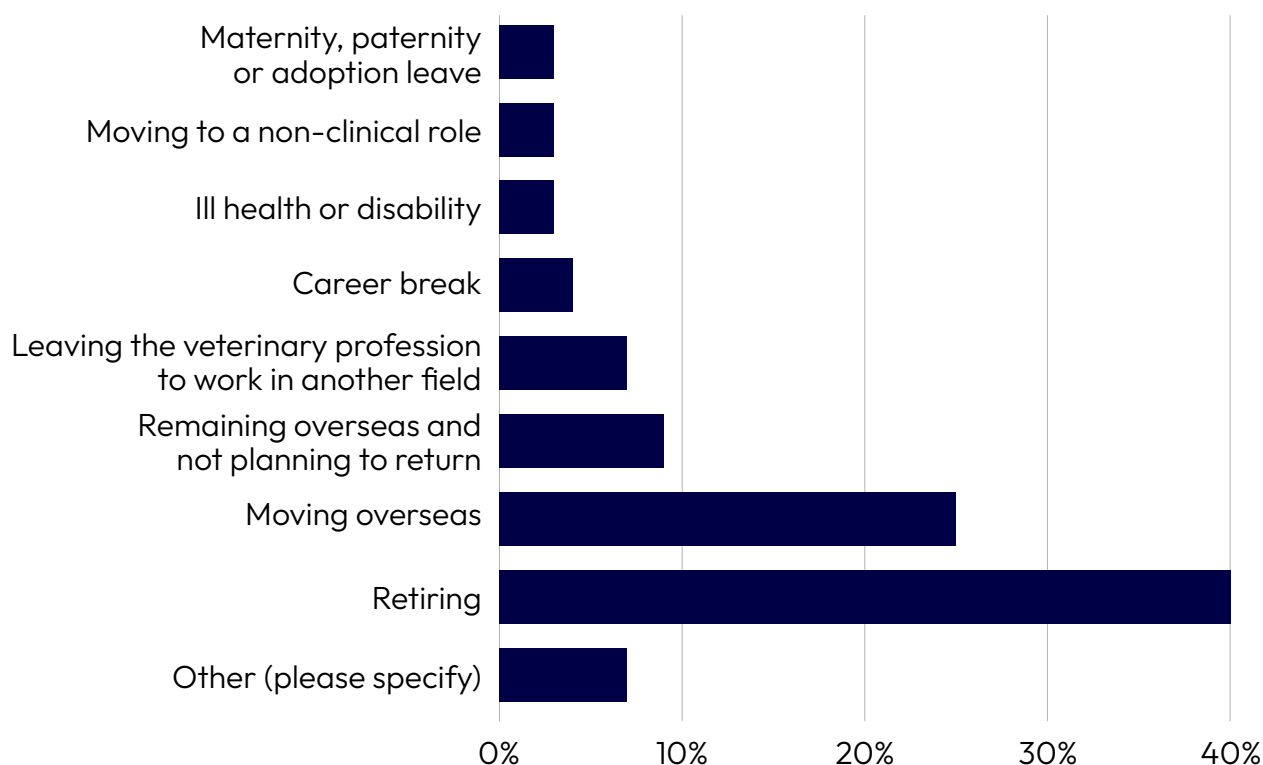


## 3.3 Leaving the Register

### Reasons for leaving the Register

The most common reason given (n=287) for leaving the Register was 'retiring', with two-fifths (40%) of respondents selecting this. In addition, one quarter (25%) of respondents said that they were 'moving overseas', and a further 9% said that they were 'remaining overseas and not planning to return'.

**Figure 3.6. Reasons for leaving the Register**



7% of respondents selected 'other' and were then asked to specify their reasons for leaving the Register. Free text responses that related to themes not covered through categories included in the survey mostly focused on issues related to registration and regulation. Responses covered a myriad of more granular topics, such as fees, benefits, perceptions of the RCVS and CPD requirements. The majority

of responses within this theme focused on the cost of being a member, with respondents describing feeling that they received no benefit from paying such fees and that they were generally unaffordable.

**“I make no claims on the College and yet I am required to pay a considerable sum for continued membership in retirement. In these difficult economic times, I decided I had subsidised the College for long enough and so for the first time in over 40 years I am no longer MRCVS and am very upset about this.”**

**“The fees for practising outside the UK are too expensive, especially considering the lack of tangible benefits in being a member overseas.”**

**“The fee for overseas practitioner is more than I make in a month. Due to this I will not be able to afford registry to RCVS. I cannot express how sorry I am.”**

Respondents also described the CPD requirements, set by the RCVS, as ‘arbitrary’, and felt that this took an extensive amount of time, leading to difficulties meeting them.

**“No longer able to keep up with the forced CPD change in combination with my primary licensing requirements.”**

**“Despite completing way in excess of CPD hours in recent years it’s the RCVS arbitrary rules that prevent me carrying these hours forward. Thus, I am now forced to resign.”**

Reasons for leaving the Register varied by group. Unsurprisingly, the majority of those leaving the Register for retirement (72%) were between 60 and 69 years of age, and almost one-fifth (17%) were 70 or over (n=116). Over half (53%) had been registered for 40 years or more at the time of survey completion, and a further 29% had been registered for between 35 and 39 years.

The second most frequently given reason for leaving the Register, namely 'moving overseas', was mostly comprised of those under the age of 40, with over half (56%) of those leaving the Register for this reason being aged between 30 and 39, and a further quarter (26%) being under 30. Similarly, a third (33%) of this group had been registered for between five and nine years, and almost half (47%) had been registered for fewer than five years. There were similar patterns visible among those who said they were 'remaining overseas and not planning to return', with two-fifths (40%) of this group being between the ages of 30 and 39, and a further third (32%) being between the ages of 40 and 49. Of this group, over a third (35%) had been registered for between five and nine years. Appendix F provides a full breakdown of reasons for leaving the Register by age, gender, years of experience (both registration and qualification) and job role.

Respondents were then given the opportunity to describe their reasons for leaving the Register in more detail, using a free-text box. Throughout free-text responses, the most frequently occurring theme was again issues with regulation and the RCVS, covering the same sub-themes as earlier responses, namely fees, perceptions of the RCVS, and CPD requirements.

**“I am leaving the RCVS register because I don’t comply with the commercial “agreement” (being asked to pay the fees) with no lawful contract, lawful terms and conditions or meeting of the minds. I do not consent to being on this Register anymore.”**

**“I am reticent to leave, but it is an additional expense that I can no longer justify given the cost of living and stresses involved in practice ownership and management. It is purely an economic decision.”**

**“As before, the cost to remain on the register as practising overseas.**

Most respondents that gave answers relating to the costs of membership indicated that their last membership category was either ‘non-practising’ or ‘practising overseas’, and that they therefore felt that the costs outweighed any possible benefits of membership.

In addition, a number of members expressed discontent with the support provided by the RCVS, and negative sentiments around the ways in which the profession is regulated. Whilst some responses in this theme were directed towards the RCVS in a broad sense, others discussed specific elements of the College’s regulatory function, such as inspections.

**“My final day was taking part in the RCVS inspection. A total lack of empathy for what practices had been through during covid. Have felt unsupported and alienated by the RCVS for years. They don’t see the real issues. They don’t encourage vets to stay as they make the bar too high and always wave the stick of discipline in case you make a mistake.”**

**“Being overseas and within government RCVS seems to have disconnect with my professional career”**

**“I see the RCVS has and seems to be continuing to support criminal and fraudulent commercial behaviour in the profession, not limited to monopolistic, anti-competitive businesses and corruption.”**

The theme of ‘issues within the profession’ was also common among responses to this question. Responses within this theme mainly centred around the demands of clinical practice and the increasing corporatisation of the profession.

**“After working for 35 years in mainly small animal practice I became deeply unhappy about the changes in our profession. The acquisition of our practice by another company changed my job beyond measure. (...) I think it is very sad that the profession has changed so much and in the long term I think the service to the public and their animals will be poorer.”**

**“Retired but along with peers not happy with the direct of the profession and it’s shift in ethos”**

To provide further insight into the circumstances and factors behind individual decisions to leave the Register, respondents in each sub-group were asked a series of questions prompting further information. Responses to these questions are presented in the following sections of this report.

## Retiring

Among those leaving the Register due to retirement (n=116), over half (60%) were retiring earlier than their state pension age. When asked why they decided to retire prior to their state pension age, respondents selected as many as applied from a range of answers set out in Table 1. The most frequently selected reason was to ‘spend time on other interests’, followed by ‘spending time with family’ and being ‘financially able to retire’. Responses are set out in detail in Table 2, below, using the number of respondents as opposed to the proportion of respondents. This is due to the question being multiple choice.

**Table 3.1. Reasons for retiring earlier than state retirement age**

Why did you decide to retire earlier than state retirement age?	Count
Caring for a spouse or partner	0
Ill health, disability or injury, including mental health issues	3
Sold practice to an independent	3
Reached an appropriate retirement age	8
Sold practice to a corporate	9
Demands of the job, stress and burnout	13
Spend time with family	17
Spend time on other interests	18
Other (please specify)	4

Those who indicated that they were retiring before state pension age were also asked to detail why they decided to take an early retirement. In response, vets leaving the RCVS Register for early retirement mostly said that this was due to reasons related to their health and wellbeing. Responses relating to this theme also mentioned stress and burnout, often as a direct result of clinical work.

**“I was finding clinical practice too exhausting both mentally and physically and too stressful. I have chosen to live a simpler life on a lot less money, but I am happier than I have ever been.”**

**“Stressed by work- although had been qualified for 33 years I found that my confidence declined the longer I had been qualified.”**

Respondents described a range of detrimental effects caused by occupational stress, ranging from a deterioration of confidence to emotional exhaustion, and a general feeling of having ‘had enough’.

A number of early retirees also noted that issues within the profession had influenced their retirement decisions.

**“I also am not comfortable with the way the profession has changed with respect to the number of practices which are now corporate and charge fees which are beyond the means of many clients.”**

**“I find it very irksome working for greedy corporations as a locum when I don’t have to . I’ve hugely enjoyed my career and have contributed a lot to the future of avian medicine but enough is enough.”**

### Career break and taking parental leave

Among those taking a career break, three were planning to take a break of less than a year, a further three planned to take a break of one year, and the final three planned to take a break of two years or more. Similarly, among those leaving the Register due to parental leave, two planned to take a break of less than one year, and two planned to take a break for 12 months.

When asked the main purpose for taking their career break, three selected 'mental health issue/illness'. In addition, two selected 'other (please specify)'. Among free-text responses, one respondent expressed a desire to pursue alternative interests, and one stated that their work contract had ended. It is likely that responses to this question were limited among this group as the majority of those taking career breaks move to the non-practising category, as opposed to leaving the Register.

