

# **European veterinary professionals working in the UK: the impact of Brexit – third and final survey 2021**

**A report for the Royal College of Veterinary  
Surgeons**

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# Institute for Employment Studies

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## Executive summary

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### The survey

The third and final survey of non-UK European<sup>1</sup> veterinary surgeons (VSs) and veterinary nurses (VNs) registered to practise in the UK took place during October and November 2021. A considerable time interval had elapsed between the baseline (2017) and second (2018) surveys and this final survey, due to the protracted period of Brexit negotiations before the UK left the European Union (EU) on 31 January 2020, and the rules governing the new relationship between the EU and the UK (marking the end of the transition period, during which nothing changed) took effect on 1 January 2021.

The overall response rate, including partial responses, was 34.7 per cent, considerably lower than the response rate for the second survey (50.4%) and the baseline survey (55.3%), but still reasonably high for a survey of this type. The large majority of respondents were VSs; 67 VNs participated compared to 2,597 VSs.

Twenty follow-up telephone interviews with VSs were conducted between December 2021 and February 2022. Twelve of these VSs had been interviewed previously, after the baseline and second surveys, while eight, who had all arrived in the UK after the Brexit referendum on 23 June 2016, were interviewed for the first time.

### Personal profile of European VSs

- The gender breakdown was similar to the previous two surveys: 60 per cent female and 39 per cent male, with one per cent either '*other*' or '*prefer not to say*'.
- Ages ranged from 22 to 79, with an average (mean) age of 39, which is somewhat older than the average age of 36 for both for the baseline and second surveys. The modal (most frequently given) age group was younger than the mean, at 28 to 32.
- Almost all (95%, compared to 96% for the second survey and 97% for the baseline survey) respondents identified as White, with three per cent preferring not to say.
- Two-thirds (68%) had a spouse, civil partner, or long-term partner not formalised by marriage or civil partnership; of these, 87 per cent had a partner living in the UK, with the large majority of partners (93%) also working in the UK.
- One-third (35%) had dependent children; of these, 87 per cent said their children lived in the UK.

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

- Respondents' year of qualification ranged from 1970 to 2021, with an average (mean) of 2007.
- The most frequently-given country of qualification was Spain (21%), followed by Italy (14%), Romania (12%) and Poland (11%); these four countries were also the most frequent responses for both the baseline and second surveys. Other countries accounting for two or more per cent of respondents were Portugal (8%), Ireland (5%), Germany (5%), Greece (4%), Belgium (3%), Bulgaria (2%), France (2%), Hungary (2%) and the Netherlands (2%).
- The majority (61%) arrived in the UK before the Brexit vote on the 23 June 2016; over half of these (59%) said they have been in the UK for 10 years or more. Of the 39 per cent who arrived after the Brexit vote, 77 per cent came before the 31 January 2020, 14 per cent during the transition period between the 1 February 2020 and the 31 December 2020, and eight per cent after the 1 January 2021 – indicating that Brexit has not completely dissuaded European VSs from coming to the UK. Table 1 indicates that the most frequently-given reasons for coming to the UK have not changed significantly since the baseline and second surveys.

**Table 1: Most frequently-given reasons for coming to the UK – 2021, 2018 and 2017**

	2021 %	2018 %	2017 %
To gain experience	57	56	56
Better career opportunities	55	56	57
Better pay and conditions	54	47	44
To work abroad	53	51	54
Veterinary work has a higher status in the UK	38	39	-
Better attitude to animals in the UK	27	30	-
To study/obtain a further qualification	24	26	20
Lack of work in home country	22	23	24
To learn English	22	22	24

*RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017*

## Job profile of European VSs

- The majority (81%) of respondents were working full time, with 14 per cent working part time and less than half a per cent working on a voluntary basis; the remaining five per cent were not working at the time of the survey, with the most frequently-given reason being that they were on a career break.
- Similar to the previous surveys, of those who were working, the majority (86%) worked in England (88% in 2018). Six per cent worked in Scotland (5% in 2018), five per cent in Wales (5% in 2018), and three per cent in Northern Ireland (2% in 2018).



- Of those who worked in England, almost half (46.3%, somewhat lower than 2018's 50.2%) worked in the South East, South West or London regions.
- Of those who were working, almost all (98%) worked within the veterinary profession, ie in a role that requires them to use their veterinary qualification. Of these, 81 per cent worked within clinical veterinary practice, and 19 per cent in roles outside clinical veterinary practice.
- For those working within clinical veterinary practice, the most frequently-selected main practice area was small animal practice (77%). Table 2 shows the breakdown of practice areas selected by four or more per cent of respondents. It is noticeable that, since 2017/2018, small animal practice has grown considerably in percentage terms, with a corresponding decrease for referral/consultancy and mixed practices.
  - Within clinical veterinary practice, 20.4 per cent of respondents identified as Advanced Practitioners and 11.8 per cent as Specialists.

**Table 2: Main practice area of European VSs working in clinical veterinary practice**

	2021 %	2018 %	2017 %
Small animal practice	77	74	65
Referral/consultancy practice	9	9	15
Mixed practice	3	6	5
Equine practice	5	5	5
Farm/production animal practice	4	4	4

*RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017*

- The most frequently-selected areas of work for those working outside clinical veterinary practice were the Food Standards Agency (FSA, 26%), the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA, 19%), commerce/industry in the private sector (14%) and other government department/agency, including the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and local government (12%).
  - Almost half (49%) of those working outside clinical veterinary practice worked mainly, or entirely, in the meat industry/official controls sector; this is the same as the second survey. The most reported countries of qualification for those working in this sector were Spain (32%) and Italy (15%).
- The large majority (86%) of respondents were in their preferred role at the time of the survey.
- One quarter (26%) had changed their area of work since first coming to the UK; of these, 39 per cent said their first role had been in the meat hygiene/official controls sector.

## Impact of Brexit on individual VSs

Views about the impact of Brexit on respondents' working and personal lives were tested by asking for their level of agreement or disagreement to 35 attitudinal statements, many of which were also used in 2017 and 2018. Figure 1 gives the average (mean) scores for selected statements.

**Figure 1: Mean scores for selected attitude statements – 2021 survey compared to the baseline (2017) and second (2018) surveys**



Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017

- Overall, respondents were clearly pleased they had come to the UK, believing it has been a positive move that has increased their employment prospects abroad; they are

also satisfied with their career progression and their pay/income progression since coming to the UK, and on the whole, they wanted to stay in the UK.

- However, they were somewhat negative overall about support from their employer and their colleagues, and did not feel that the people they met in the course of their work were friendlier now. It is also noticeable that the mean score for most positively-worded statements has decreased since the baseline survey in 2017; and it is apparent, too, that there was less agreement than in previous surveys to wanting to stay in the UK, and that on average, respondents felt that things had changed for them.
- There was a very high level of agreement that the UK's withdrawal from the EU has saddened respondents. However, it is encouraging to see that, on average, respondents were not in agreement about the majority of negatively-worded statements; there was a particularly low score for the statement *'I regret coming to the UK'*, with 79.2 per cent disagreeing. Less encouragingly, there was more agreement to considering a move back home than in 2018 or 2017. The two statements showing the biggest increase in agreement – *'I am more stressed at work'* and *'A lot has changed for me'* – may in part have been due to the increased workload pressure and changes in working practices due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Although the majority of respondents have not observed or experienced prejudice at work in the run up to, or since, the UK's withdrawal from the EU, 34 per cent have observed prejudice, and 27 per cent have personally experienced it. Free text responses indicated that the most frequently-experienced prejudice (45%) was remarks from clients about the names or accents of European VSs, sometimes accompanied by a request to see a 'British vet' and/or questioning the validity of non-British qualifications. Around 15 per cent of comments related to stronger prejudice, amounting to overt racism, abuse and bigotry. Other forms of prejudice were that British VSs were preferred in recruitment and for career advancement (15%) and that colleagues displayed prejudice (10%); a further 10 per cent of comments related to things becoming worse since the Brexit vote. Encouragingly, eight per cent of comments had added caveats that the majority of clients and colleagues were friendly and positive; it was only a minority who displayed prejudice.
- Although there is far more clarity now about VSs being able to stay in the UK to live and work, and respondents' uncertainty has decreased considerably since 2018 and 2017, 47 per cent still felt the situation was still not clear for them, and 43 per cent did not yet feel able to commit to staying in the UK.
- It is notable that respondents working within clinical practice were more positive than those working outside clinical practice, about almost every aspect.
- Unsurprisingly, intention to stay in the UK also made a big difference, with those planning to stay in the UK indefinitely or at least five years being much more positive about every aspect than those planning to leave the UK within one year.

## Applying for settled status

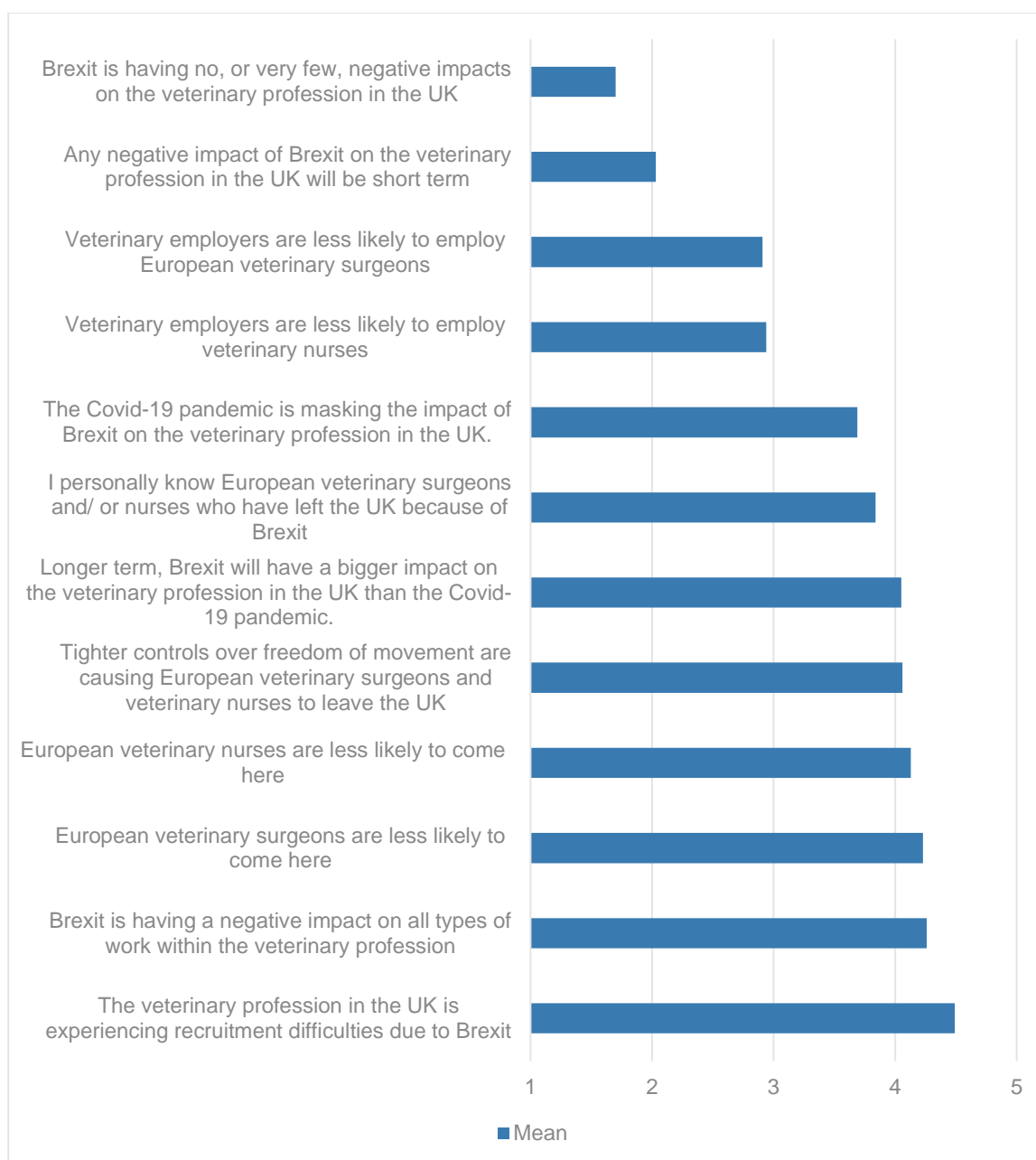
- Over two-thirds of respondents (70%) had successfully applied for settled status, with three per cent awaiting the outcome of their application and a further 13 per cent not needing to apply due to having Irish citizenship, British citizenship, or indefinite leave to enter and/or remain in the UK.
- The remaining respondents were asked if they had applied for pre-settled status: 72 per cent had either done so, successfully, or were awaiting the outcome of their application.
- The remaining respondents mostly either did not meet the criteria or had decided not to apply. When asked for more details, free text responses indicated that some had already gone home or had decided to do so, therefore did not see the need to apply, while others said they would like to stay and would apply for pre-settled status when they were able to, or were working until their visas ran out before making a decision.
- The large majority of those who had obtained settled or pre-settled status said the process was easy and straightforward, with only a small minority experiencing problems or finding it stressful. However, a small number of respondents, notably some of those who had been in the UK for a long time, added that they felt resentful or insulted at having to go through the process.