**Table 3.2. Main purpose for taking a career break**

What is the main purpose for taking your career break?	Count	%
Physical health issue/illness	2	18%
Parental leave/looking after children	2	18%
Looking after an adult dependant	2	18%
Mental health issue/illness	3	27%
Other (please specify)	2	18%
Total (n=)	11	

### Moving or remaining overseas

Among respondents moving overseas (n=73), over four-fifths (81%, n=58) were educated overseas between the ages of 11 and 16, and 78% (n=57) qualified overseas. Over two-thirds (69%) of all respondents leaving the UK were returning to their home country as opposed to moving to a different country. When asked the most important factor in determining their decision to move overseas, the most frequently chosen to be near friends and family', chosen by 30% of respondents. A further

17% said that they were moving for due to 'poor work-life balance'. Furthermore, over three-quarters (76%) of these respondents said that they planned to continue working in the veterinary profession outside of the UK, and a further 16% expressed uncertainty. These findings highlight the importance of international mobility in shaping the cohort of vets leaving the Register.

Furthermore, over three-quarters (77%) of these respondents said that they planned to continue working in the veterinary profession outside of the UK, and a further 24% expressed uncertainty. When asked the most important factor in determining their decision to move overseas, the most frequently chosen was 'to be near friends and family', chosen by 30% of respondents. A further 18%, however, said that 'poor work-life balance' was the most important 'push' factor. However, among those remaining overseas and no longer planning to return, the majority (64%) had moved to a different country that was not their home country. Of this group, over half (57%) also qualified outside of the EU. Almost all of this group (93%) said that they planned to continue working in the veterinary profession outside of the UK. When asked the most important factor in determining their decision to move overseas, the most frequently chosen was 'chronic stress' chosen by one-fifth (21%) of respondents. A further 14% said that 'poor work-life balance' was the most important factor.

When asked to specify further, respondents that selected 'other' reasons as being the determining factor described issues within the profession (work-life balance and the normalisation of sole charge positions), the standard of living in the UK, family circumstances and COVID as reasons for moving or remaining overseas.<sup>4</sup>

**“Poor quality of life in UK compared to the other country especially due to lack of work-life balance.”**

**“Sole charge positions becoming the norm.”**

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<sup>4</sup> Note that all responses relating to COVID (n=2) were given in 2022.

## **“My son will have a better childhood in NZ, and I will have more family support”**

### **Moving to a non-clinical role**

Among respondents moving to a non-clinical role (n=8), two did not know which field(s) they were planning to move to, one was moving to the research role, one to a government role, and one to academia.<sup>5</sup> When asked what the most important factor was in shaping their decision to leave clinical practice, two said that they wanted a career change or a new challenge, and two said that this was due to a poor work-life balance.

### **Leaving the veterinary profession to work in another field**

Those who indicated that they were leaving the Register due to moving to another field (n=103) were asked a series of questions to further understand their reasons for leaving the profession, and which sector they were moving to. When asked what field(s) they had moved to, or planned to move to, the most frequently selected response options were ‘education’, and ‘professional, scientific and technical activities’. A full breakdown of which field(s) respondents planned to move to can be found in Appendix G, using the number of respondents as opposed to the proportion of respondents. This is due to the question allowing multiple responses.

Respondents were then asked why they were leaving the profession, and subsequently to select which factor was most important in shaping their decision. The reason most frequently cited as ‘most important’ was ‘chronic stress’, with over a third (36%) of respondents selecting this. 14% of respondents said that a career change or new challenge was the most important factor in their decision to leave, and 7% of respondents gave physical health issues as the most important reason. A full breakdown of the most important factors in shaping respondents’ decisions to leave the profession can be found in Appendix H.

A further fifth (21%) of respondents selected ‘other’ reasons as being most important. Respondents who selected the ‘other’

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<sup>5</sup> The other three respondents said that they were moving to a field not listed.

option and subsequently gave free-text answers most often cited issues with their role or practice as their reason for leaving the profession. Among these responses the most recurrent sub-theme was ‘profession’, with respondents describing dissatisfaction with corporate monopolies and a focus on profit over care.

**“Focus on financial profit over care, not sustainable, felt like I was part of the issue rather than helping to improve conditions.”**

**“Corporate monopoly on practice environment.”**

### 3.4 Returning to the Register

In addition to being asked about leaving the Register, respondents were asked about their plans to return, any concerns they had around returning and support needs upon returning (if relevant). Responses to these questions are outlined in the following sections of this report.

#### Plans to return

When asked whether they had plans to return to the Register in the future, respondents most frequently said that they did not have plans to return to the Register (54%). A further 35% of respondents said that they were not sure whether they would return.

**Table 3.3. Plans to return to the Register in the future**

	Count	%
Yes	31	11%
No	156	54%
I’m not sure	100	35%

Those that said they did have plans to return to the Register (n=31) were then asked when they expected to return, to which the majority (77%) said that they planned to return sometime after six months but before five years.

**Table 3.4. Time expected to return to the Register**

	Count	%
Within the next 6 months	4	13%
In 6 months or more, but less than a year	11	36%
In a year or more, but less than five years	13	42%
In five years or more	3	10%

Plans to return differed by reasons for leaving the Register. For example, none of those leaving the Register due to leaving the profession said that they had plans to return to the Register in the future. In contrast, those moving overseas, remaining overseas and taking a career break were mostly unsure about whether they would return (51%, 65% and 55% respectively). All of those taking parental leave said that they did have plans to return to the Register in the future, and unsurprisingly, the majority (86%) of those retiring said they did not have plans to return. A full breakdown of whether respondents planned to return to the Register by their reasons for leaving can be found in Appendix I.

## Concerns

To gain insight into how transitions to work can be made easier for those who have left the Register, respondents were asked whether they had any concerns about returning. The most common theme arising from responses to this question was ‘membership’, with participants describing numerous concerns about the process of re-joining the register and the costs associated with this.

**“Sometimes it seems complicated what the right thing to do financially is. For instance, this time it was timed well as my last day of work prior to Mat leave was the final day of the late fee - so it was financially sensible to pay the late fee to stay on and then register as non-practising. (...). If I’d have had an extra month I’d have had to renew my full membership, then go to non-practising after a month - I’m unsure if it would have cost me the full year or not.”**

**“I told RCVS late that I had left the country, they have said that if I return, I have to pay another half year of fees. This is a flaw in the system: I did not pay my fees therefore you should remove me automatically and not give me a fine. This prevents me from wanting to come back a little.”**

As outlined in the quotes above, concerns in this category ranged from anxiety around examinations and a lack of knowledge about required documentation, to a lack of understanding around the fee structure and concerns that this would not be financially viable in their individual circumstances.

### **Support needs**

Respondents were then asked if there were any factors that would help them consider returning to the profession, to which a much larger number of responses were given. When respondents were asked what would help them to consider returning, the most common theme arising from free-text responses was a change in personal circumstances. This included discussions of financial need, caring responsibilities and improvements in health.

In addition, just over a fifth of free-text responses related to changes that would fall under the remit of the RCVS. Responses in this theme mostly related to a need to reduce membership fees in order to reduce the financial burden of membership, but also covered a need to decrease CPD requirements, and more general points relating to how the profession is regulated, and the level of compassion shown by the College.

**“Just don’t see the point in paying the RCVS membership fees if I have no intention of practising in the UK for the foreseeable future.”**

**“I’ve been on the overseas register for 13 years. I’ve got nothing out of it. I’m not planning to return to the UK to work so I don’t want to spend the money on something I don’t see the value in.”**

**“Not charging extortionate fees for someone in the category as non-practising (practising abroad) - would have remained if it was similar to New Zealand, in which I still pay ~£15 for the same category.”**

**“If the re-registration fee were waived. I feel I have been badly let down when I was advised in 2022 that I could not be allowed time to pay. I did in the end, but I needed to use overdraft and have not been solvent since!”**

As outlined through the above quotes, respondents repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the cost of re-joining the register or remaining on the register as non-practising.

Around the same of responses related to cultural shifts and changes, with most centring around the demands of clinical practice, followed by poor management and corporatisation.

**“Radical reform of the veterinary industry. (...) Within a few years of working in clinical practice I found that I was working very long hours, completing a very busy night on call (with only 1-2 hours’ sleep) after working a 10-hour day and then expected to work another 10-hour day. that although I loved being a vet that it was an unsustainable way of life.”**

**“It’s an industry that is super stressful, with long hours and salaries that aren’t the best considering the responsibilities we have. It is not very well suited for people with children considering you have to work weekends and after hours and when you’re going to work when your child is asleep and coming home when they are asleep it is hard.”**

**“If it was easier to get reliable time-off and not burn out... (...) I think we’ll need to train a lot more vets as average working hours are so much less, and more vets of my age will retire early as the gaps we’re filling are completely exhausting us and ageing us so we end up dropping out sooner. Sorry but I can’t keep it up any longer....”**

As outlined through the above quotations, many respondents detailed a need for a cultural shift that would lead to better work-life balance for veterinarians in the UK. Whilst some participants simply stated that this would encourage them to return, several responses provided anecdotal evidence of the detrimental impacts of workplace stress. These impacts ranged from burnout to impacting vets’ ability to spend time with their children, with one respondent referring to their workload as ‘unsustainable’.