## Impact of Brexit on intentions to stay or leave the UK

- When asked whether Brexit had influenced their intentions, three per cent said that it had encouraged them to stay longer, but a much larger 54 per cent said that it had made them think of leaving sooner; the remaining 43 per cent said that Brexit has had no influence on their intention to stay or leave the UK. To a similar question about the Covid-19 pandemic, a lower 33 per cent said it had made them think of leaving sooner, suggesting that Brexit has had a notably stronger influence than the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Despite the above finding, when asked how long, from now, they were likely to stay in the UK, 52 per cent said they planned to stay for at least five years or indefinitely, and only five per cent said their planned length of stay was less than one year.

## Impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession

Figure 2 shows VSs' stark responses to statements about the impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession; the majority of these statements were new to the 2021 survey, although a small number were also asked in 2018. It is clear that, overall, they believed the impact was negative, even very negative for some aspects, such as the impact on recruitment, and that the Covid-19 pandemic was masking the impact.

**Figure 2: Mean scores for selected statements about the impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession**

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals 2021

When asked to rate the impact of Brexit on 12 areas of the veterinary profession, both within and outside clinical veterinary practice, responses indicated that Vets believed Brexit was having a very negative or negative impact on all 12 areas.

- The most negative impact was considered to be in the following areas: meat industry/animal products - official controls (with over 60% of respondents selecting 'very negative impact'), Official Veterinary work, small animal practices, farm/production animal practices, and mixed practices.

- The least impacted areas were considered to be the pet insurance industry and veterinary Research Councils, but even in these two areas the impact was thought to be somewhat negative.

## Support from the RCVS

- When asked whether the RCVS was working effectively to support European VSs and VNs working in the UK, 36 per cent said '*yes, definitely*' (30% in 2018) and 25 per cent '*no*' (8% in 2018); the remaining 38 per cent '*yes, but more could be done*' (63% in 2018). This suggests respondents have become more definite in their opinions.
- Free text suggestions about what the RCVS should do fall into several broad headings, with the following being put forward by at least 10 per cent of those providing a suggestion:
  - Make it easier for EU veterinary professionals to work in the UK by supporting visa applications and accepting EU qualifications and universities (27%)
  - Improve support for EU VSs and VNs, including financial support, and have more concern for their welfare (21%)
  - Improve working conditions, especially by enabling the recruitment of more staff to reduce the strain experienced from staff shortages (14%)
  - Remove or lower the required score on the English language test (12%)
  - Lobby or put pressure on the government on behalf of EU veterinary professionals in the UK (10%).

## Final thoughts

- When asked if they would advise other European VSs and VNs to come to the UK, 30 per cent said '*no*' and 29 per cent were '*unsure*'. However, 26 per cent said '*yes, to work longer term and perhaps even settle here*' and 15 per cent said '*yes, but only for a limited period of time*'. This suggests that a substantial minority of respondents still believed that a period of time working in the UK would be of benefit to EU VSs and VNs.
- At the end of the survey, VSs were invited to make further comments about the survey or the impact of Brexit. Issues raised by 20 or more respondents were:
  - Brexit was a bad idea, and it was a mistake/disaster for the UK to leave the EU (65 comments).
  - Brexit has contributed towards the recruitment crisis, staff shortages and people leaving the profession (57 comments).
  - Brexit will make a lasting impact which will take the UK years to sort out (51 comments).
  - It is difficult / too complicated for people to come to the UK post-Brexit (38 comments).

- The survey is biased and/or asks the wrong questions; in particular, there should have been more about the recruitment crisis (30 comments).
- There is not enough support for EU VSs, including from the RCVS (28 comments).
- EU VSs feel unwelcome in the UK, with a change in attitude from the British public (26 comments).
- It is good to be asked these questions and it shows the RCVS cares (22 comments).

## Follow-up interviews with VSs

The final round of interviews with 20 EU VSs – 12 of whom had been interviewed after previous surveys, eight of whom were newer arrivals in the UK – provided additional qualitative material to supplement the survey findings.

As for previous rounds of interviews, most interviewees were happy with their current career progression due to promotions, new jobs and new skills learnt. A small group did not agree and thought there were better paid opportunities outside the UK. Newer arrivals felt that, despite a few financial concerns, they were happy to be working in the UK.

Generally, there were some concerns about planning for the future, despite negotiations having come to an end. Some felt that there was a lack of clarity about the future, and this made them feel hesitant to make any major decisions. Others, at least for the short term, were keen to stay living and working in the UK, for the work opportunities and because they enjoyed the lifestyle in the UK. Others were planning to live flexibly across Europe and the UK, and a small number were planning to leave the UK altogether.

Longer term plans were varied, with some interviewees planning to stay until retirement and others hoping to leave for their home country to be with family. Around a quarter felt uncertain about their plans and said that they are still waiting to see how Brexit unfolds and that it really depends on where their career takes them.

As observed in the previous two rounds, the majority of interviewees had not experienced any direct repercussions of the Brexit vote. Some had observed or heard negative comments from staff or online, whilst others had mainly administrative issues, including visa restrictions and waiting times for paperwork. A small number said they now felt unwelcome in the UK.

Most interviewees did not have any regrets about coming to the UK, reporting high job satisfaction, learning opportunities and extensive work experience. A small number had mixed feelings and one expressed regret about staying in the UK post-Brexit.

Nevertheless, most said that they would encourage others to come to work in the veterinary profession in the UK, mainly for the professional opportunities and the high standard of veterinary practice in the UK. Around a quarter said that they would not encourage this, however, as the logistics of coming to the UK are not worth it anymore.

Interviewees felt that Brexit has had a great impact on the profession, especially on staff numbers. The additional costs and administration involved in employing an EU vet has



put many employers off from hiring and this then causes burnout and stress for those who remain. The English tests were thought to be a deterrent for many EU VNs as they are considered too hard and expensive. These issues, they felt, have led many to leave the profession, which has only worsened the strain on the remaining staff. Interviewees were also keen to add that the Covid-19 pandemic may have also exacerbated these issues.

Similarly to the previous rounds, opinions about the RCVS were mixed, with some feeling well supported and others feeling that the RCVS should be doing more to protect and look after EU VNs in the UK, such as lobbying the government to address the shortage of VNs and providing more support for those who were already in the UK during the vote and transition period. Some, however, felt that they did not see that they had a relationship with the RCVS other than having to be registered to practise in the UK. Several interviewees, especially recent arrivals, felt that the RCVS needed to work towards reducing the staff shortage by making the process of coming to work in the UK easier, such as by providing more information, making the English language tests less strict, and lobbying the government to ensure better treatment and protection for all VNs working in the UK.

## Experiences and views of European VNs

Sixty-seven VNs, compared to a much smaller group of 19 in 2017 and 20 in 2018, participated in this survey. Any comparisons in this section should be treated with caution due to the very small sample sizes in 2017 and 2018.

### Personal details

- **Gender:** 82 per cent female and 18 per cent male, broadly similar to the previous surveys.
- **Age:** between 24 and 53, a wider range than the previous surveys, with a mean average of 33.4 years (older than in 2017 and 2018, when the mean ages were 28 and 30, respectively).
- **Ethnicity:** 94 per cent identified as white, unlike the previous surveys when no respondent identified as anything other than white.
- **Partner and children:** 52 per cent had a spouse, civil partner, or long-term partner; of these, 86 per cent had a partner living in the UK, all of whom also worked in the UK. A relatively low 12 per cent had dependent children.
- **Year and country of qualification:** respondents qualified between 2000 and 2021, 77 per cent from 2011 onwards. Countries of qualification given by two or more VNs were Portugal (28 respondents), Ireland (13), the Netherlands (4), Poland (4), Italy (4), Germany (3), Belgium (2), Denmark (2) and Spain (2). The increase in representation from Portugal is noteworthy.
- **Arrival in the UK:** 54 per cent of VNs arrived before the Brexit vote; of these, 71 per cent have been in the UK between five and 10 years. Of the 46 per cent who arrived

after the Brexit vote, 90 per cent came before the 31 January 2020, three per cent during the transition period, and seven per cent after the 1 January 2021.

- The most frequently-given reasons for coming to the UK (multiple response) were ‘to gain experience’ (60%), ‘better pay and conditions’ (52%), ‘better career opportunities’ (49%), ‘to work abroad’ (48%) and ‘veterinary work has a higher status in the UK’ (42%). These are broadly similar to the previous surveys.

## Job details

- Most respondents were working full time (82%), with 10 per cent working part time, and the remaining eight per cent (the majority of whom were studying) not currently working. This breakdown is broadly similar to the previous surveys.
  - All those who were working said they worked within the veterinary profession, and of these, 95 per cent (slightly higher than in the previous surveys) worked within clinical veterinary practice with only five per cent working outside.
  - The large majority (84%) worked in England, and 94 per cent worked in an urban or mixed urban/rural environment.
- Within clinical veterinary practice:
  - Fifty-nine per cent were working as a VN, 26 per cent as a head, deputy head or senior VN, five per cent a locum, with the rest in other roles. The majority (72%) worked in a small animal practice, with 18 per cent in a referral/consultancy practice, six per cent in a mixed practice, and four per cent worked in an equine practice.
  - Ten per cent were specially qualified practitioners (SQPs).
  - As in the baseline and second surveys, no respondent worked mainly or entirely within the meat industry/official controls sector.

## Personal impact of Brexit

Table 3 indicates that the views of European VNs were notably less positive in general compared to the baseline and second surveys, with a lower percentage agreeing to most of the positively-worded statements and a higher percentage agreeing to most of the negatively-worded statements. Three new statements suggesting indecision about the future also attracted a substantial level of agreement. Encouragingly, however, there was agreement overall to two further new statements, ‘*Despite Brexit, coming the UK has been a positive move for me*’ and ‘*I am pleased I came to the UK*’, and only 15 per cent were actively looking for work outside the UK compared to 50 per cent in 2018.

**Table 3: Personal impact of Brexit – percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing to selected statements**

Statement	N	2021 %	2018 %	2017 %
I am satisfied with my career progression since coming to the UK	55	62	75	100
I would like to stay in the UK	55	44	67	78
Nothing much has changed for me	55	33	63	71
Working in the UK has increased my employment prospects abroad	55	55	50	65
I am satisfied with my pay/income progression since coming to the UK	55	40	50	57
I am optimistic about my future	56	32	38	50
My employer is more supportive now	54	11	13	36
My colleagues are more supportive now	54	13	6	7
Despite Brexit, coming to the UK has been a positive move for me.	55	71	-	-
I am pleased I came to the UK	54	67	-	-
The UK's withdrawal from the EU has saddened me	56	84	75	92
I am actively looking for work outside the UK	53	15	50	14
I feel less welcome in the UK	53	51	44	58
I am more stressed at work	53	45	13	31
A lot has changed for me	51	39	13	21
My job security has reduced	52	27	6	7
My opportunities for promotion/advancement are more limited	53	23	6	7
People I meet in the course of my work are less friendly towards me now	52	10	6	0
I have observed prejudice at work in the run up to, or since, the UK's withdrawal from the EU	53	38	-	-
I have personally experienced prejudice at work in the run up to, or since, the UK's withdrawal from the EU	53	28	-	-
The situation is still not clear for me.	54	52	-	-
I am undecided whether to stay in the UK or leave.	53	45	-	-
I do not feel able to make a commitment to staying in the UK.	52	48	-	-

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017

Note: Comparisons between the 2021 results and those of the 2017 and 2018 surveys should be treated with caution due to the very small sample sizes from the first two surveys.

- VNs experiencing or observing prejudice described similar incidents to VSs, namely rudeness from clients or occasionally colleagues, and not being considered for career opportunities.

- **Future plans:** from the time of the survey, 23 per cent planned to stay in the UK indefinitely, 28 per cent intended to stay for more than five years, 22 per cent between one and five years, and just three per cent for less than a year; the remaining 25 per cent were undecided. The impact of Brexit has made 56 per cent consider leaving the UK sooner, but 39 per cent said that it has not had an impact on them staying in the UK. A smaller 33 per cent said that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has made them think of leaving the UK sooner, while the majority (63%) saying it had not impacted on their plans.
  - Sixty-three per cent had successfully applied for settled status or were awaiting a decision, 25 per cent did not need to apply due to having Irish or British citizenship, and 10 per cent had applied successfully for pre-settled status. The remaining few said either they did not meet the criteria or that they had decided not to apply.
  - Mostly, applying for settled or pre-settled status appears to have been easy and straightforward, although a small number found it difficult or disliked having to apply.
- When asked whether they would advise a European VS or VN to come to the UK to work now that the UK has left the EU, 28 per cent said *'yes, to work longer term and perhaps even settle here'*, and 17 per cent said *'yes, but only for a limited period of time'*. However, 23 per cent said *'no'* and 32 per cent said that they were *'unsure'*.

### Support from the RCVS

The majority of VN respondents felt supported by the RCVS, in that 46 per cent said *'definitely'*, 33 per cent *'yes, but more could be done'* and only 21 per cent *'no'*. However, these results are not as positive as the second survey, when 71 per cent felt *'definitely'* supported and no respondent said *'no'*. Free text responses indicated that VNs wanted more support with fees and qualification routes, more pressure on the government and more representation in the media.

### Impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession

VNs were very clear that they considered Brexit to be having a major negative impact on the veterinary profession in the UK; Table 4 shows that there was a high level of agreement with statements suggesting that Brexit was causing problems, and a low level of agreement with any statement that suggested there were few problems, or that any problems were short term or due to other causes.

**Table 4: Impact on the veterinary profession of Brexit: percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing**

Statement	N	%
The veterinary profession in the UK is experiencing recruitment difficulties due to Brexit	53	91
Brexit is having a negative impact on all types of work within the veterinary profession	53	91
The Covid-19 pandemic is masking the impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession in the UK	50	86
European veterinary surgeons are less likely to come here	52	83
European veterinary nurses are less likely to come here	52	81
Longer term, Brexit will have a bigger impact on the veterinary profession in the UK than the Covid-19 pandemic	50	78
Tighter controls over freedom of movement are causing European veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to leave the UK	52	75
I personally know European veterinary surgeons and/or nurses who have left the UK because of Brexit	53	60
European veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses are still coming to the UK because of the opportunities offered to them	54	13
Brexit is having no, or very few, negative impacts on the veterinary profession in the UK	54	9
Brexit will not have a lasting impact on the veterinary profession in the UK, after the initial few years	51	6
European veterinary surgeons and nurses have been leaving the UK because of the Covid-19 pandemic, not Brexit	50	6
Any negative impact on the veterinary profession in the UK will be short term	52	2

*Source: RCVS survey of non-UK European veterinary professionals 2021*

When asked whether, and how, different areas within the veterinary profession were being impacted by Brexit, VNs gave fairly similar responses to VVs. However, there were two areas where they assessed the impact as not significant: the pet insurance industry and veterinary research councils. The areas assessed by 75 per cent or more respondents as having a very negative or negative impact were: small animal practices (96%), mixed practices (95%), farm/production animal practices (90%), referral/specialist/consultancy practices (88%), equine practices (80%), the animal pharmaceutical industry (80%), the meat industry/animal products – Official Controls (79%), and animal charities (76%). The percentages responding either ‘*very negative*’ or ‘*negative*’ have increased substantially since 2018.

## Conclusions

The final survey of European VSs and VNs who are registered to work in the UK, together with the follow-up interviews, yielded a mixed picture. Respondents were very clear in their opinions that Brexit had impacted on their personal lives, and on the veterinary profession, in a negative way; yet they were also, on the whole, pleased that they came to the UK, and believed it still offers opportunities to veterinary professionals to develop their careers and gain experience.

Sixty-one per cent of VS respondents had arrived in the UK before the Brexit referendum in 2016, and many of these had been in the UK for 10 years or more and thought of the UK as their home. However, European VSs have continued to come to the UK after the referendum and even after the UK's exit terms were at last agreed; eight per cent of respondents had arrived in the UK after the transition period, from 1 January 2021. The reasons for coming to the UK have not changed over the years of running the three Brexit surveys: to gain experience and career opportunities in a country where veterinary professionals have status and the attitude towards animals is good.

On the whole respondents were pleased they had come to the UK, feeling it had increased their employment prospects; they were satisfied with their career progression and pay/income progression, and wanted to stay in the UK (a large 79% disagreed with the statement 'I regret coming to the UK'). Around half (52%) planned to stay in the UK for at least five years, with a low five per cent planning to leave within one year. A substantial minority (41%) said they would still advise others to come to the UK because of the opportunities offered. However, respondents were very sad about the UK's withdrawal from the EU and felt that things had changed for them, and they were less welcome.

Although the majority of respondents had not experienced or observed prejudice since the Brexit vote and during the withdrawal period, a substantial minority had (34% observed and 27% experienced). Their comments described mainly casual prejudice and some more serious abuse from clients, and occasionally from colleagues, and perceived unfairness around job and promotion opportunities.

Applying for settled or pre-settled status had been, for most, a straightforward and easy process, with quick decisions; only a small minority had experienced any difficulties, stress or delays. However, some respondents resented having to apply and felt insulted that they were now being treated as outsiders.

Views about the impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession were bleak, with respondents believing that it was impacting negatively or very negatively on every area, especially the meat industry/animal production official controls, official veterinary work and small animal practices. Brexit was thought to be having a notably bigger impact than the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although many respondents felt well supported by the RCVS, some did not, and others thought more could be done. Suggestions included lowering the bar on English language tests; better facilitation of EU veterinary professionals who wanted to come to the UK; more lobbying of the government; and more pressure on employers.



# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Background

In early 2017 the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) asked the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to conduct a series of three surveys to gather the views and intentions of veterinary surgeons (VSs) and veterinary nurses (VNs) registered to practise in the UK, whose nationality is non-UK European<sup>2</sup>. The UK is a net importer of VSs from Europe. Currently, around 7,701 VSs who qualified from a non-UK European university are registered to work in the UK; by contrast, the number of UK graduates working abroad in European countries is relatively small. European VNs registered to work in the UK who qualified in a non-UK European country are also included in the surveys; at 286, their number is low compared to VSs, but higher than the years in which the first two surveys were conducted in 2017 and 2018, when the number was lower than 100. The reason for the difference in sample sizes between the 2021 surveys and the two previous surveys appears to be that for the 2017 and 2018 surveys, VNs were selected for inclusion if they were both EU nationals and EU qualified.

In commissioning the three surveys, the RCVS wished to find out more about the views and intentions of European VSs and VNs currently practising in the UK, firstly in the immediate aftermath of the 'Brexit' decision that the UK should leave the European Union (EU), and secondly at intervals over the following years during the process of the UK's exit from the EU. This information was required for several reasons:

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

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<sup>2</sup> Note that, to avoid repetition of the somewhat cumbersome phrase 'non-UK European' throughout the report, the adjective 'European' has been used to describe VSs and VNs whose nationality is non-UK European.



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

This report presents the results of the third and final RCVS 'Brexit' survey and compares these to the results of the first (baseline) survey that took place in March 2017, and the second survey that was conducted during June and July 2018.

## 1.2 The third survey

### 1.2.1 Process

Some of the questions for the third survey were deliberately similar to those for the baseline and second surveys, to allow for comparisons. A number of additional questions asked about the relative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit, and about respondents' experience of applying for settled or pre-settled status. As with the first two surveys, the third survey was set up online using the Snap survey tool, and was tested both by IES researchers and the RCVS team before being launched on 19 October 2021, three years and four months after the second survey's launch date of 18 June 2018, and four years and seven months after the baseline survey's launch date of 2 March 2017.

Every European VS and VN registered with the RCVS to practise in the UK or on the non-practising list was sent an email invitation to take part in the survey, which was accessed via a link in the email; in total, 8,173 email invitations were sent. Three reminders were sent at intervals to those who had not yet completed and submitted their questionnaires. The survey was closed on 17 November 2021.

### 1.2.2 Response

Of the 8,173 email invitations, only 15 were returned because of a failed delivery; this reduced the sample size slightly to 8,158. A total of 2,829 people responded, of which 2,729 said they were registered with the RCVS to practise in the UK, while 100 said they were not. These 100 were then asked if they were registered with the RCVS on the non-practising list; 89 said yes, while 11 said no; these 11 were then exited from the survey. The 89 on the non-practising list were asked if they intended to return to practising within the next five years; 46 said yes and proceeded to the rest of the survey questions, while the 41 who said no were exited from the survey. A total of 416 responses were partial (ie the respondent abandoned the survey part way through, or completed it but did not click on the 'submit' button at the end). However, an analysis of the response pattern suggests that the majority (around 73%) of these 416 respondents answered at least some questions, providing some usable data. The overall response rate was therefore 34.7 per cent, reducing to 29.6 per cent if only the completed and submitted returns are included. This is considerably lower than the response rate for the second survey (50.4% and 44.2%, respectively) and the response rate for the baseline survey (55.3% and 51.6%, respectively). However, it is still reasonably high for a survey of this type. As would be

expected from the comparative size of the European VS and VN populations in the UK, the large majority of respondents were VSs; 67 VNs responded compared to 2,597 VSs, a relatively small number but notably higher than the second and baseline surveys, when only 20 and 19 VNs, respectively, responded.

### 1.2.3 Analysis

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

## 1.3 Follow-up interviews

This report also contains details of the analysis of 20 follow-up telephone interviews conducted with a sample of VSs. Twelve of these interviewees had been interviewed before, 11 after both the baseline and second surveys, and one after the second survey, while eight interviewees were interviewed for the first time. The eight new interviewees were selected from survey respondents who had arrived in the UK after the Brexit referendum on 23 June 2016, and who indicated via their survey responses that they would be happy to be contacted to take part in an interview. The 20 telephone interviews took place during December 2021 and January and February 2022.