# Chapter 4: Respondents leaving the Vet Nurse Register

## 4.1 Introduction

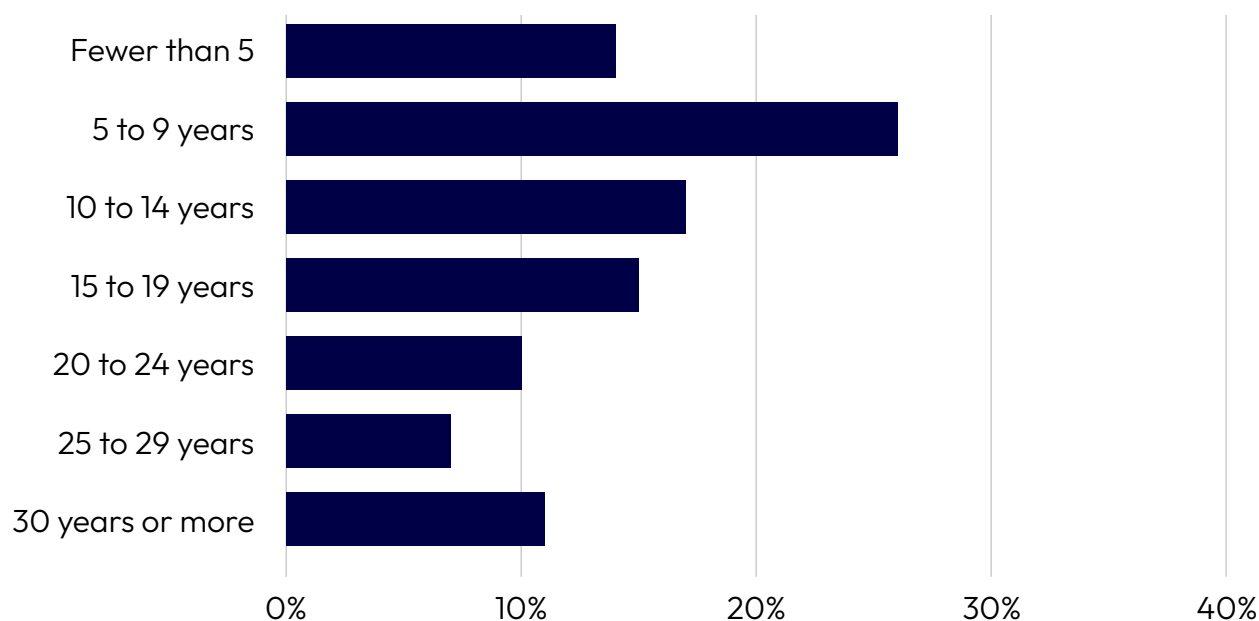
This chapter will first outline the demographic and employment characteristics of veterinary nurses who responded to the Exit Survey between 2023 and 2024, before presenting data highlighting their reasons for leaving the RCVS Register, and plans for restoring their registration in the future.

## 4.2 Profile of respondents

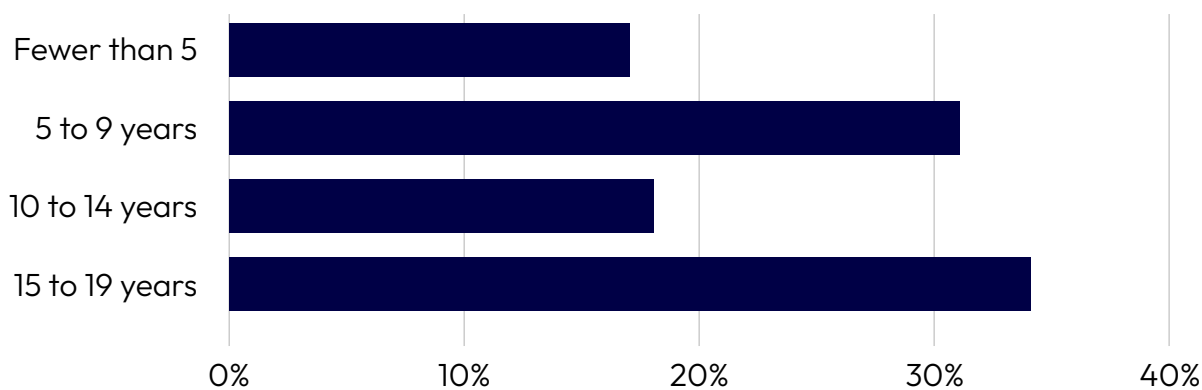
### Demographics

Of the 202 veterinary nurses that responded to the exit survey between September 2023 and the end of 2024, the vast majority were female (99%), under 50 years of age (78%) and white (99%, n= 201, one missing). Over one third, 34% of respondents had been registered for between 15 and 19 years at the time of survey completion, closely followed by those who registered 5 to 9 years prior (31%). No respondents had been registered 20 or more years at the time of survey completion (n= 174, 28 missing). Respondents were then asked about years since qualification, to which the majority indicated that they had been qualified for between five and nineteen years at the time of participation, with one quarter (25%) of these having qualified five to nine years prior to participation. Almost all (99%) respondents qualified in the UK, and the majority (78%) qualified through the further education route.

**Figure 4.1: Years since qualification, percentage of respondents**



**Figure 4.2: Years since registration, percentage of respondents**



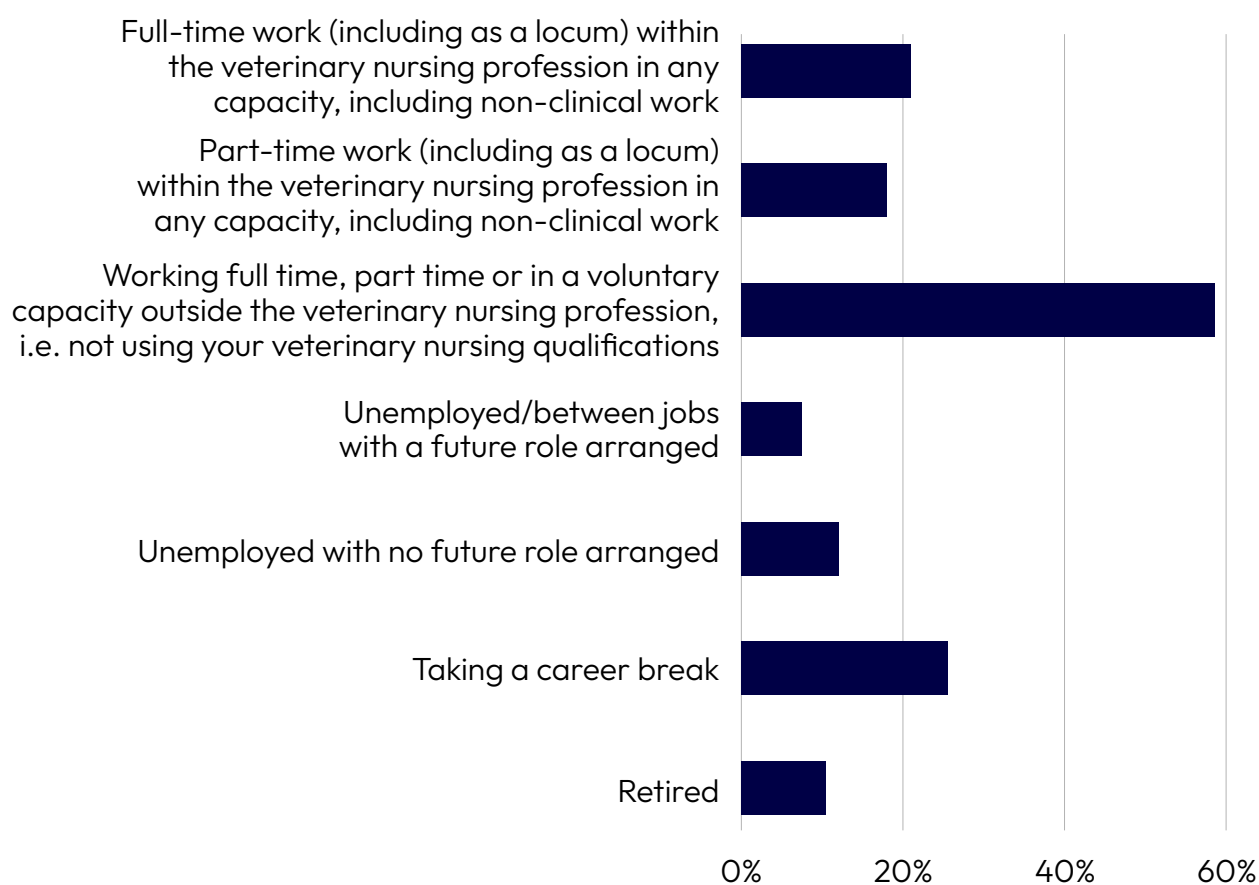
The survey then went on to ask respondents about caring responsibilities, physical and mental health conditions, and financial support during their schooling years. Less than half (43%) of respondents had dependent children living with them, and the majority of respondents (98%) did not provide care for an adult dependent. The majority (79%) of respondents did not have a physical or mental health condition that limited their work. In relation to financial support, reported that their

household did not receive income support during their school years (71%) and did not receive free school meals at any point during their school years (78%).

## Employment

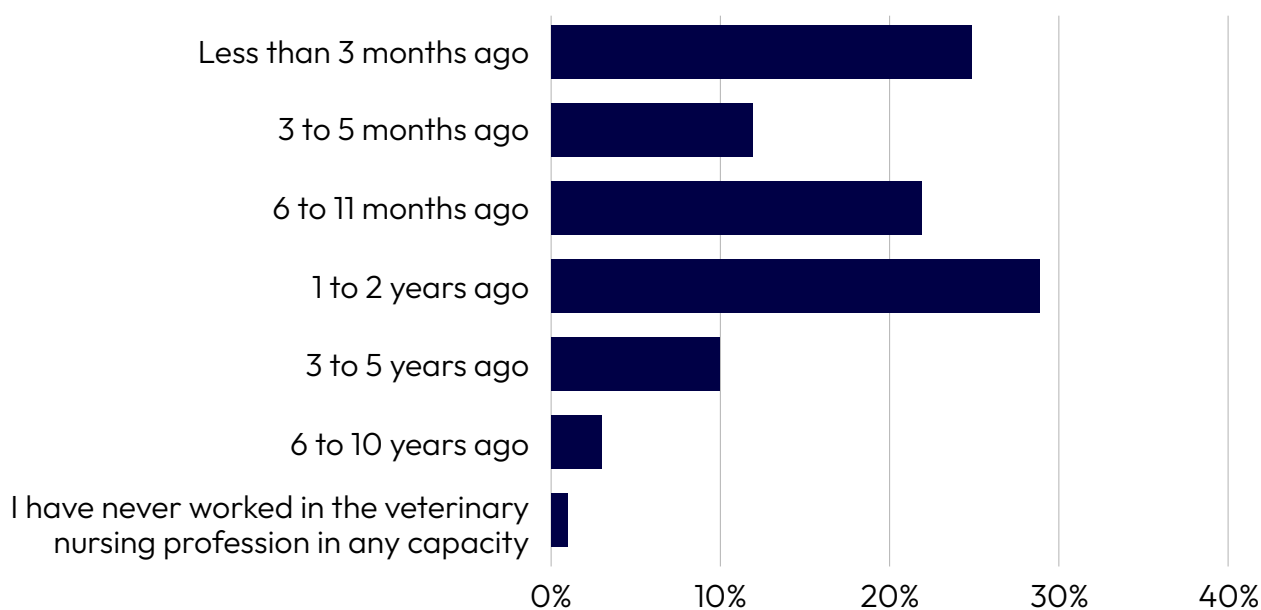
Participants were then asked a series of questions around employment. At survey completion, a quarter of respondents were employed full time in the veterinary nursing profession (14% full-time, 12% part-time), 39% were working full-time outside of the veterinary nursing profession, 12% were unemployed (of which 8% had no future role arranged), 17% were taking a career break, and 7% were retired.