## 1.4 This report

This report consists of the following chapters:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Personal profile of European veterinary surgeons
- Chapter 3: Job profile of European veterinary surgeons
- Chapter 4: Personal views about the impact of Brexit
- Chapter 5: Views about the impact of Brexit on the UK veterinary profession
- Chapter 6: Follow-up interviews with veterinary surgeons
- Chapter 7: The views and intentions of European veterinary nurses
- Chapter 8: Conclusions

## 2 Personal profile of European veterinary surgeons

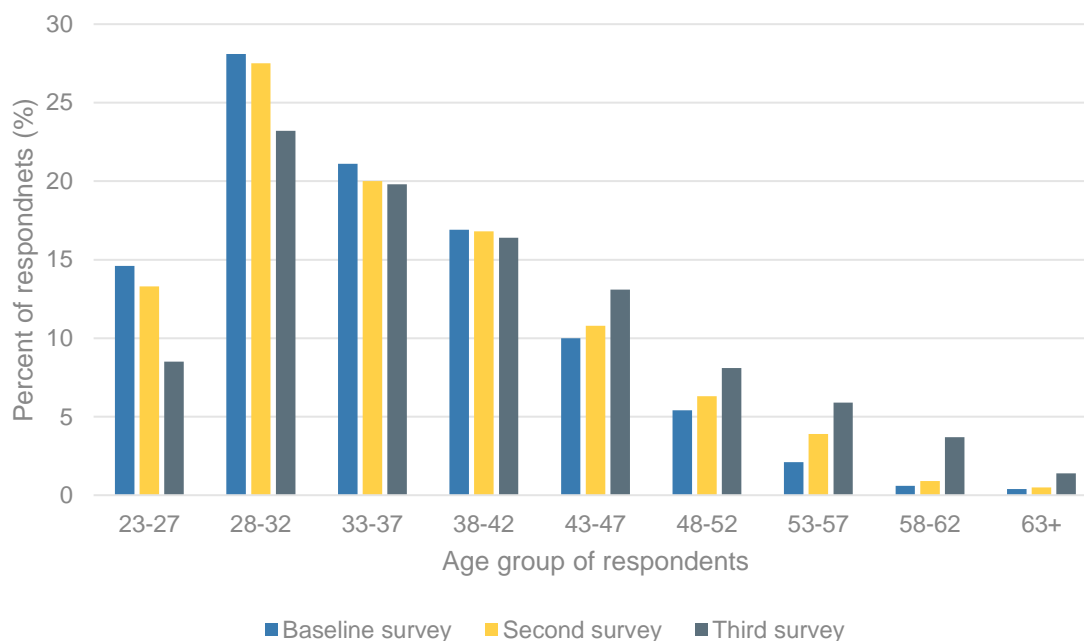
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### 2.1 Gender, age and ethnicity

- The gender split of respondents was 60 per cent female and 39 per cent male, with one percent either preferring not to say or selecting 'other'. This is similar to the gender split for the baseline and second surveys.
- Respondents' age ranged from 22 to 79, compared to a range of 23 to 68 for the baseline survey and 22 to 73 for the second survey.
  - The mean average age of respondents was 39 years, which is slightly greater than the mean age for the baseline and second survey of 36 years. The modal age was 32, higher than 30 for both the baseline and second survey.
  - The mean ages broken down by gender were female 38 years and male 41 years, compared to 35 and 37 for the baseline survey and 35 and 38 for the second survey.
  - The modal ages were female 29 years and male 32 years, compared to 30 and 30 for the baseline survey, and 29 and 31 for the second survey.
  - Figure 2.1 shows the ages of respondents grouped into five-year bands (23-27 up to 63+). This shows that a large proportion of VSs (68%) were aged under 43 years old, but this is lower than in the previous surveys (81% in the baseline survey; 78 per cent in the second survey). A higher percentage than the other surveys (19 per cent) were aged over 47 years old (9% in the baseline survey; 12% in the second survey).
  - When analysed by country within age group, the countries that had the highest numbers of VSs by age group are similarly to the previous two surveys, with the exception of Romania which had the highest proportion of an age group for the first time in this survey:
    - VSs from Spain were the largest group in the 23 to 27 (38%), 33 to 37 (21%), 43 to 47 (24%) and 48 to 52 (26%) age groups.
    - VSs from Romania were the largest group in the 28 to 32 (18%) age group.
    - VSs from Italy were the largest group in the 38 to 42 (18%) age group.
    - VSs from Germany were the largest group in the 53 to 57 (26%) age group.
    - VSs from Ireland were the largest group in the 58 to 62 (20%) and 63 plus (46%) age groups.

- Almost all (95%, 97% for the baseline survey and 96% for the second survey) respondents identified as white, with three per cent preferring not to say (2% for both the baseline and second survey). The remaining one per cent identified as Asian, Black, mixed or other.

**Figure 2.1: Respondents grouped by age, current survey compared to the baseline and second surveys**



Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017

## 2.2 Partners and dependent children

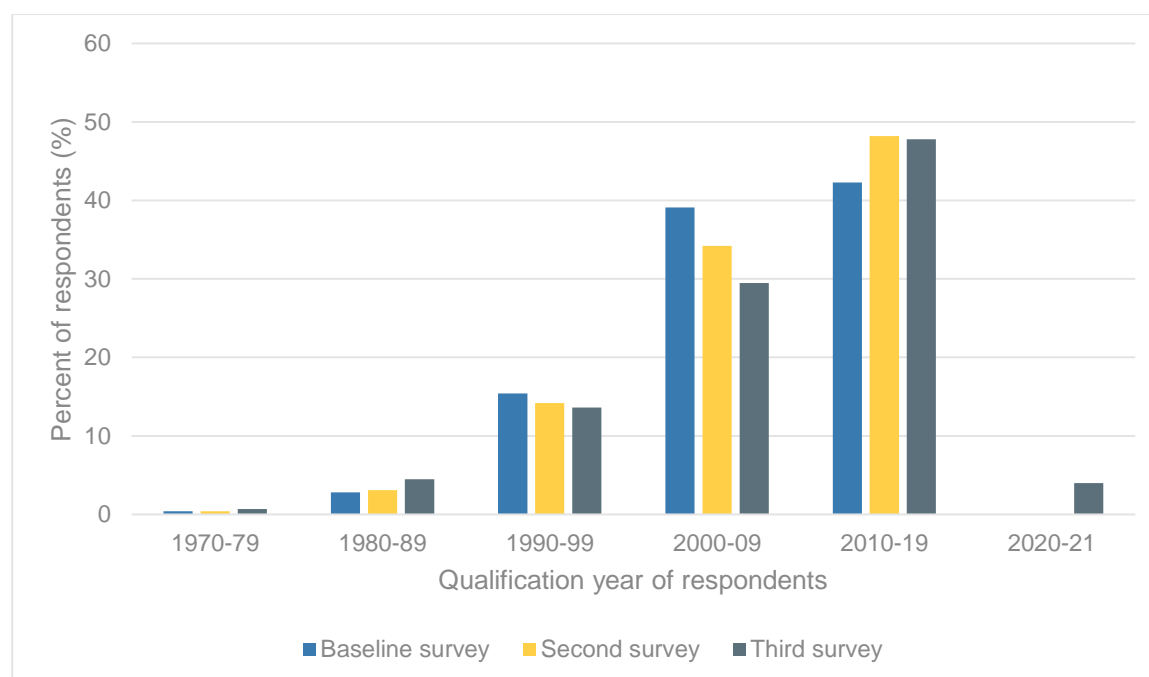
- Sixty-eight per cent of respondents had a spouse, civil partner, or long-term partner not formalised by marriage or civil partnership (67% in the baseline survey and 64% in the second survey).
  - Of those with a spouse, civil partner, or long-term partner, 87 per cent (90% for the baseline and 88% for the second survey) had a partner who lives in the UK.
  - Of those who did not have a partner currently living in the UK, 39 per cent had plans for their partner to come to the UK (59% in the baseline survey, 50% in the second survey).
- Of those with a partner living in the UK, 93 per cent said their partner was currently working in the UK; this was 94 per cent for the baseline and second surveys.
- Thirty-five per cent of respondents had dependent children (31% for both the baseline and second survey). Of those children, 87 per cent lived in the UK, which is fewer than both previous surveys (92% for the baseline and 88% for the second survey).

- Of the 13 per cent whose children were not living in the UK (N=117), 39 per cent had plans for this to happen, compared to a much bigger 61 per cent for the baseline survey and a similar 38 per cent for the second survey.

## 2.3 Year, country and university of qualification

- The year in which respondents qualified ranged from 1970 to 2021 (1971 to 2017 for the baseline survey and 1969 to 2018 for the second survey).
- The mean year of qualification was 2007 (same as the second survey) and the mode year is 2017 (2015 in the second survey).
- Figure 2.2 shows that the majority of respondents (81%) qualified from 2000 onwards (similar to the baseline and second surveys, 81% and 82%, respectively).

**Figure 2.2: Respondents grouped by year of qualification, current survey compared to the baseline and second surveys**



Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017

- When asked about **country** of qualification, respondents indicated that they come from 26 different European countries (the same number as the second survey). An 'other' option was also provided, which yielded 10 other countries outside Europe, including Brazil and South Africa.
  - The most frequent response was Spain (21%), followed by Italy (14%), Romania (12%) and Poland (11%). These four countries were also the most frequent responses for both the baseline and second surveys.
  - Portugal accounted for eight per cent; Ireland and Germany for five per cent each; Greece for four per cent; Belgium for three per cent; and Bulgaria, France, Hungary, and the Netherlands for two per cent each.

- Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Lithuania, and Slovakia each accounted for one per cent.
- Estonia, Latvia, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, and Switzerland each accounted for less than one per cent of respondents.
- An analysis of country by year of qualification shows there have been some changes in the country of qualification of VSs since the last survey, although these are minor:
  - Of those who qualified between 1970 and 1979, 56 per cent qualified in Ireland (64% in the second survey) and 11 per cent qualified in the Netherlands.
  - Of those who qualified between 1980 and 1989, 32 per cent qualified in Ireland (13% in the second survey), 13% qualified in Belgium, and 11% qualified in Spain (19% in the second survey).
  - Of those who qualified between 1990 and 1999, 28 per cent qualified in Spain (29% in the second survey), 21 per cent qualified in Germany (17% in the second survey) and 13 per cent qualified in Italy (14% in the second survey).
  - Of those who qualified between 2000 and 2009, 19 per cent qualified in Spain (same as in the second survey), 17 per cent qualified in Italy (15% in the second survey), and Poland and Romania each account for 12 per cent (for Poland, same as in the second survey).
  - Of those who qualified between 2010 and 2019, 21 per cent qualified in Spain (19% in the second survey), 16 per cent qualified in Romania (14% in the second survey), 14 per cent qualified in Italy (15% in the second survey), 13 per cent qualified in Poland and 10 per cent qualified in Portugal.
  - Of those who qualified in 2020 and 2021, 25 per cent qualified in Spain, 14 per cent qualified in Romania, 12 per cent qualified in Portugal and 11 per cent qualified in Poland.
- When asked about the **university** of qualification, 61 universities were identified (78 in the second survey). The most cited universities were University College Dublin in Dublin, Ireland (5.0%), the University of Agronomical Sciences and Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest, Romania (4.1%), and the Technical University of Lisbon in Lisbon, Portugal (3.5%).
  - 30 respondents qualified outside Europe, most commonly identifying the University of Pretoria in South Africa (N=12), Massey University in New Zealand (N=2) and the University of Queensland in Australia (N=2).
- When asked if their nationality was the same as the country in which they qualified, 92 per cent (compared to 91% for the baseline survey and 90% for the second survey) agreed.
  - Of those who qualified in a country different from their own, 89 per cent said that they came from another European country (88% for the baseline survey and 86% for the second survey).

## 2.4 Coming to the UK

Sixty-one percent of VSs arrived in the UK before the Brexit vote on the 23 June 2016; 59 per cent of whom had been in the UK for 10 years or more. Of the 39 per cent who arrived after the Brexit vote, 77 per cent arrived before the 31 January 2020, 14 per cent arrived during the transition period between the 1 February 2020 and the 31 December 2020, and eight per cent arrived after the 1 January 2021. This suggests that that the Brexit vote has not dissuaded European VSs from coming to the UK completely.

Table 2.3 shows the responses given when respondents were asked to select all the reasons that applied to them for coming to the UK. The most frequently selected reasons were: *'to gain experience'* (57%, compared to 55% for the baseline survey and 56% for the second survey), *'better career opportunities'* (55%, compared to 56% for both the baseline and second surveys), *'better pay and conditions'* (54%, compared to 44% for the baseline survey and 47% for the second survey) and *'to work abroad'* (53%, the same as the baseline survey and 51% for the second survey).

The statement *'good training opportunities for early career veterinary professionals in the UK'* was added to the current survey as this was indicated in previous follow-up interviews as an important reason for some European VSs.

**Table 2.3: Reasons for coming to the UK**

	N	%	% for the second survey	% for the baseline survey
To gain experience	1474	57	56	56
Better career opportunities	1424	55	56	57
Better pay and conditions	1382	54	47	44
To work abroad	1362	53	51	54
Veterinary work has a higher status in the UK	976	38	39	-
Better attitude to animals in the UK	708	27	30	-
To study/obtain a further qualification	618	24	26	20
Lack of work in home country	557	22	23	24
To learn English	565	22	22	24
I like British culture	440	17	21	24
I like the British way of life	403	16	20	23
I like British people	336	13	15	-
Family/friends in the UK	235	9	11	18
Marriage/partner	235	9	9	10
Stayed here after studying	39	2	3	3
Good training opportunities for early career veterinary professionals in the UK	924	36	-	-
Other	129	5	4	6

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017

Similarly to the second survey, most respondents who selected *'other'* gave reasons that would easily fit into the statements provided, for example to live abroad, to learn English and because they like British culture and/or the British way of life. The majority of answers discussed moving to the UK for a job or study opportunity. Respondents also discussed how political issues influenced their decision to leave their home country and to come to the UK, whilst others said that they were coming to the UK for a better life for themselves and their family. Fewer respondents stated that they were from Ireland or had dual citizenship compared to the second survey (N=9), but it was still a common response across the free text answers.

### 2.4.1 Gender differences

Female respondents were less likely to select *'I like British culture'* (16%), *'to learn English'* (20%), *'to study/obtain a further qualification'* (23%), *'veterinary work has a higher status in the UK'* (38%) compared to male respondents (20%, 26%, 25% and 39%, respectively).

Female respondents were more likely to select *'lack of work in home country'* (22%), *'better attitude to animals in the UK'* (28%), *'good training opportunities'* (37%), *'to work abroad'* (54%), *'better pay & conditions'* (55%) and *'better career opportunities'* (57%) than male respondents (21%, 27%, 35%, 52%, 52% and 53%, respectively).

There was no difference in gender for the statements: *'to gain experience'* (57%) and *'stayed here after studying'* (2%).

### 2.4.2 Age differences

A higher proportion of younger age groups (23 to 27 and 28 to 32) reported coming to the UK for the following reasons: *'to work abroad'* (65% and 62%), *'to gain experience'* (79% and 72%), *'better pay and conditions'* (74% and 67%), *'better career opportunities'* (72% for both age group), *'to study/obtain a further qualification'* (34% and 27%), *'veterinary work has a higher status in the UK'* (50% and 44%) and *'good training opportunities for early career veterinary professionals in the UK'* (67% and 54%).

On the other hand, a higher proportion of respondents over 63 years old reported coming to the UK because *'I like the British way of life'* (30%), *'I like British culture'* (30%) and *'I like British people'* (36%) more than any other age group. However, this is the smallest age group (N=33) which must be considered when interpreting the results.

### 2.4.3 Country of qualification differences

Reasons to come to the UK were analysed by country of qualification. Some countries (see below) had low response numbers so this must be considered when interpreting these results: Denmark (N=12), Estonia (N=8), Latvia (N=12), Norway (N=3), Slovenia (N=10), Sweden (N=3), Switzerland (N=1), United Kingdom (N=1).



- '*Better pay and conditions*' was commonly reported by those who qualified in Latvia (75%), Portugal (70%) and Poland (65%). Poland and Portugal were in the top three countries for the second survey too.
- '*Lack of work in home country*' was most commonly reported by those who qualified in Croatia (56%), Spain and Italy (29% each).
- To '*study/obtain a further qualification*' was commonly reported by those who qualified in Estonia (50%), Greece and France (45% each).
- A '*better attitude to animals in the UK*' was a popular reason for those who qualified in Romania (48%), Portugal (40%) and Croatia (33%).
- Only a small number of respondents said that they '*stayed here after studying*' but respondents who qualified in Latvia and Bulgaria (8% each) were most likely to select this reason.

#### 2.4.4 Date of arrival differences

Reasons why respondents came to the UK were analysed by whether they came to the UK before or after the Brexit vote.

- Those who came to the UK before the Brexit vote on the 23 June 2016 were more likely to select '*lack of work in home country*' (22%), '*I like the British way of life*' (17%) and for '*marriage/partner*' (11%) than those who came to the UK afterwards (21%, 14% and 6%, respectively).
- Respondents who came to the UK after the Brexit vote were more likely to select '*to work abroad*' (60%), '*to gain experience*' (66%), '*better pay and conditions*' (66%), '*better career opportunities*' (68%) and '*good training opportunities for early career veterinary professionals in the UK*' (50%) than those who came to the UK before the Brexit vote (48%, 52%, 46%, 47% and 27%, respectfully).
- '*To learn English*' was equally selected by 22 per cent of respondents that came to the UK before and after the Brexit vote.

## 3 Job profile of European veterinary surgeons

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### 3.1 Job details

The majority (81%) of respondents were working full time, 14 per cent were working part time, five per cent were not currently working, and less than half a per cent were working on a voluntary basis. In comparison, the baseline and second survey had almost identical percentages: 86 per cent full time, 12 per cent part time, two per cent not working, and less than half a per cent working on a voluntary basis.

- Of the 121 respondents not currently working, 50 per cent were on a career break, 11 per cent were retired, eight per cent were studying, and five per cent were unemployed; 27 per cent selected '*other*'.
- Ninety-eight per cent of those working (similarly to the baseline and second survey) were working within the veterinary profession. There has been a slight increase of those working in a role that does not require them to use their veterinary qualification (2%, N = 57, compared to 42 in the baseline and 26 in the second surveys).
- Of those who are working within the veterinary profession, 81 per cent (the same percentage as the second survey, 78% in the baseline survey) were working within clinical veterinary practice. Nineteen per cent worked within the profession, but outside clinical veterinary practice.

### 3.2 Location details

Similarly to the previous surveys, the majority (86%) of European VSs worked in England (88% in the second survey), six per cent in Scotland (5%), five per cent in Wales (same as the second survey) and three per cent in Northern Ireland (2%).

- Of those who worked in Northern Ireland, only 22 per cent (N=17) also worked in the Republic of Ireland (ie on both sides of the border).

Table 3.1 displays the regional breakdown of European VSs working in England. It shows that around half of respondents worked in the South East, South West and London regions.

**Table 3.1 Location of European VSs working in England (%), 2021 compared to the second survey**

Region	Number	2021 %	2018 %
South East	368	18.2	19.9
South West	327	16.1	15.4
London	244	12.0	14.9
West Midlands	238	11.8	10.2
East of England	203	10.0	9.7
East Midlands	183	9.0	9.2
North West	183	9.0	8.2
Yorkshire and the Humber	173	8.5	7.6
North East	61	3.0	3.3
Don't know	45	2.2	1.7

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021 and 2018

- When asked about the type of location in which they worked, the responses were:
  - Forty-eight per cent were in an urban or predominantly urban area (59% in the second survey).
  - Eighteen per cent were in a rural or predominantly rural area (15% in the second survey).
  - Thirty-four per cent were in a mixed urban/rural area (26% in the second survey).
- An analysis of type of location by UK country shows that:
  - VSs in Scotland and England were more likely to work in an urban or predominantly urban area (41% and 50%, respectively). This is the same as the second survey.
  - VSs in Northern Ireland were more likely to work in a mixed urban/rural area (39%).
  - VSs in Wales were more likely to work in rural or predominantly rural areas (38%).

### 3.3 VSs working in clinical practice

The largest proportion of VS respondents who worked in clinical practice reported that they worked as an employed assistant (38%, compared to a much higher 70% in the baseline survey and 58% in the second survey).

- Other roles include locum (10%, 8% and 13% in the baseline and second surveys); sole principal (9%, 6% for both the baseline and second survey); salaried partner (7%, 3% for both the baseline and second survey); director of a limited company (6% same as the baseline survey, 5% for the second survey); joint venture partner (2%, 3% for both the baseline and second survey); and consultant (1%, 4% and 7% for the baseline and second survey).

- Roles that were new for this survey include independent veterinary service provider (5%) and intern (4%).
- Equity partners, practice managers, business managers, head/deputy head/senior veterinary nurses and veterinary nurses accounted for one per cent or less each.
- Fifteen per cent selected 'other' (6% in the second survey). Of these, 45 respondents identified as residents (N=15 in the second survey), 23 said that they worked as a senior or head VS, 13 said they were an 'employee', 12 worked in academia or as a lecturer, and nine said they were a clinical director. By far the largest number of 'other' roles should perhaps have been identified as 'employed assistant': 48 said that they were a veterinary surgeon, without providing any further details or descriptions; 31 identified as a veterinary surgeon but gave examples such as 'night veterinary surgeon' or 'first opinion veterinary surgeon'; and a further 13 identified as an 'employed veterinary surgeon'.
- Of those who are locums or consultants (N=299), 51 per cent work for more than one practice. This is a higher percentage than the second survey (37%) but similarly to the baseline survey (53%). The number of practices worked in ranged between zero to 20 practices, with a mean of 2.8 and a mode of two.
- Around one-fifth (20.4%, N=384) said they were Advanced Practitioners, and a smaller number (11.8%, N=221) identified as Specialists.

### 3.3.1 Job by country of qualification

An analysis of role by country indicated that:

- Sole principals were most likely to qualify in Spain (20%), Romania (18%) and Poland (17%). These were the same top three countries in the baseline and second surveys; however, the most sole principals qualified in Poland (18%).
- Directors of limited companies were most likely to have qualified in Spain or Germany (15% each). Germany was in the top three for both previous surveys, but Spain is included for the first time.
- The most equity partners qualified in Spain (18%), Portugal and Romania (14% each).
- Joint venture partners qualified in Spain (18%), Germany (13%), Italy and Romania (10% each).
- Salaried partners most commonly qualified in Spain (32%) and Romania (21%). These are the same countries for the previous surveys.
- The three most likely countries in which employed assistants qualified in have not changed since the previous surveys: Italy (16%), Spain (15%) and Poland (13%).
- Independent veterinary service providers qualified in Poland (20%), Spain (18%) and Italy (16%).
- Independent consultants or peripatetic specialists mainly qualified in Italy (27%), and Spain (15%) – these are the same two countries that were identified in the second survey.

- The most commonly mentioned countries in which locums qualified are Romania (16%), Poland (15%), Italy and Spain (14% each). Romania was not in the top three countries in the previous surveys.
- Interns qualified in Spain (30%), Italy (18%), Greece and Poland (11% each).
- Some roles had small numbers of respondents, so the results are not representative of the role population as a whole:
  - There are a small number of business managers (N=4) included in the respondents; they qualified in Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Romania.
  - VNs nurses that were included (N=2) came from Italy and Romania.

### 3.3.2 Practice area

The most common main practice area is small animal practice (77%), which has been the case for all previous surveys (65% in the baseline survey and 74% in the second survey).

Table 3.2 shows the full breakdown of practice area and shows decreased percentages for *'mixed practice'*, which has decreased from six per cent to three per cent. *'Telemedicine/tele-triage'* has been included for the first time in this survey.

**Table 3.2 Main practice area of VSs working in clinical veterinary practice**

	N	2021 %	2018 %	2017 %
Small animal practice	1462	77	74	65
Referral/consultancy practice	171	9	9	15
Mixed practice	62	3	6	5
Equine practice	98	5	5	5
Farm/production animal practice	78	4	4	4
Telemedicine/tele-triage	10	1	-	-
Other first opinion practice	3	<1	1	2
Other	24	1	<1	3
Total	1908	100	100	100

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017

The small number (N = 24) that selected *'other'* described their practice area as, for example, emergency, exotic, out of hours (OOH) and poultry.

### 3.3.3 Area of practice by country of qualification

The top three countries of qualification for each area of practice for European VSs were similar to the previous surveys. The main area of veterinary clinical practice, small animal, had the same top three countries as for the baseline and second surveys: Spain, Italy and Poland.