**Figure 4.3. Employment status of respondents at the time of survey completion**



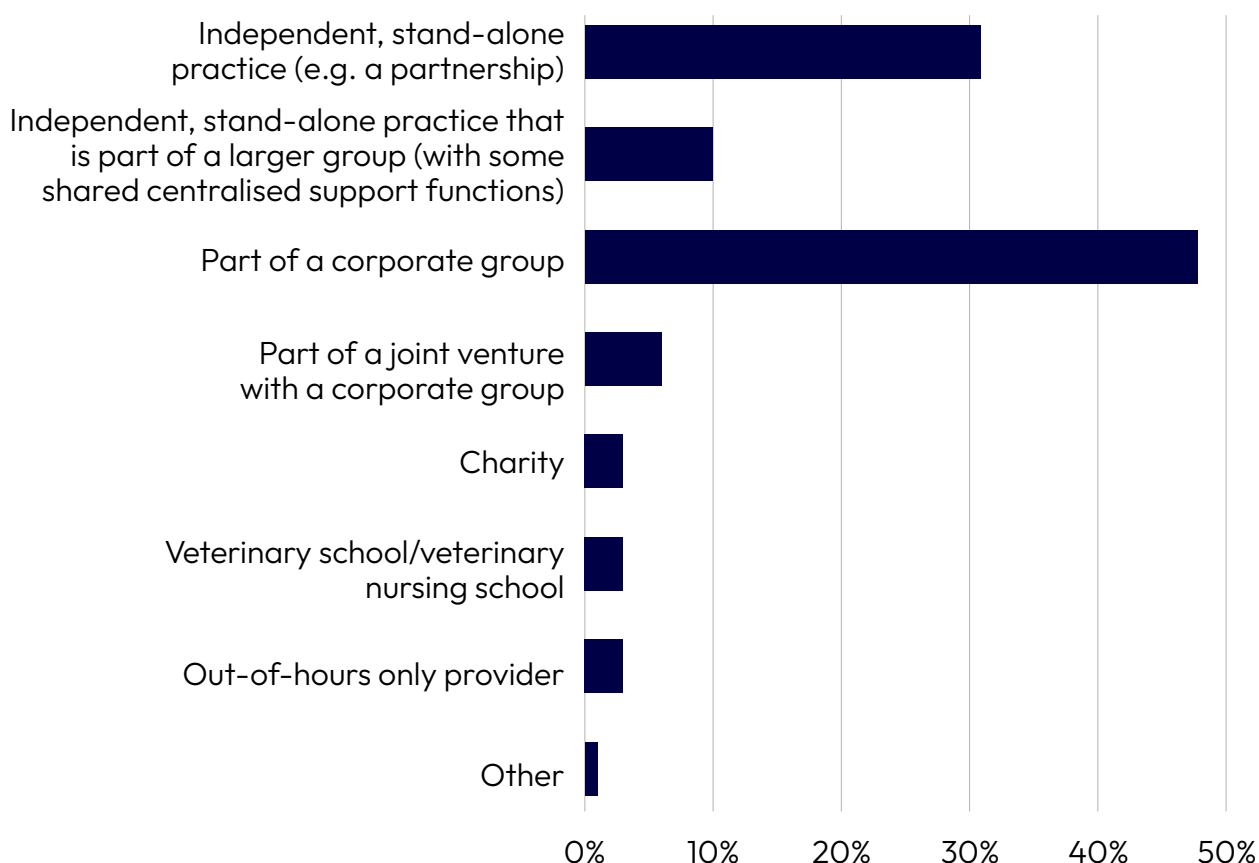
When asked about their current or last employment as a veterinary nurse, one quarter of respondents said that they had worked within the profession less than three months prior to completing the survey, around one fifth (22%) 6 to 11 months prior, and just under one third (29%) one to two years prior (n= 148, 54 missing). Furthermore, half (50%) of respondents noted that they worked full-time during their last employment as a veterinary nurse, and 72% said that they worked in clinical practice during their last veterinary nursing role.

**Figure 4.4 Length of time passed since respondents last worked in the veterinary nursing profession**



Of those who said they had not worked in clinical practice; (n= 34, 22 missing), none worked for government agencies. Of those who said that they had worked in clinical practice, the majority (76%, n=140, 1 missing) worked in a small-animal practice and a further 14% worked in referral, consultancy or hospital settings. 67% of those who had worked in clinical practice were employed as veterinary nurses, 16% were joint venture partners, 7% were directors and 5% worked as locums (n= 134, 7 missing). In addition, almost half (48%) of those that said they were employed by a practice that was part of a corporate group.

**Figure 4.5 Ownership category of last practice respondents worked in**



## 4.3 Leaving the Register

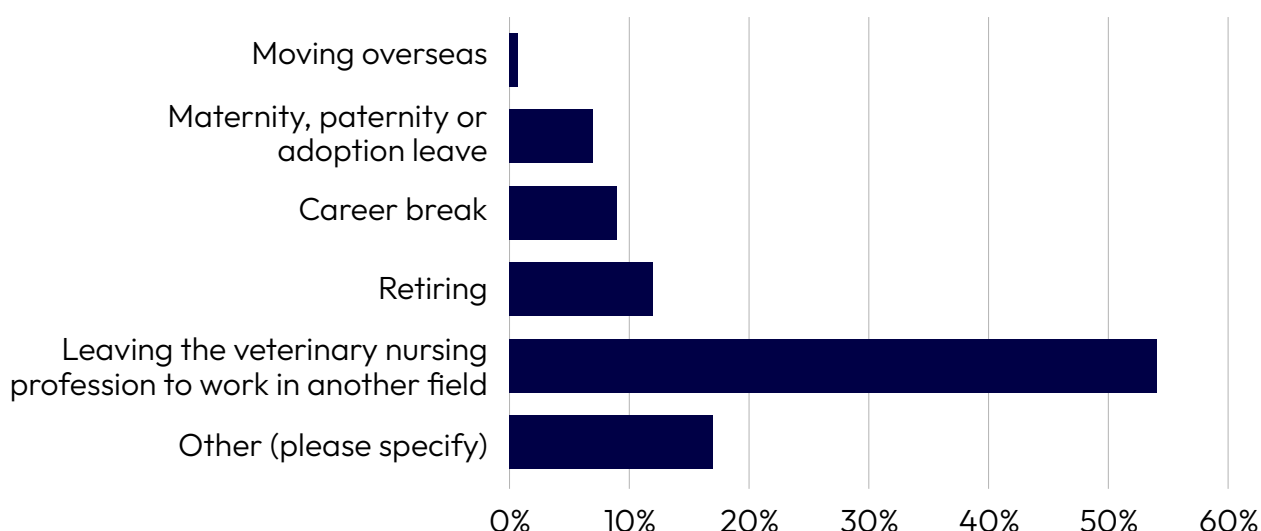
### Reasons for leaving the Register

The most common reason given for leaving the Register was 'leaving the veterinary profession to work in another field', with over half (54%) of respondents selecting this. Of the respondents who selected this answer (n=103), 5 said that they were studying to become, or were, veterinary surgeons. A further 12% said that they were retiring, and 17% selected 'other' (Figure 4.6).

Those that selected 'other' (n=32) were then asked to specify their reasons for leaving the Register, to which the majority described personal reasons such as a decline in either physical

or mental health. Many free-text responses given when asked to specify ‘other’ reasons for leaving the Register were recoded and combined with ‘leaving the veterinary nursing profession to work in another field’. It is possible that there was a degree of reluctance among participants to categorise themselves as ‘leaving the profession’, and that they identify more with the phrase ‘leaving my job’ or ‘leaving clinical practice’. Among free-text responses, family was also a contributing factor, with many highlighting the need for greater flexibility, particularly in relation to childcare.

**Figure 4.6 Reasons for leaving the Register**



Reasons for leaving the Register varied by group. For example, around half (48%) of those respondents leaving the Register due to leaving the profession (n=103) were between 30 and 39 years of age, and a further fifth (20%) were aged 20 to 29. In addition, over half of those respondents leaving the profession (55%) had been registered for under ten years, and half (50%) had been qualified for under ten years. Specifically, 38% of respondents leaving the profession had been registered between five and nine years, and around a third (34%) had been qualified between five and nine years. In conclusion, the largest group of respondents who told us they are leaving the profession are clinical nurses with between five and nine

years of experience, with respondents in this group making up around one-third of all respondents leaving the profession.

Conversely, those leaving the Register to take a career break (n= 17) were more likely to be older and to have more experience (both in terms of years registered and qualified) than those leaving the Register due to moving to another field and thus leaving the veterinary nursing profession. The majority (65%) of those leaving the Register to take a career break were between the ages of 30 and 39, and a further 18% were between the ages of 50 and 59. Two fifths (42%) of respondents taking a career break had been registered between 15 and 19 years, and a further third (33%) had been registered between ten and 14 years. Over a third (35%) had been qualified between ten and 14 years, and almost one fifth (18%) had been qualified between both 15 and 19 years and 25 to 29 years. There was also a higher proportion of those working in more senior positions among respondents leaving the Register for a career break, with 27% of respondents taking a career break stating they had worked or were currently in the position of 'head nurse'. Appendix J provides a full breakdown of reasons for leaving the Register by age, gender, years of experience (both registration and qualification) and job role.

Respondents were then given the opportunity to describe in more detail their reasons for leaving the Register using a free-text box. Throughout free-text responses, the most common theme was 'sectoral issues', with respondents describing a number of problems relating to the veterinary nursing profession as a whole, rather than with their specific role or practice. The most common sub-theme found within these responses was that of 'regulation', which relates to regulatory policies and practices determined by the RCVS. Fees were the most recurrent issue for respondents, with many describing an inability to afford the costs of renewal.

**“Fees were too high considering cost of living. Not sure what the RCVS does for the profession these days. No gain for my current role by staying on the register.”**

**“Due to some other financial commitments, I just could not afford my fees this year even though I have done my CPD.”**

**“I can’t afford to keep paying fees when on disability benefits. It’s been a difficult decision; I feel sad about it.”**

The second most recurring theme was ‘personal reasons’, which mainly included descriptions of deteriorating health, both physical and mental. This was closely followed by the theme of ‘careers’, within which respondents mostly gave details of new roles and career changes, sometimes mentioning feelings of responsibility fatigue, compassion fatigue, and a need for better progression and/or remuneration as reasons for changing career.