- VSs who worked in mixed practice qualified in Ireland (25%, 15% in the second survey), Germany (13%), Belgium and Poland (10% each).
- Those working in small animal practices qualified in Spain (18%), Italy (15%) and Poland (14%). These percentages were exactly the same in the second survey.
- Equine practice VSs qualified in Spain (22%, 21% in the second survey), Italy (18%, 15% in the second survey) and Ireland (9%, 8% in the second survey).
- VSs that worked in farm/production animal practices qualified in Romania (22%, 18 per cent in the second survey), Spain (17%, 12% in the second survey) and Portugal (12%, 9% in the second survey).
- VSs working in other first opinion practices qualified in Romania (67%) and Poland (33%). There were few respondents working in this type of practice (N = 3), so this must be considered during any analysis.
- Referral/consultancy VSs qualified in Spain (20%, 21% in the second survey), Italy (20%, 24% in the second survey) and Portugal (12%, 11% in the second survey).
- VSs working in telemedicine/tele-triage qualified in Italy (40%), France, Poland, and Portugal (20% each). Again, there was a small number of respondents working in this field (N=10) which could affect analysis.
- VSs who selected 'other' qualified in Italy, Spain (17% each) and Germany (13%).

### 3.3.4 Gender & clinical practice

Table 3.3 shows the percentage gender breakdown for different types of clinical practice. Female respondents made up a larger proportion of the types of clinical practice, except for 'farm/animal production'. 'Telemedicine/tele-triage' was added as a type of clinical practice for the first time in this current survey.

**Table 3.3 Gender breakdown by type of clinical practice (%)**

Type of clinical practice	Female	Male	Female (second)	Male (second)	Female (baseline)	Male (baseline)
Mixed	53	45	47	53	54	46
Small animal	65	35	64	35	66	34
Equine	62	38	61	39	61	39
Farm/production animal	37	63	29	70	31	67
Other first opinion	67	33	78	22	63	37
Referral/consultancy	56	44	56	43	54	46
Telemedicine/tele-triage	70	30	-	-	-	-
Other	62	38	46	46	62	34

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017

### 3.4 VSs working elsewhere from clinical veterinary practice

Seventeen per cent of VS respondents worked outside clinical veterinary practice (N=437, compared to a notably higher 603 for the baseline survey and 562 for the second survey). The most common areas of work outside clinical practice were the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), which is the same for both previous surveys. Table 3.4 gives the full breakdown of results.

**Table 3.4 Veterinary work areas outside clinical practice**

	N	%	% 2018	% 2017
Food Standards Agency (FSA) (contracted or employed)	114	26	33	38
Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) (contracted or employed)	85	19	18	21
Commerce/industry (private sector)	62	14	13	11
Other UK government department/agency, including Defra and local government	53	12	6	6
Veterinary school	29	7	13	14
Portal (contracted or employed)	25	6	2	3
Food Standards Scotland (FSS)	13	3	-	-
Other university/educational establishment	8	2	5	4
Charity/trust	4	1	3	2
Zoo/wildlife/conservation	4	1	-	-
Research Council	3	1	<1	1
Home Office	2	<1	<1	<1
Other	35	8	6	8

*Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017*

Those who selected 'other' specified their work areas, which were very varied. Diagnostic laboratory work, telemedicine, mobile vet, pathology, and self-employed were mentioned by two VSs each. Three respondents said that they work in TB testing and another six VSs said that they work in exports.

■ Further analysis shows:

- Twenty per cent of those working outside clinical veterinary practice were aged 38 to 42 (22% in the second survey), followed by 19 per cent aged 43 and 47 (17%), 14 per cent aged between 33 and 37 (17%), and 13 per cent each aged 28 to 32 and 48 to 52.

- Forty per cent qualified between 2000 and 2009 (41% in the second survey), followed by 28 per cent who qualified between 2010 and 2019 (same as the second survey) and 23 per cent who qualified between 1990 and 1999.
- Fifty-one per cent were female, 46 per cent were male and two per cent preferred not to say or chose 'other'. This is almost exactly the same as the second survey (only difference is 52% are female).
- Forty-nine per cent (N=125) respondents working outside clinical veterinary practice worked mainly, or entirely, in the meat industry/official controls sector; this is the same as the second survey. The most reported countries of qualification for those working in this sector are Spain (32%) and Italy (15%).

### 3.5 All VSs: preferred roles and changes in role

All European VSs working in the profession were asked if their current role is their preferred role; this was true for 86 per cent of respondents. This is a slight decrease compared to the second survey (89%), but an increase compared to the baseline survey (82%).

- Further analysis of the 14 per cent (N = 321) who say their current role is not their preferred role shows that:
  - Twenty-seven per cent qualified from Spain (25% in the baseline survey and 24% in the second survey), 17 per cent from Italy (same percentage in the baseline survey and 23% in the second survey) and 10 per cent each from Poland, Portugal, and Romania (12% in the baseline survey and 11% in the second survey).
  - Seventy-seven per cent are working in clinical practice (compared to 71% in the baseline survey and 70% for the second survey).
    - Seventy-six per cent of those working in clinical practice work in small animal practices (71% for the baseline and 70% for the second survey).
    - Nine per cent work in referral/consultancy, which is the same as the second survey. Equine practice (6%), farm/production (4%), mixed practice (3%) and telemedicine (1%) account for the final respondents.
  - Thirty-six per cent are working as employed assistants, which is much lower than the two previous surveys (73% for the baseline and 55% for the second). Thirteen per cent are locums (15% in the second survey) and 11 per cent are interns. Fifteen per cent said 'other'.
    - The most common responses given to specify their 'other' position included resident (27), specialist (24), partner/owner/director of a practice (18), clinical work (16), small animal practice (16), surgical (13), academia (12), zoo/wildlife/conservation (12), non-clinical work (11), equine (11), locum (10) and referral work (10). Ten respondents said that they would prefer to leave the veterinary industry.
  - Twenty-seven per cent work for the FSA (62% in the baseline survey and 50% in the second survey) and 24 per cent for APHA (19% in the baseline survey and 21%



in the second survey). Eleven per cent work for another UK government department and nine percent in the private sector (commercial/industry).

- Fifty-five per cent of those working mainly or entirely in the meat hygiene industry/official controls sector report that it is not their preferred role; this is much lower than the 77 per cent in the second survey.
- When asked to specify their preferred roles, the following responses were given by two or more respondents: resident (33), specialist (33), surgeon (19), a clinical role (19), locum (11), conservation (8), a non-clinical role (6), epidemiology (5), in a small animal practice (5), farm (4).
  - A small proportion of respondents (N = 8) indicated that their preferred role would not be in the veterinary sector and that they were hoping to leave it for another position.

All VSs working within the profession were asked if they had changed their area of work since coming to the UK. The majority had not (74%, the same for the second survey and 73% for the baseline survey).

- Twenty-seven per cent of VSs have changed their area of work since coming to the UK (N = 618):
  - Forty per cent of these respondents' first roles were mainly or entirely in the meat hygiene industry/official controls sector; this is roughly the same as the second survey (39%), but lower than the baseline survey (44%).
  - Twenty-seven per cent qualified in Spain (26% in the second survey), 14 per cent in Italy (same as the second survey) and 11 per cent each from Romania and Poland.
  - When asked to specify their first area of work when arriving in the UK in a free text box, respondents gave the following main answers: meat hygiene (31%) and general/clinical practice (30%). A small group of responses worked outside the veterinary profession, for example, waitresses and a sawmill worker.

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## 4 Personal views about the impact of Brexit

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Respondents were asked to give their views about a variety of aspects relating to the impact of Brexit on their working and personal lives, by responding to 35 attitudinal statements on a five-point scale from '*strongly disagree*' (scoring 1) to '*strongly agree*' (scoring 5). These statements are of three types: positively-worded (to which agreement indicates the respondent has a positive view); negatively-worded (to which agreement indicates a negative view); and neutrally-worded. These are presented separately in the three sub-sections below. Both the percentage spread of responses, and the mean average score (out of 5) are given for each statement; the higher the mean, the greater the degree of agreement with the statement. Some of these attitudinal statements were also used in the baseline and/or second surveys of European VSs; where this is the case, the mean scores for the previous surveys are also given for comparison.

### 4.1 Positively-worded statements

Table 4.1 presents the views of respondents about the positively-worded statements, with the mean scores from the baseline and second surveys for comparison (the final two statements in the table were not asked in the previous two surveys). These results indicate that, despite Brexit, respondents are, on average, clearly pleased they came to the UK, believing it has been a positive move that has increased their employment prospects abroad; they are also satisfied with their career progression and their pay/income progression since coming to the UK, and on the whole, they would like to stay in the UK. However, they are somewhat negative overall about support from their employer and their colleagues, and do not feel that the people they meet in the course of their work are friendlier now.

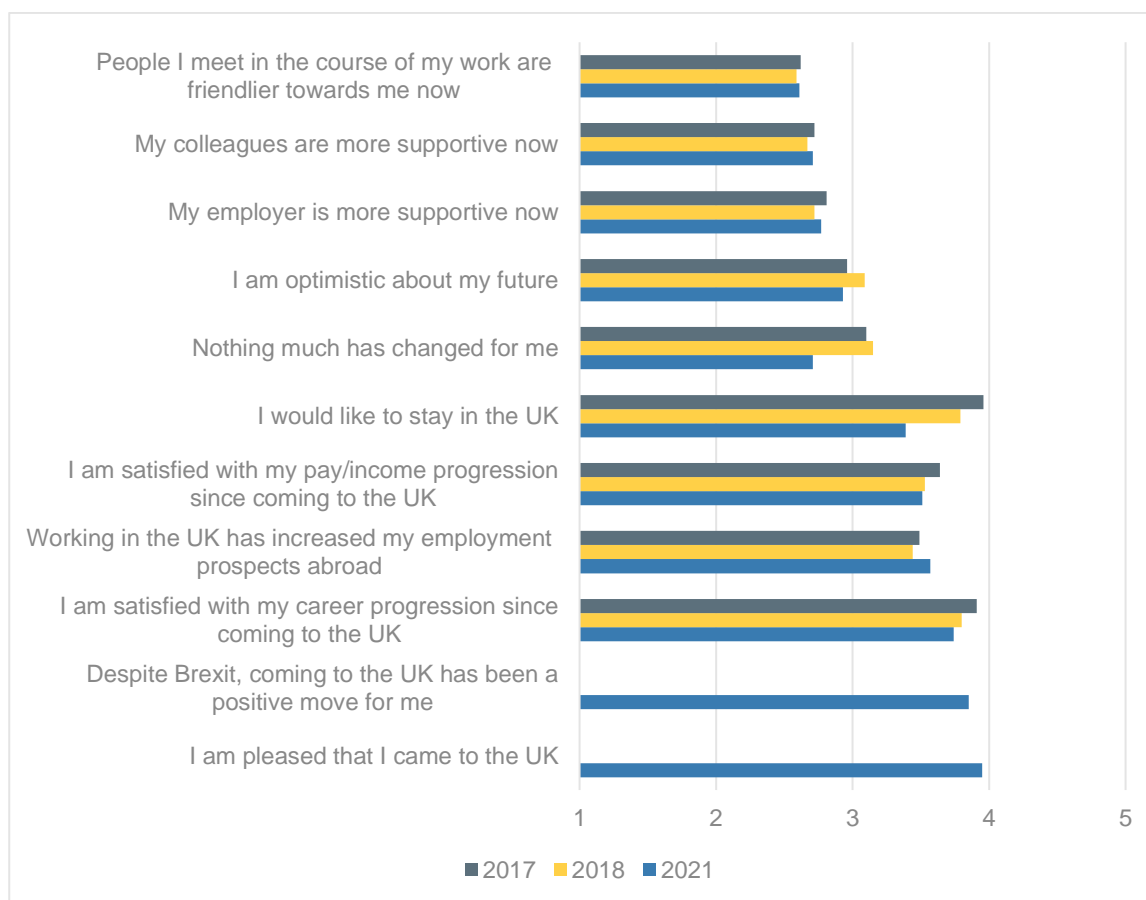
It is also noticeable that the mean score for most statements has decreased since the baseline survey, with only one statement, '*Working in the UK has increased my employment prospects abroad*', seeing a higher score. It is also apparent that the scores for '*I would like to stay in the UK*' and '*Nothing much has changed for me*' have decreased substantially.

Figure 4.1 presents the mean scores as a graph, with comparisons from the previous two surveys where these are available.