**“I have significant compassion fatigue that initially caused me to leave practice and join my local government’s public protection team as an animal welfare officer.”**

**“I have started a degree in adult nursing. I took a break from veterinary nursing to have my baby and decided whilst on leave I needed to find something that excited me and with more scope for career progression and better pay.”**

**“No longer wanting accountability/responsibility of RVN status and looking to change career focus.”**

Whilst not explicitly given as a reason for leaving the Register, the theme of ‘identity’ also frequently occurred, with responses connoting sadness around removing themselves from the Register, highlighting the innate connection that veterinary nurses often have with their roles and the extent to which their veterinary identity is entrenched within their sense of self.

**“Having held RVN status for many years, but now working solely in Management, I feel it is unfair to my RVN colleagues that still actively nurse, that I hold the same ‘status’ as they do.”**

**“I am quite upset about re leaving to be honest, I worked hard for my qualifications with distinction & credits.”**

**“I’m against having to ‘leave’ a register that I worked hard to support for over twenty years. It is outrageous that the law requires those wonderful RVNs not currently employed in the veterinary field to give up their hard-earned status. It’s totally devaluing. There should be a retired list instead.”**

To provide further insight into the circumstances and factors behind individual decisions to leave the Register, respondents in each sub-group were asked a series of questions prompting further information. Responses to these questions are presented in the following sections of this report.

## Retiring

Among those leaving the Register due to retirement (n=22), over three-quarters (77%) were retiring earlier than their state pension age. When asked why they decided to retire prior to their state pension age, respondents selected as many as applied from a range of answers set out in Table 1. Around one-quarter (24%) said that this was due to wanting to spend time with their family or retire at the same time as their partner. Retiring due to a physical or mental health condition or illness, demands of the job or stress, or to enjoy retirement or spend time on other interests were equally frequent, with 18% of respondents choosing each of these options as reasons for early retirement.

**Table 4.1 Reasons for retiring earlier than state retirement age**

	Count	%
Physical or mental health condition or illness	3	18%
Demands of the job / stress	3	18%
Dissatisfaction with the veterinary nursing profession	1	6%
To enjoy retirement / spend time on other interests	3	18%
To spend time with family / retire at same time as partner	4	24%
Other (please specify)	3	18%
Total (n=)	17	100%

## Career break and taking parental leave

Among those taking a career break (n= 17), two-thirds (67%) were planning to take a break of two years or more, and a further quarter (25%) were planning to take a break for twelve months. Similarly, among those leaving the Register due to parental leave (n=12), over half (55%) planned to take a break of 24 months or more, and a further 27% planned to take a one-year break.

When asked the main purpose for taking their career break, over half (59%) selected 'other (please specify)'. Among free-

text responses subsequently given, respondents detailed issues with management or a lack of integration with their team, a need for greater flexibility and more child-friendly hours, and dissatisfaction with pay. Stress, burnout and fatigue were also described by multiple respondents.

**“I left due to feeling undervalued and management issues, they didn’t listen to my concerns, and I had had a bad year personally wise. I also wanted to reduce my hours.”**

**“Pay (too low) and also not child friendly occupation.”**

**“I was working as a sole nurse in what should have been a 4-nurse team being directed from another branch that would not send cover and expect myself to do a full-time job of 4 in only 3 working days. I became despondent in my role and burnt out.”**

In addition, almost a quarter (24%) of respondents said that the main purpose for taking their career break was ‘parental leave’ or ‘looking after children’.

**Table 4.2 Main purpose for taking a career break**

	Count	%
Physical health issue/illness	1	5.9%
Mental health issue/illness	1	5.9%
Sabbatical	1	5.9%
Parental leave/looking after children	4	23.5%
Other (please specify)	10	58.8%
Total (n=)	17	100%

### **Moving overseas**

Among respondents moving overseas (n=5), three were returning to their home country as opposed to moving to a different country. Furthermore, three of these respondents said that they planned to continue working in the veterinary nursing profession outside of the UK, and a further one expressed uncertainty. When asked the most important factor in determining their decision to move overseas, two respondents said that moving to be near friends and family was most important, and a further two selected 'other'. When asked to specify further, respondents that selected 'other' described wanting to travel for a period of time, and high costs of living in the UK.

### **Leaving the veterinary nursing profession**

Those who indicated that they were leaving the Register due to moving to another field (n=103) were asked a series of questions to further understand their reasons for leaving the profession, and which sector they were moving to.

When asked what field(s) they had moved to, or planned to move to, the most frequently selected response options were 'administrative and support service activities', and 'human health and social work activities', with 18% of respondents selecting each of these options. The second most frequently selected field was 'other service activities', with 14% of respondents indicating that this is the field they had moved or were moving to. Respondents were then asked whether their new role would require formal retraining, to which just over half (51%) answered 'no'. A full breakdown of which field(s) respondents planned to move to can be found in Appendix K.

Respondents were then asked why they were leaving the profession, and subsequently to select which factor was most important in shaping their decision. The reasons most frequently cited as 'most important' were 'Pay' and 'Chronic stress', with 17% of respondents selecting each of these. 10% of respondents said that a career change or new challenge was the most important factor in their decision to leave, and 9% of respondents gave health issues (either physical or mental) as

the most important reason. A full breakdown of the most important factors in shaping respondents' decisions to leave the profession can be found in Appendix L.

A further 9% of respondents selected 'other' reasons as being most important. Respondents who selected the 'other' option and subsequently gave free-text answers most often cited issues with their role or practice as their reason for leaving the profession. Among these responses the most recurrent sub-theme was 'management', with respondents describing low levels of emotional safety within their practice, and toxic working environments due to poor leadership.

**“[My boss] was awful to work with, bullying within the workplace, despite several formal grievances brought against her, was still in the same role.”**

**“Online abuse from owners, toxic managers and work environment.”**

**“Poor senior management ability.”**

## 4.4 Returning to the Register

In addition to being asked about leaving the Register, respondents were asked about their plans to return, any concerns they had around returning and support needs upon returning (if relevant). Responses to these questions are outlined in the following sections of this report.

### Plans to return

When asked whether they had plans to return to the Register in the future, respondents most frequently said that they were not sure (46%). However, around two-fifths (39%) of respondents said that they did not have any plans to return to the Register.

**Table 4.3 Plans to return to the Register in the future**

	Count	%
Yes	28	14.7%
No	75	39.3%
I'm not sure	88	46.1%
Total (n=)	191	100%

Those that said they did have plans to return to the Register (n=28) were then asked when they expected to return, to which the majority (82%) said that they planned to return in a year or more, but less than five years.

**Table 4.4 Time expected to return to the Register**

	Count	%
Within the next 6 months	2	7.1%
In 6 months or more, but less than a year	2	7.1%
In a year or more, but less than five years	23	82.1%
In five years or more	1	3.6%
Total (n=)	28	100%

Plans to return differed by reasons for leaving the Register. For example, only a small percentage (6%) of those moving to another field said that they had plans to return to the Register in the future. In contrast, those moving overseas and taking a career break were mostly unsure about whether they would return (80% and 71% respectively). The majority (69%) of those taking parental leave said that they did have plans to return to the Register in the future, and unsurprisingly, over three-quarters (77%) of those retiring said they did not have plans to return. A full breakdown of whether respondents planned to return to the Register by their reasons for leaving can be found in Appendix M. In relation to length of time before they returned to the Register, there was no clear variations by reason for leaving.

### Concerns

To gain insight into how transitions to work can be made easier for those who have left the Register, respondents were asked whether they had any concerns about returning. Six respondents gave free-text answers to this question, covering three themes, namely skills regression, difficulty during registration, and an absence of concerns. Two respondents expressed concerns around the potential for the profession to develop quickly, leading one to feel that they would need a refresher course upon returning. A further two participants felt that the process of rejoining the register may act as a barrier alongside the cost of registration, and two respondents said that they had no concerns.

**“My main concerns would be the changes in technology and medicines that I would need to know. The actual ‘nursing’ (e.g. restraint, GA, care etc) does not worry me at all.”**

**“I have just registered again as potential for job in near future. But I am annoyed I had to pay twice within a couple months, when the first one was supposed to cover till next October. I currently have no job and this was very expensive!”**

**“I considered myself an experienced VN and I understand that the profession moves on quickly. If it is made too difficult to rejoin, I will not be returning.”**

### **Support needs**

Respondents were then asked if there were any factors that would help them consider returning to the profession, to which a much larger number of responses (n=150) were given. Among these free-text responses, the dominant theme was ‘changes to the profession’, which refers to changes across the profession rather to particular practices or roles. Three sub-themes prevailed among these responses, namely ‘remuneration’, ‘flexibility’ and ‘increased opportunities’.

The most recurrent of these three sub-themes was ‘remuneration’, which was often linked to recognition and appreciation, with respondents using words such as ‘fair’ and ‘adequate’ when describing the pay increase that they would like to see prior to returning. Some respondents described a need for pay to reflect the responsibilities and extensive training required by their roles, whilst others discussed the high costs of essentials such as childcare, describing their salaries as ‘unliveable’ and highlighting the financial struggles faced by those in the profession.

**“When Veterinary Nurses are given the respect, responsibilities and pay they deserve.”**

**“Better pay for RVNs. Childcare cost more than I was earning.”**

**“Working long antisocial hours with nothing to show for it (money/promotion/rewards) is completely demeaning and I will never put myself through it again.”**

The second most frequently highlighted theme was ‘increased opportunities’. Specifically, respondents described a need for the expansion of roles and pathways for veterinary nurses, such as roles with greater challenge and responsibility, a tiered system similar to that found in human nursing, and greater opportunities for progression, both generally and in specific areas of interest.

**“A big shift in the role of the vet nurse and expansion of career roles and opportunities. More pathways like there are in human nursing, further training, greater responsibility, enhanced pay.”**

**“A more challenging and rewarding advanced clinical role as a nurse with a decade of clinical experience.”**

**“An overhaul of what veterinary nurses are allowed to do. A tiered system of qualifications similar to human nurses to allow nurses to work to their own strengths and interests.”**

**“If the RCVS created more clearly defined nursing roles than are recognised within the profession that alone with human practice e.g. matron, ANP, physician’s assistant, district nurse. Nurses are not respected by the majority of vets for their clinical acumen, and it is very demoralising.”**

**“Being recognised for our qualification (protected title, own governing body)”**

Finally, ‘flexibility’ was frequently mentioned in free-text responses to this question, which encompassed several specific needs, namely child-friendly hours, improved work-life balance, and standard working hours. Many respondents described difficulty in balancing their professional life with their parental responsibilities due to a lack of flexibility in shift patterns and said that in order to return they would require ‘family-friendly’ working hours which would allow them to work

around their children's schooling. Others generally highlighted a poor work-life balance throughout the profession and felt that this would have to be improved before they would rejoin. Finally, some respondents expressed a desire for 'normal' working hours similar to that of non-healthcare professions, including not having to work nights, weekends or overtime.

**“More consideration to work-life balance.  
A change to shift patterns would be helpful for wellbeing, such as short shifts or 4-day week.  
I found managing the work-life balance too tricky in my career.”**

**“More flexible job roles for RVNs with children in school. I've been unable to find roles within school hours and need to be able to care for my children.”**

**“Don't enjoy working evenings and weekends anymore. There are things I want to do other than work and it makes me miserable when I can't do them. So, I'd need a 9-5 job.”**

#### **Awareness of PSP**

Respondents were also asked whether they were aware of the required period of supervised practice (PSP) for veterinary nurses who return to the Register after five years or more. The majority of respondents (75%) said that they were aware of this. Among those who said they were unaware of the PSP, over half (57%) had been qualified for under ten years, and 43% had been registered for fewer than five years.

**Table 4.5. Awareness of the Period of Supervised Practice (PSP)**

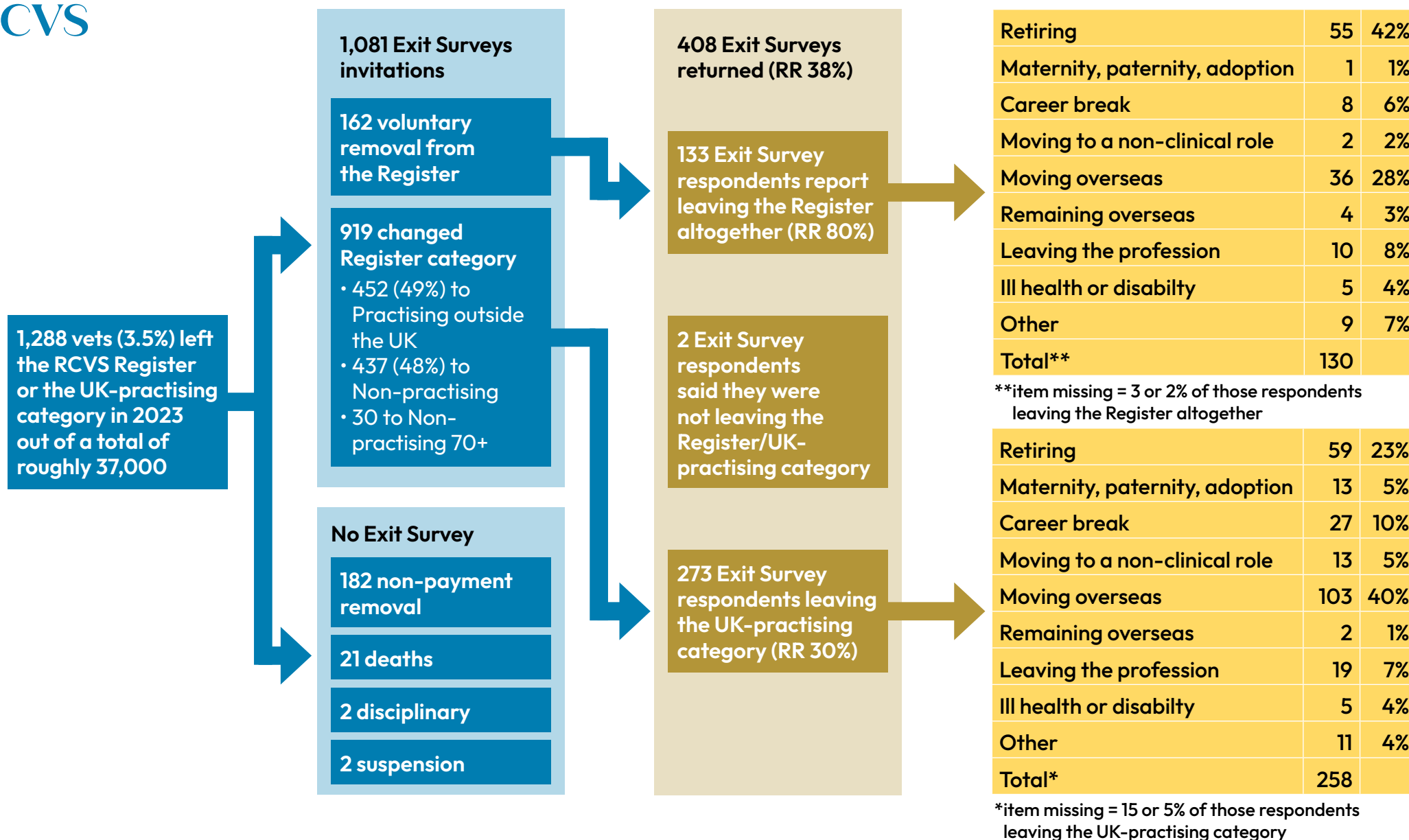
<b>Were you aware of the Period of Supervised Practice (PSP) requirement before taking this survey?</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	21	75%
No	7	25%

# **Exit Survey 2022–2024**

## **Appendices (A to M)**

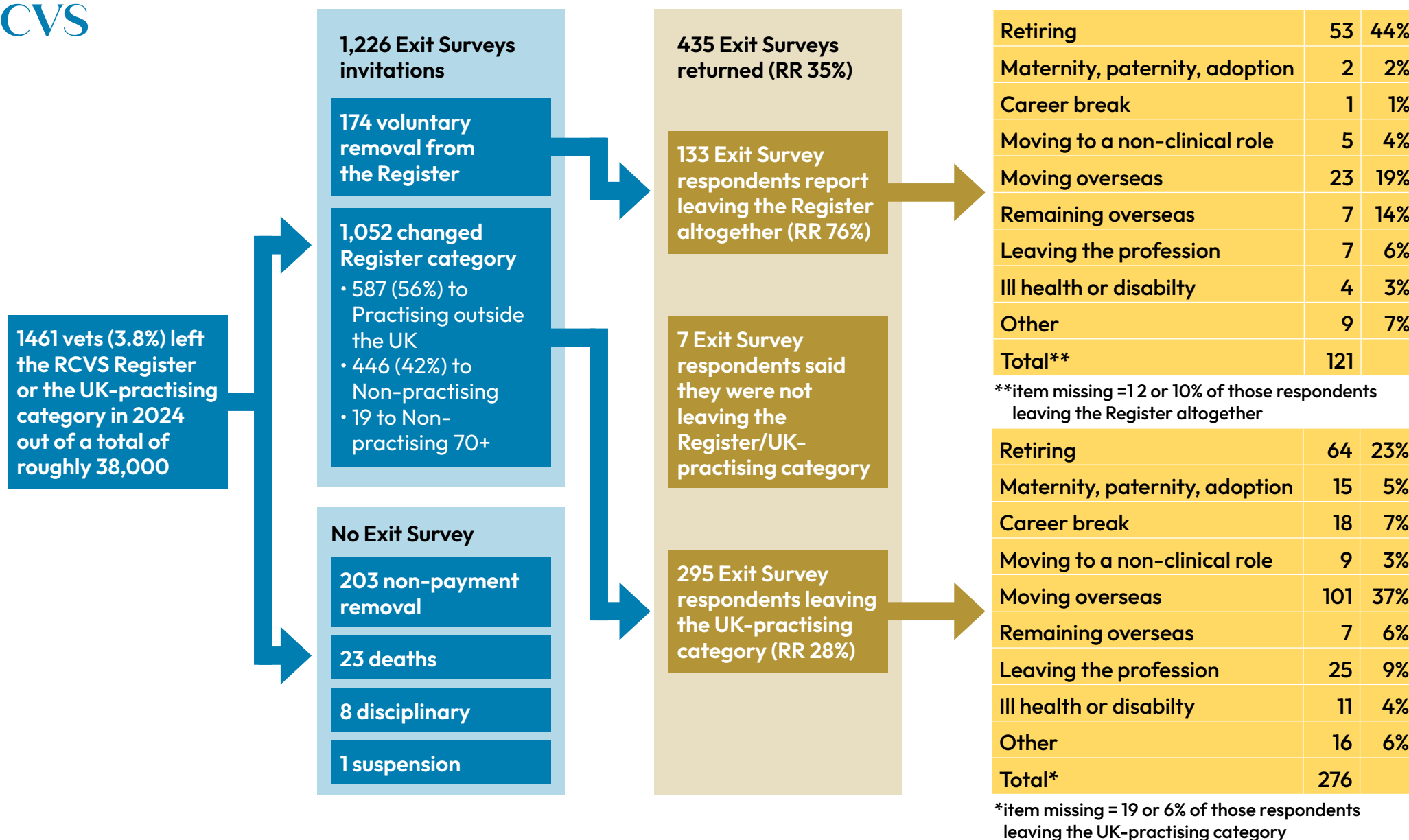
# Appendix A

## 2023 Exit Survey vet surgeon respondents



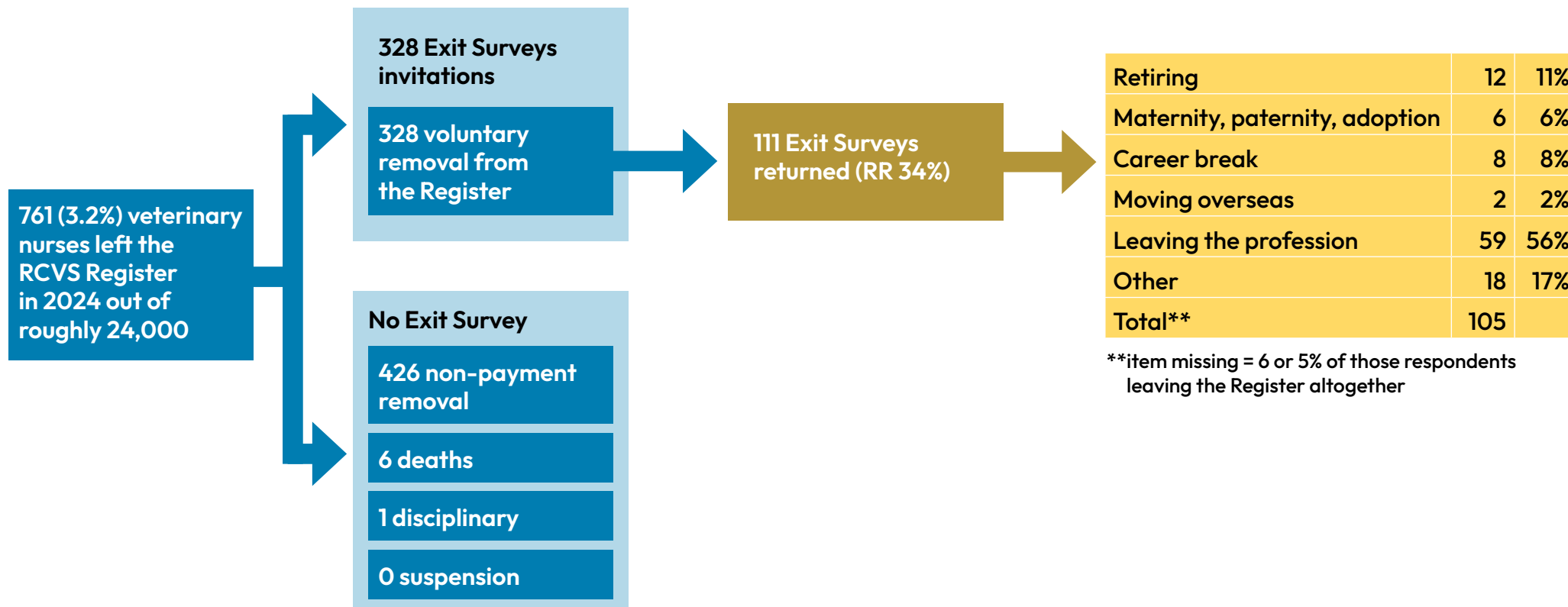
# Appendix A (continued)