**Table 4.1 Personal impact of Brexit – positively-worded statements**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Strongly disagree %</b>	<b>Disagree %</b>	<b>Neither disagree nor agree %</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>Strongly agree %</b>	<b>Mean 2021</b>	<b>Mean 2018 (survey 2)</b>	<b>Mean 2017 (baseline survey)</b>
I am pleased that I came to the UK	2331	1.5	3.0	17.0	55.6	22.9	<b>3.95</b>	-	-
Despite Brexit, coming to the UK has been a positive move for me	2312	3.3	5.8	15.1	53.7	22.1	<b>3.85</b>	-	-
I am satisfied with my career progression since coming to the UK	2330	2.7	9.2	16.4	54.8	16.9	<b>3.74</b>	3.80	3.91
Working in the UK has increased my employment prospects abroad	2283	2.9	8.4	31.6	42.9	14.2	<b>3.57</b>	3.44	3.49
I am satisfied with my pay/income progression since coming to the UK	2330	4.5	15.2	17.8	49.3	13.2	<b>3.51</b>	3.53	3.64
I would like to stay in the UK	2324	6.8	13.0	28.8	37.0	14.3	<b>3.39</b>	3.79	3.96
I am optimistic about my future	2303	10.8	23.9	33.3	25.1	6.9	<b>2.93</b>	3.09	2.96
My employer is more supportive now	2225	7.7	21.6	58.1	10.7	1.9	<b>2.77</b>	2.72	2.81
Nothing much has changed for me	2330	18.3	32.4	16.3	25.5	7.5	<b>2.71</b>	3.15	3.10
My colleagues are more supportive now	2249	7.8	22.2	62.5	6.2	1.3	<b>2.71</b>	2.67	2.72
People I meet in the course of my work are friendlier towards me now	2249	9.6	28.0	56.0	5.1	1.3	<b>2.61</b>	2.59	2.62

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2107

**Figure 4.1: Mean scores for positively-worded statements – 2021, 2018 and 2017**

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017

#### 4.1.1 Further analysis of positively-worded statements

- **Gender:** On average, there were few differences between men and women in their responses to the positively-worded statements. Men were a little more likely than women to agree that their employer is more supportive, that people they meet during the course of their work are friendlier, and that they are satisfied with their pay/income and career progression; however, these differences are not major.
- **Age:** Although there were no big differences in response to most statements when analysed by age group, some variation was apparent:
  - In response to *‘Nothing much has changed for me’*, which yielded a mean score overall of 2.71, those in the youngest age group (aged 23 to 27) scored lowest at 2.59, while those in the oldest age group (aged 63 and over) scored highest at 3.37.
  - For the statement *‘My colleagues are more supportive now’*, which yielded a mean score overall of 2.71, those in the two oldest age groups (aged 56 to 62, and 63 and over) were the most positive at 2.86 and 3.15, respectively.
  - The two oldest age groups were also the most positive overall in response to *‘My employer is more supportive now’*, with those aged 56 to 62 scoring 2.97 and those

aged 63 and over 2.94; however, these scores are still very slightly below the midpoint of 3.

- In response to *'People I meet in the course of my work are friendlier towards me now'*, which yielded a fairly low mean score overall of 2.61, those in the 48 to 52 age group scored lowest at 2.48, while those in the oldest age group (aged 63 and over) scored highest at 2.95.
- For the statement *'I am optimistic about my future'*, which yielded a mean score overall of 2.94, those in the youngest (aged 23 to 27) and oldest (63 and over) age groups were notably more positive than the rest, at 3.28 and 3.33, respectively.
- In response to *'Despite Brexit, coming to the UK has been a positive move for me'*, which returned a fairly high mean score overall of 3.86, those in the 53 to 57 and 58 to 62 age groups were the least positive overall (while still being clearly positive) at 3.71 and 3.64, respectively, while those in the oldest age group (aged 63 and over) scored highest at 4.09.
- The response to *'I am satisfied with my pay/income progression since coming to the UK'*, which returned a clearly positive mean score overall of 3.52, followed a similar pattern; those in the 53 to 57 and 58 to 62 age groups were the least positive overall at 3.33 and 3.29, respectively, while those in the oldest age group (aged 63 and over) scored highest at 3.95.
- For the statement *'I am optimistic about my future'*, which yielded a mean score overall of 2.94, those in the youngest (aged 23 to 27) and oldest (63 and over) age groups were notably more positive than the rest, at 3.28 and 3.33, respectively.
- In response to *'I am satisfied with my career progression since coming to the UK'*, which returned a fairly high mean score overall of 3.75, those in the two youngest age groups (23 to 27 and 28 to 32) and the oldest age group (63 and over) were the most positive overall at 3.85, 3.85 and 4.0, respectively, while those aged 53 to 57 were the least positive, at 3.54.
- The response to *'Working in the UK has increased my employment prospects abroad'* yielded a more varied response than other statements. The mean score overall was a clearly positive 3.58, but those in the youngest age group (23 to 27) were notably more positive than average at 3.85, while those in the 53 to 57 and 58 to 62 age groups were notably less positive than average, at 3.15 and 3.19, respectively.
- In response to *'I am pleased I came to the UK'*, which returned a high mean score overall of 3.95, those in the 53 to 57 and 58 to 62 age groups were the least positive overall (while still being clearly positive) at 3.73 and 3.72, respectively, while those in the oldest age group (aged 63 and over) scored highest at 4.13.
- Finally, the statement *'I would like to stay in the UK'* yielded the most consistent response of all the positively-worded statements, with a mean of 3.39 overall and age group scores varying only from 3.34 to 3.52.

## 4.2 Negatively-worded statements

Table 4.2 presents the views of respondents about the negatively-worded statements, with the mean scores from the baseline and second surveys for comparison where available. There is a very high level of agreement that the UK's withdrawal from the EU has saddened respondents, on a similar level to respondents' sadness about the Brexit vote in the previous two surveys. However, it is encouraging to see that, on average, respondents are not in agreement about the majority of these negatively-worded statements; indeed, there is a particularly low score for the statement *'I regret coming to the UK'*, with 79.2 per cent disagreeing, and the mean score for *'I am actively looking for work outside the UK'* has not increased. This does not mean that there is no cause for concern, as respondents are more likely to agree that they are considering a move back home than for previous surveys, and are also more likely to say they have experienced or observed prejudice than in 2018 or 2017. The two statements showing the biggest increase in agreement – *'I am more stressed at work'* and *'A lot has changed for me'* – may in part be due to the increased workload pressure and changes in working practices due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 4.2 presents the mean scores as a graph, with comparisons from the previous two surveys where these are available.

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

Statement	N	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither disagree nor agree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Mean 2021	Mean 2018 (survey 2)	Mean 2017 (baseline survey)
The UK's withdrawal from the EU has saddened me (1)	2308	2.3	2.7	8.4	17.6	57.9	<b>4.42</b>	4.31	4.46
I feel less welcome in the UK	2274	7.9	18.6	19.1	34.4	20.0	<b>3.40</b>	3.35	3.60
I am more stressed at work	2208	8.2	20.0	23.2	31.7	16.9	<b>3.29</b>	2.67	2.67
A lot has changed for me	2255	5.4	22.4	30.5	30.6	11.1	<b>3.20</b>	2.86	2.89
I am more likely to leave the UK	2206	12.1	23.4	22.5	30.6	11.2	<b>3.05</b>	2.97	3.00
I am considering a move back home	2242	12.4	26.0	22.1	26.1	13.4	<b>3.02</b>	2.81	2.81
I am fearful about the future	2209	10.5	30.2	24.7	29.0	5.6	<b>2.89</b>	2.92	3.13
I have observed prejudice at work in the run up to, or since, the UK's withdrawal from the EU (2)	2194	14.2	30.4	22.6	25.1	8.8	<b>2.84</b>	2.50	2.45
I feel pessimistic about my future	2239	12.4	34.6	28.2	19.2	5.7	<b>2.71</b>	2.67	2.81
I have personally experienced prejudice at work in the run up	2200	16.3	32.6	23.7	18.8	8.5	<b>2.71</b>	2.42	2.33

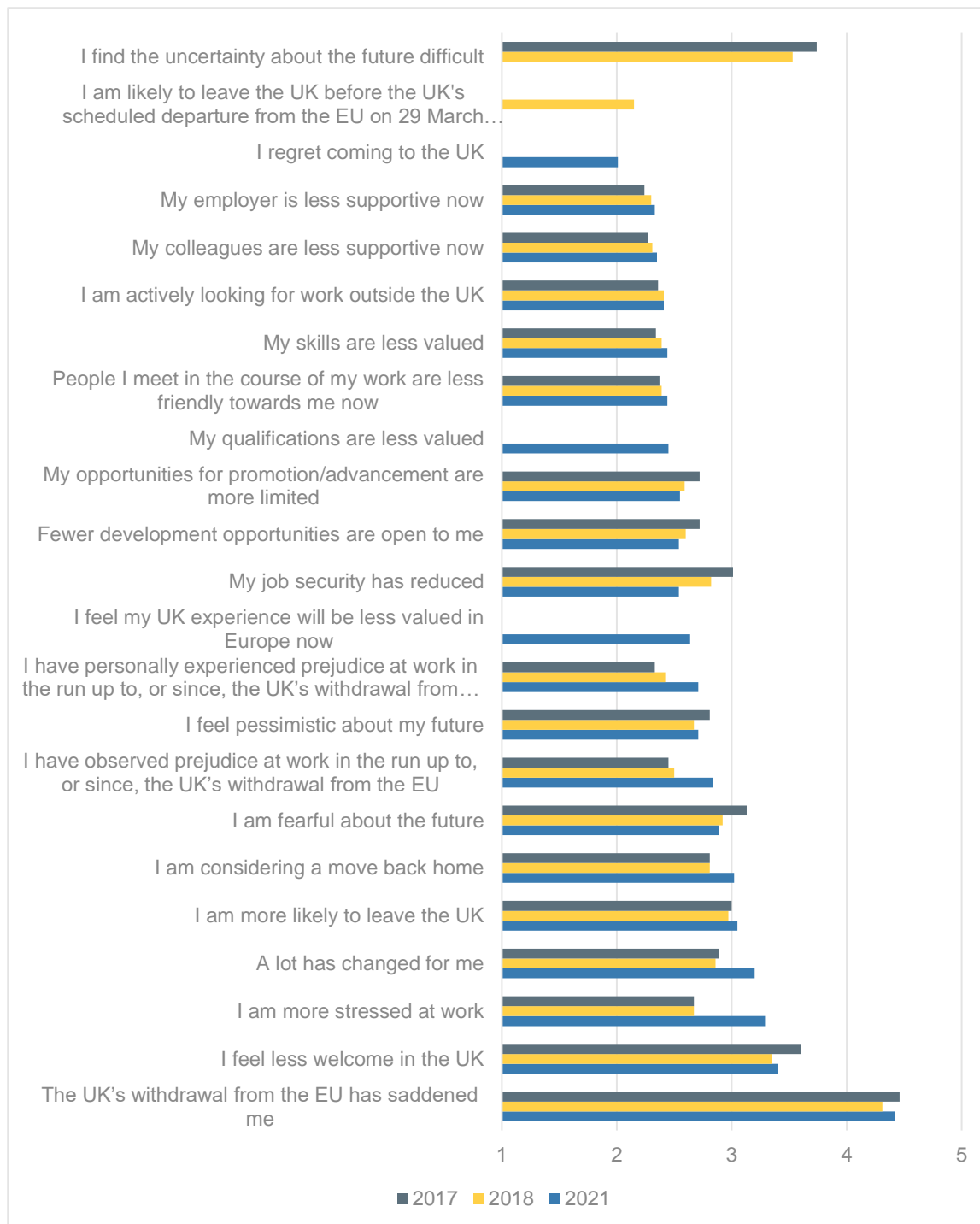
Statement	N	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither disagree nor agree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Mean 2021	Mean 2018 (survey 2)	Mean 2017 (baseline survey)
to, or since, the UK's withdrawal from the EU (3)									
I feel my UK experience will be less valued in Europe now	2225	12.6	39.5	26.1	16.2	5.6	<b>2.63</b>	-	-
My job security has reduced	2217	15.8	40.9	22.2	16.2	4.9	<b>2.54</b>	2.82	3.01
Fewer development opportunities are open to me	2200	14.5	39.9	26.8	14.7	4.1	<b>2.54</b>	2.60	2.72
My opportunities for promotion/ advancement are more limited	2192	13.2	40.2	28.9	13.5	4.2	<b>2.55</b>	2.59	2.72
My qualifications are less valued	2196	17.7	41.1	24.7	11.1	5.4	<b>2.45</b>	-	-
People I meet in the course of my work are less friendly towards me now	2176	16.6	37.0	34.7	9.1	2.5	<b>2.44</b>	2.39	2.37
My skills are less valued	2192	16.6	42.6	25.5	10.3	5.0	<b>2.44</b>	2.39	2.34
I am actively looking for work outside the UK	2187	23.8	36.7	21.3	11.2	7.0	<b>2.41</b>	2.41	2.36
My colleagues are less supportive now	2192	17.2	38.5	38.0	5.0	1.4	<b>2.35</b>	2.31	2.27
My employer is less supportive now	2176	18.2	38.9	35.9	5.4	1.6	<b>2.33</b>	2.30	2.24
I regret coming to the UK	2209	27.3	51.9	15.2	3.6	1.9	<b>2.01</b>	-	-
I am likely to leave the UK before the UK's scheduled departure from the EU on 29 March 2019	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.15	-
I find the uncertainty about the future difficult	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.53	3.74