## 2024 Exit Survey vet surgeon respondents



# Appendix A (continued)

## 2024 Exit Survey vet nurse respondents



# Appendix B

## Leaving the UK-practising category

	Retiring	Maternity, paternity or adoption leave	Career break	Moving to a non-clinical role	Moving overseas	Remaining overseas and not planning to return	Leaving the veterinary profession to work in another field	Ill health or disability	Other (please specify)	Total
<b>Base (n=)</b>	136 (22.5%)	33 (5.5%)	50 (8.3%)	23 (3.8%)	244(40.3%)	20 (3.3%)	47 (7.8%)	22 (3.6%)	30 (5.0%)	605 (100.0%)
<b>What is your gender?</b>										
Female	49 (36.0%)	32 (97.0%)	30 (60.0%)	15 (65.2%)	172 (70.5%)	12 (60.0%)	30 (63.8%)	18 (81.8%)	23 (76.7%)	381 (63.0%)
Male	87 (64.0%)	1 (3.0%)	20 (40.0%)	8 (34.8%)	69 (28.3%)	8 (40.0%)	15 (31.9%)	4 (18.2%)	7 (23.3%)	219 (36.2%)
Prefer not to say	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (1.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.5%)
Prefer to self-describe (please specify)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.3%)
<b>Age (grouped)</b>										
Under 30	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.1%)	11 (22.0%)	4 (17.4%)	90 (37.5%)	1 (5.3%)	8 (17.4%)	1 (4.5%)	5 (16.7%)	121 (20.3%)
30–39	0 (0.0%)	26 (81.2%)	11 (22.0%)	8 (34.8%)	88 (36.7%)	5 (26.3%)	11 (23.9%)	5 (22.7%)	12 (40.0%)	166 (27.8%)
40–49	1 (0.7%)	5 (15.6%)	9 (18.0%)	3 (13.0%)	34 (14.2%)	1 (5.3%)	10 (21.7%)	7 (31.8%)	5 (16.7%)	75 (12.6%)
50–59	24 (17.8%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (22.0%)	2 (8.7%)	22 (9.2%)	7 (36.8%)	13 (28.3%)	5 (22.7%)	1 (3.3%)	85 (14.2%)
60–69	95 (70.4%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (12.0%)	4 (17.4%)	6 (2.5%)	4 (21.1%)	3 (6.5%)	3 (13.6%)	5 (16.7%)	126 (21.1%)
70+	15 (11.1%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.0%)	2 (8.7%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5.3%)	1 (2.2%)	1 (4.5%)	2 (6.7%)	24 (4.0%)

# Appendix B (continued)

## Leaving the UK-practising category

Years since registration (grouped)	Retiring	Maternity, paternity or adoption leave	Career break	Moving to a non-clinical role	Moving overseas	Remaining overseas and not planning to return	Leaving the veterinary profession to work in another field	Ill health or disability	Other (please specify)	Total
Fewer than 5	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.2%)	11 (22.4%)	2 (8.7%)	96 (40.5%)	2 (10.5%)	7 (14.9%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (24.0%)	126 (21.4%)
5–9	0 (0.0%)	13 (40.6%)	5 (10.2%)	6 (26.1%)	64 (27.0%)	3 (15.8%)	8 (17.0%)	4 (18.2%)	6 (24.0%)	109 (18.5%)
10–14	0 (0.0%)	12 (37.5%)	6 (12.2%)	2 (8.7%)	35 (14.8%)	4 (21.1%)	6 (12.8%)	3 (13.6%)	5 (20.0%)	73 (12.4%)
15–19	2 (1.5%)	3 (9.4%)	5 (10.2%)	2 (8.7%)	19 (8.0%)	1 (5.3%)	4 (8.5%)	2 (9.1%)	1 (4.0%)	39 (6.6%)
20–24	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.2%)	4 (8.2%)	2 (8.7%)	11 (4.6%)	2 (10.5%)	4 (8.5%)	4 (18.2%)	1 (4.0%)	30 (5.1%)
25–29	3 (2.2%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (12.2%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (1.7%)	1 (5.3%)	6 (12.8%)	2 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	22 (3.7%)
30–34	17 (12.7%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (8.2%)	1 (4.3%)	5 (2.1%)	4 (21.1%)	6 (12.8%)	3 (13.6%)	2 (8.0%)	42 (7.1%)
35–39	33 (24.6%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (14.3%)	2 (8.7%)	3 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (10.6%)	3 (13.6%)	2 (8.0%)	55 (9.4%)
40+	79 (59.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.0%)	6 (26.1%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (10.5%)	1 (2.1%)	1 (4.5%)	2 (8.0%)	92 (15.6%)

# Appendix C

## Leaving the UK-practising category

What field have you moved to, or plan to move to?	Count
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (includes animal farming)	4
Manufacturing (includes manufacturing of food and drink products and printing)	2
Wholesale and retail trade	2
Transportation and storage (includes postal and courier services)	3
Accommodation and food service activities (includes hospitality)	1
Information and communication (includes publishing and broadcasting)	1
Financial and insurance activities	3
Real estate activities	3
Professional, scientific and technical activities	11
Administrative and support service activities	2
Education	3
Human health and social work activities	6
Arts, entertainment and recreation	2
Other service activities	7
Don't know	1

# Appendix D

## Leaving the UK-practising category

And which of these reasons would you say is most important?	
Pay	1 (2.2%)
Not feeling rewarded/valued (non-financial)	4 (8.9%)
Career change/new challenge	7 (15.6%)
Chronic stress	9 (20.0%)
Lack of flexibility in hours	1 (2.2%)
Poor work-life balance	5 (11.1%)
Dissatisfaction with career opportunities	4 (8.9%)
Burden of bureaucracy/legislation	2 (4.4%)
(Mental) Health issues	2 (4.4%)
Other (please specify)	10 (22.2%)

# Appendix E

## Leaving the UK-practising category

Do/did you work within clinical veterinary practice (including practices or hosp	Retiring	Maternity, paternity or adoption leave	Career break	Moving to a non-clinical role	Moving overseas	Remaining overseas and not planning to return	Leaving the veterinary profession to work in another field	Ill health or disability	Other (please specify)	Total
Yes	2 (1.5%)	30 (90.9%)	18 (36.0%)	0 (0.0%)	85 (35.0%)	3 (15.0%)	1 (2.2%)	6 (27.3%)	7 (24.1%)	152 (25.2%)
No	83 (61.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (10.0%)	10 (43.5%)	32 (13.2%)	6 (30.0%)	24 (52.2%)	1 (4.5%)	10 (34.5%)	171 (28.4%)
I'm not sure	51 (37.5%)	3 (9.1%)	27 (54.0%)	13 (56.5%)	126 (51.9%)	11 (55.0%)	21 (45.7%)	15 (68.2%)	12 (41.4%)	279 (46.3%)
When do you expect to return to the UK-practising category?										
Within the next 6 months	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.4%)	3 (16.7%)	0 (.)	10 (11.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (28.6%)	16 (10.6%)
In 6 months or more, but less than a year	1 (50.0%)	17 (58.6%)	6 (33.3%)	0 (.)	15 (17.6%)	1 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (66.7%)	2 (28.6%)	46 (30.5%)
In a year or more, but less than five years	1 (50.0%)	11 (37.9%)	9 (50.0%)	0 (.)	50 (58.8%)	2 (66.7%)	1 (100.0%)	2 (33.3%)	3 (42.9%)	79 (52.3%)
In five years or more	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (.)	10 (11.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (6.6%)

# Appendix F

## Leaving the Registers altogether

	Retiring	Maternity, paternity or adoption leave	Career break	Moving to a non-clinical role	Moving overseas	Remaining overseas and not planning to return	Leaving the veterinary profession to work in another field	Ill health or disability	Other (please specify)	Total
<b>Base (n=)</b>	116 (40.4%)	4 (1.4%)	11 (3.8%)	8 (2.8%)	73 (25.4%)	26 (9.1%)	20 (7.0%)	9 (3.1%)	20 (7.0%)	287 (100.0%)
<b>What is your gender?</b>										
Female	47 (40.5%)	4 (100.0%)	5 (45.5%)	6 (75.0%)	57 (78.1%)	16 (61.5%)	15 (75.0%)	8 (88.9%)	12 (60.0%)	170 (59.2%)
Male	67 (57.8%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (54.5%)	2 (25.0%)	15 (20.5%)	10 (38.5%)	5 (25.0%)	1 (11.1%)	8 (40.0%)	114 (39.7%)
Prefer not to say	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.3%)
Prefer to self-describe (please specify)	2 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.7%)
<b>Age (grouped)</b>										
Under 30	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (20.0%)	2 (25.0%)	19 (26.0%)	1 (4.0%)	1 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (21.1%)	29 (10.2%)
30–39	0 (0.0%)	4 (100.0%)	2 (20.0%)	3 (37.5%)	41 (56.2%)	10 (40.0%)	8 (40.0%)	2 (22.2%)	5 (26.3%)	75 (26.4%)
40–49	1 (0.9%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (20.0%)	2 (25.0%)	9 (12.3%)	8 (32.0%)	4 (20.0%)	4 (44.4%)	4 (21.1%)	34 (12.0%)
50–59	11 (9.5%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (5.5%)	4 (16.0%)	5 (25.0%)	1 (11.1%)	5 (26.3%)	32 (11.3%)
60–69	84 (72.4%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (8.0%)	2 (10.0%)	2 (22.2%)	1 (5.3%)	93 (32.7%)
70+	20 (17.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	21 (7.4%)

# Appendix F (continued)

## Leaving the Registers altogether

Years since registration (grouped)	Retiring	Maternity, paternity or adoption leave	Career break	Moving to a non-clinical role	Moving overseas	Remaining overseas and not planning to return	Leaving the veterinary profession to work in another field	Ill health or disability	Other (please specify)	Total
Fewer than 5	0 (0.0%)	1 (25.0%)	4 (36.4%)	3 (42.9%)	34 (46.6%)	3 (11.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (11.1%)	5 (25.0%)	51 (17.9%)
5–9	0 (0.0%)	1 (25.0%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (14.3%)	24 (32.9%)	9 (34.6%)	7 (35.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (20.0%)	47 (16.5%)
10–14	4 (3.5%)	2 (50.0%)	1 (9.1%)	2 (28.6%)	6 (8.2%)	3 (11.5%)	2 (10.0%)	1 (11.1%)	2 (10.0%)	23 (8.1%)
15–19	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (5.5%)	4 (15.4%)	4 (20.0%)	2 (22.2%)	0 (0.0%)	15 (5.3%)
20–24	4 (3.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.4%)	4 (15.4%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (22.2%)	3 (15.0%)	14 (4.9%)
25–29	3 (2.6%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (5.5%)	1 (3.8%)	2 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5.0%)	12 (4.2%)
30–34	10 (8.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (18.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.8%)	2 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (15.0%)	18 (6.3%)
35–39	33 (28.7%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (15.0%)	2 (22.2%)	2 (10.0%)	41 (14.4%)
40+	61 (53.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (14.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.8%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (11.1%)	0 (0.0%)	64 (22.5%)

# Appendix G

For those leaving the profession, what field(s)  
have you moved to, or plan to move to?

What field(s) have you moved to, or plan to move to?	Count
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (includes animal farming)	2
Information and communication (includes publishing and broadcasting)	2
Professional, scientific and technical activities	3
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	1
Education	4
Human health and social work activities	1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1
Other service activities	1
Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies	1

# Appendix H

For those leaving the profession, which of these reasons would you say is most important?

And which of these reasons would you say is most important?	
Not feeling rewarded/valued (non-financial)	1 (7.1%)
Career change/new challenge	2 (14.3%)
Chronic stress	5 (35.7%)
Long/unsocial hours	1 (7.1%)
Poor work-life balance	1 (7.1%)
Health issues (physical)	1 (7.1%)
Other (please specify)	3 (21.4%)

# Appendix I

## Leaving the Registers altogether

Do you have plans to return to the RCVS Register in the future?	Retiring	Maternity, paternity or adoption leave	Career break	Moving to a non-clinical role	Moving overseas	Remaining overseas and not planning to return	Leaving the veterinary profession to work in another field	Ill health or disability	Other (please specify)	Total
Yes	0 (0.0%)	4 (100.0%)	5 (45.5%)	3 (37.5%)	12 (16.4%)	2 (7.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (22.2%)	3 (15.0%)	31 (10.8%)
No	100 (86.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (25.0%)	24 (32.9%)	7 (26.9%)	15 (75.0%)	4 (44.4%)	4 (20.0%)	156 (54.4%)
I'm not sure	16 (13.8%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (54.5%)	3 (37.5%)	37 (50.7%)	17 (65.4%)	5 (25.0%)	3 (33.3%)	13 (65.0%)	100 (34.8%)
When do you expect to return to the RCVS Register?										
Within the next 6 months	0 (0.0%)	1 (25.0%)	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (8.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (33.3%)	4 (12.9%)
In 6 months or more, but less than a year	0 (0.0%)	3 (75.0%)	4 (80.0%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (8.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (50.0%)	1 (33.3%)	11 (35.5%)
In a year or more, but less than five years	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (66.7%)	9 (75.0%)	1 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	13 (41.9%)
In five years or more	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (8.3%)	1 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (33.3%)	3 (9.7%)

# Appendix J

## Vet nurses leaving the Register

	Retiring	Parental leave	Career break	Moving overseas	Leaving the veterinary nursing profession to work in another field	Other (please specify)	Total
<b>Base (n=)</b>	22 (11.5%)	13 (6.8%)	17 (8.9%)	5 (2.6%)	103 (53.6%)	32 (16.7%)	192 (100.0%)
<b>Age (grouped)</b>							
20–29 years	0 (0.0%)	1 (7.7%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (20.0%)	21 (20.4%)	0 (0.0%)	23 (12.0%)
30–39 years	0 (0.0%)	11 (84.6%)	11 (64.7%)	3 (60.0%)	49 (47.6%)	12 (37.5%)	86 (44.8%)
40–49 years	3 (13.6%)	1 (7.7%)	2 (11.8%)	1 (20.0%)	24 (23.3%)	8 (25.0%)	39 (20.3%)
50–59 years	7 (31.8%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (17.6%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (5.8%)	9 (28.1%)	25 (13.0%)
60–69 years	11 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5.9%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.9%)	3 (9.4%)	18 (9.4%)
70 years or over	1 (4.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.5%)
<b>Years since registration (grouped)</b>							
Fewer than 5	2 (13.3%)	5 (50.0%)	1 (8.3%)	3 (75.0%)	17 (17.2%)	1 (3.7%)	29 (17.4%)
5–9	0 (0.0%)	2 (20.0%)	2 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	38 (38.4%)	11 (40.7%)	53 (31.7%)
10–14	1 (6.7%)	2 (20.0%)	4 (33.3%)	1 (25.0%)	18 (18.2%)	3 (11.1%)	29 (17.4%)
15–19	12 (80.0%)	1 (10.0%)	5 (41.7%)	0 (0.0%)	26 (26.3%)	12 (44.4%)	56 (33.5%)

# Appendix J (continued)

## Vet nurses leaving the Register

	Retiring	Parental leave	Career break	Moving overseas	Leaving the veterinary nursing profession to work in another field	Other (please specify)	Total
<b>Years since registration (grouped)</b>							
Less than a year	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.0%)
1 to 2 years	0 (0.0%)	3 (23.1%)	1 (5.9%)	1 (20.0%)	6 (5.8%)	1 (3.1%)	12 (6.2%)
3 to 4 years	0 (0.0%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (5.9%)	2 (40.0%)	9 (8.7%)	0 (0.0%)	14 (7.3%)
5 to 9 years		2 (15.4%)	2 (11.8%)	0 (0.0%)	35 (34.0%)	11 (34.4%)	50 (26.0%)
10 to 14 years	0 (0.0%)	3 (23.1%)	6 (35.3%)	1 (20.0%)	19 (18.4%)	3 (9.4%)	32 (16.7%)
15 to 19 years	2 (9.1%)	2 (15.4%)	3 (17.6%)	0 (0.0%)	15 (14.6%)	5 (15.6%)	27 (14.1%)
20 to 24 years	5 (22.7%)	1 (7.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (6.8%)	5 (15.6%)	18 (9.4%)
25 to 29 years	2 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (17.6%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (7.8%)	1 (3.1%)	14 (7.3%)
30 years or more	13 (59.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5.9%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.9%)	6 (18.8%)	23 (12.0%)

# Appendix J (continued)

## Vet nurses leaving the Register

	Retiring	Parental leave	Career break	Moving overseas	Leaving the veterinary nursing profession to work in another field	Other (please specify)	Total
<b>Years since registration (grouped)</b>							
Director (of a limited company)	1 (5.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.4%)
Joint venture partner (JVP)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (0.7%)
Head Nurse	5 (27.8%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (27.3%)	1 (25.0%)	12 (16.2%)	1 (4.5%)	22 (15.9%)
Veterinary nurse	10 (55.6%)	8 (88.9%)	7 (63.6%)	3 (75.0%)	51 (68.9%)	13 (59.1%)	92 (66.7%)
Locum (temporarily fulfilling duties of others during their absence, or to cover vacancies temporarily)	0 (0.0%)	1 (11.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (5.4%)	2 (9.1%)	7 (5.1%)
Other (please specify)	2 (11.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (6.8%)	1 (4.5%)	9 (6.5%)

# Appendix K

## Vet nurses leaving the Register

What field(s) have you moved to, or plan to move to?	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (includes livestock farming)	2 (2.2%)
Manufacturing (includes manufacturing of food and drink products and printing)	2 (2.2%)
Wholesale and retail trade	2 (2.2%)
Transportation and storage (includes postal and courier services)	1 (1.1%)
Accommodation and food service activities (includes hospitality)	4 (4.4%)
Financial and insurance activities	10 (11.1%)
Real estate activities	1 (1.1%)
Professional, scientific and technical activities	7 (7.8%)
Administrative and support service activities	16 (17.8%)
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	2 (2.2%)
Education	6 (6.7%)
Human health and social work activities	16 (17.8%)
Arts, entertainment and recreation	2 (2.2%)
Other service activities	13 (14.4%)
Don't know	6 (6.7%)

# Appendix L

## Vet nurses leaving the Registers

And which of these reasons would you say is most important?	
Pay	15 (16.5%)
Not feeling rewarded/valued (non-financial)	9 (9.9%)
Career change/new challenge	7 (7.7%)
Chronic stress	15 (16.5%)
Long/unsocial hours	6 (6.6%)
Lack of flexibility in hours	6 (6.6%)
Poor work-life balance	7 (7.7%)
Dissatisfaction with career opportunities	5 (5.5%)
Burden of bureaucracy/legislation	2 (2.2%)
Health issues (physical)	4 (4.4%)
Health issues (mental)	4 (4.4%)
Discrimination	2 (2.2%)
Prefer not to say	1 (1.1%)
Other (please specify)	8 (8.8%)

# Appendix M

## Vet nurses leaving the Register

	Retiring	Parental leave	Career break	Moving overseas	Leaving the veterinary nursing profession to work in another field	Other (please specify)	Total
<b>Do you have plans to return to the RCVS Register in the future?</b>							
Yes	9 (29.0%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (69.2%)	3 (17.6%)	1 (20.0%)	6 (5.8%)	28 (14.7%)
No	9 (29.0%)	17 (77.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (11.8%)	0 (0.0%)	47 (45.6%)	75 (39.3%)
I'm not sure	13 (41.9%)	5 (22.7%)	4 (30.8%)	12 (70.6%)	4 (80.0%)	50 (48.5%)	88 (46.1%)
Base (n=)	32 (16.7%)	22 (11.5%)	13 (6.8%)	17 (8.9%)	5 (2.6%)	103 (53.6%)	192 (100.0%)