## Notes:

1. The wording for the first two surveys was: 'The Brexit vote has saddened me'
2. The wording for the first two surveys was: 'I have observed prejudice at work since the vote'
3. The wording for the first two surveys was: 'I have personally experienced prejudice at work since the vote'

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2107

**Figure 4.2: Mean scores for negatively-worded statements – 2021, 2018 and 2017**



Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017

### 4.2.1 Further analysis of negatively-worded statements

- Gender:** Overall, the responses of men and women to these negatively-worded statements were very similar. However, women were in stronger agreement that the



UK's withdrawal from the EU has saddened them (4.49 compared to 4.30 for men). Women were also more stressed at work (3.36 compared to 3.19 for men).

■ **Age:** The responses to this set of statements varied somewhat by age:

- Although respondents in all age groups had very high levels of agreement with the statement *'The UK's withdrawal from the EU has saddened me'*, those in the youngest age group (23 to 27) had the lowest mean score at 4.14, while those aged 53 to 57 had the highest mean score at 4.61.
- Respondents in the oldest age group (63 and over) disagreed, on average, with the statement *'A lot has changed for me'*, scoring 2.70, while those in all other age groups agreed, ie had a mean score above the midpoint of 3.
- In response to *'I feel pessimistic about my future'*, those in the youngest and oldest groups were least likely to agree, with those aged 23 to 27 returning a mean score of 2.35 and those aged 63 and over a mean score of 2.50; those aged 53 to 57 were the most likely to agree, with a mean score of 2.89, but even these respondents returned an average score below the midpoint of 3.
- The only age group to disagree overall with *'I feel less welcome in the UK'* was the oldest group (aged 63 plus), who returned a mean score of 2.80. Respondents in all the other age groups agreed with this statement on average, especially those aged 33 to 37 (3.54) and 53 to 57 (3.55).
- In all age groups, the mean score for the statement *'I am considering a move back home'* was either somewhat above or somewhat below the midpoint of 3. The highest level of disagreement was among those aged 63 and over, at 2.67, while the highest level of agreement was in the 33 to 37 age group, at 3.17.
- There was consistent disagreement on average among all age groups in response to both *'My colleagues are less supportive now'* and *'My employer is less supportive now'*.
- Although respondents, on average, consistently disagreed with the statement *'People I meet in the course of my work are less friendly towards me now'*, those in the youngest (23 to 27) and oldest (63 and over) age groups were the most likely to disagree, scoring 2.24 and 2.05, respectively.
- The only age group to disagree overall with *'I am more stressed at work'* was the oldest group (aged 63 plus), who returned a mean score of 2.45. Respondents in all the other age groups agreed with this statement on average.
- There was consistent disagreement on average among all age groups in response to both *'My skills are less valued at work'* and *'My qualifications are less valued'*.
- Although respondents in all age groups disagreed, on average, with the statement *'I feel my UK experience will be less valued in Europe now'*, those aged 28 to 32 were most likely to disagree, at 2.49, while those aged 53 to 57 were least likely to disagree, at 2.86.
- There was consistent disagreement to the statement *'My job security has reduced'*.
- Although respondents in all age groups disagreed, on average, with the statement *'Fewer development opportunities are open to me'*, those aged 23 to 27 were most

likely to disagree, at 2.40, while those aged 53 to 57 were least likely to disagree, at 2.84.

- There was consistent disagreement to the statement *'I have personally experienced prejudice in the run up to, or since, the UK's withdrawal from the EU'*, with mean scores ranging from 2.36 (63 and over) to 2.77 (38 to 42).
- Similarly, there was consistent disagreement to the statement *'I have observed prejudice in the run up to, or since, the UK's withdrawal from the EU'*, with mean scores ranging from 2.48 (63 and over) to a close-to-the-midpoint 2.95 (38 to 42).
- Although respondents generally disagreed with the statement *'I am fearful about the future'*, the second-oldest age group (58 to 62) returned a midpoint score of 3.04, while the oldest group (63 and over) had, on average, the lowest score of 2.57.
- There was consistent and clear disagreement to the statement *'I regret coming to the UK'*, with mean scores ranging from 1.84 (23 to 29) to 2.29 (58 to 62).
- The greatest level of agreement, on average, to the statement *'I am more likely to leave the UK'* was among those aged 33 to 37 (3.18), while the lowest level of agreement was in the oldest group (63 and over), at 2.45.
- Finally, the most likely age groups to agree with *'I am actively looking for work outside the UK'* were those aged 33 to 37 and 48 to 52, both scoring 2.53; however, even this mean score is clearly below the midpoint of 3.

### Experiencing or observing prejudice at work

The majority of respondents have, encouragingly, not observed or experienced prejudice at work in the run up to, or since, the UK's withdrawal from the EU. However, 33.9 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they have observed such prejudice, and 27.3 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they have personally experienced it. These respondents were asked to provide free-text further information about this prejudice, and 589 did so, with some making more than one point. A random sample of 20 per cent of these free text comments was taken and analysed for themes.

- **Remarks from clients:** The most frequently-expressed type of prejudice, accounting for around 45 per cent of free text comments, was remarks from clients about the names or accents of European VSs, sometimes accompanied by a request to see a 'British vet' and/or questioning the validity of non-British qualifications and the motivation of the VS for coming to the UK:

*A few times clients have commented about my name or surname*

*... the emergence of casual bigotry on the telephone and in attitudes*

*Clients asking to be seen by an English vet and not a foreigner*

*Clients have asked me if I am a fully qualified vet because I studied in Spain*

*Clients: 'I want to see the English vet. Irish is close enough I suppose.'*

*Everyone thinks that all people come to the UK just for the money and that makes me sad*

*Owners ... look at you or repeat they don't understand you when they do but they just don't like what you are saying*

*Mainly the first couple of years since the vote. Usually clients making comments that made me feel not welcome as a foreigner. Not that much the last couple of years*

*Negative feedback from clients focused on my nationality rather than on my ability*

*Several clients, when unhappy with the cost of treatment their pet received, felt that the foreign origin of the clinician was a valid indicator that the treatment was less valuable or of a lesser standard*

- **Overt racism/abuse from clients and the public:** A smaller percentage of comments (around 15%) related to stronger prejudice, amounting to overt racism, abuse and bigotry rather than the more casual remarks reported above:

*Clients told me it is time to go home*

*Many times since the referendum I've been asked when I am getting back to my country now that we have voted to get rid of immigrants*

*... clients being racist towards 'foreign vets', mocking European countries for not being as 'advanced' as the United Kingdom ... Severe undercurrents of racist abuse towards European citizens and lack of education about cultures outside of Great Britain*

*We have had several comments (verbal and written) about 'these foreign vets that can barely speak English', which is a very unfair statement as all our vets can speak a perfectly understandable and fluent English*

*A lot of clients are rude to foreigners, even to those who speak perfect English. Generally, I despise everything about the UK now that I've experienced working there ... I would never recommend anyone to go there because you British people treat us like garbage*

*[A client] considered the cost estimated was very high and he made a comment 'All you foreigners come in our country to take ... our jobs, where did you come from with that estimate? All you want is money and you don't care for animals'*

*Due to the nature of the work we do, in the FSA we continuously liaise with food business operators, slaughtermen, sometime farmers, who did not hesitate to be jubilant about 'leaving Europe' or that we suddenly have to 'go back home'. This did not happen once or twice, or only to me*

- **Preferential career/promotion treatment for British VSs:** Some respondents (around 15%) believed that VSs with UK qualifications were preferred for job appointments and opportunities even when their qualifications and experience were not as good as those from the EU:

*An English graduate can easily have a salary more than 20 to 25,000 a year more than a foreigner*

*As a foreign new grad working alongside other foreign new grads and British new grads I felt like in my company we were treated differently – British new grads tended to be given the better practices and assumed to be better informed*

*Career progression opportunities have never been available for EU vets, before or after the referendum ... Other groups of people at work did have opportunities but not us*

*During the recruitment process British citizens have always an untold preference to get the job ... European citizens are mostly employed to cover positions where it is difficult to find British veterinarians. Achievements at work and in public of British veterinarians are always widely celebrated, while achievements of veterinarians from other countries are seldom mentioned, if at all*

*For leadership positions there are more opportunities for English people than foreigners*

*I have seen British vets with less experience and skills being chosen over EU more experienced candidates for a clinical director role*

- **Prejudice from colleagues:** Some respondents (around 10%) had experienced prejudice from colleagues, and/or felt that their employer did not support them when colleague or clients were abusive:

*I have also experienced prejudice from clients several times specifically when they asked for a British vet and my previous place of work accepted such demands*

*One of the Directors where I used to work was a strong Brexit supporter and as a foreigner I was repeatedly informed about it. Racist jokes or comments were quite normal for him*

*I had a very bad experience when I was working in [name and location of practice] with nurses being unfair and bad with me, not helping me, causing me problems ... Managers promising [but] no changes at all*

*Other people at the workplace have tried ... to undermine our reputation as professionals with negative comments and criticism, and spreading comments about EU vets having lesser qualifications than UK colleagues*

*I was verbally abused and called bad names in front of everyone in reception on three different occasions, for nothing else than being foreign. None of the practice managers sacked these clients*

- **'It's got worse':** Several respondents (around 10%) observed that undercurrents of prejudice have always existed, but have become worse since the Brexit vote and exit negotiations, with people feeling empowered to express their views:

*I have witnessed some farmers treating some European veterinarians differently immediately after the vote in 2016*

*Since Brexit I have experienced clients being unhappy about my accent which wasn't the case before*

*Some clients do have racist comments/attitudes that I think would be avoided /silent if Brexit was rejected*

*Before we were all equal now we are again divided into nations and groups, colours, genders. It's a step backwards*

*Farmers/businesses that are inspected/checked by us (government vet work) tend to get more aggressive when EU vet and substandard findings coincide. They didn't like it before but Brexit has added another level of hostility to it*

*Despite living and working in this country since 2001, married to a British partner and being part of the community where I have lived for more than 15 years, the situation has changed since the exit of the UK from the EU*

- **'It's only a minority'**: Despite the prejudice they have experienced and/or observed, some respondents (around 8%) added that the majority of their interactions with colleagues, clients and the public were positive:

*But as well I found clients very nice with me due to my nationality and telling me how good my English was*

*I am and always will be grateful to nice people in the UK who gave me the opportunity to grow and improve my veterinary skills*

*My co-workers are really supportive*

*Most of the staff at work are friendly and do not judge on nationality at all*

### 4.3 Statements suggesting indecision

When the previous two surveys were conducted in 2017 and 2018, the terms of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, and the position of Europeans living and working in the UK, were not clear. This led to many respondents adopting a 'wait and see' attitude before making decisions about their future in the UK. Now that there is far more clarity and processes are in place, the responses to the differently-worded 2021 statements in Table 4.3 suggest that respondents' uncertainty has decreased considerably. However, almost half (46.6%) agree that the situation is still not clear for them, and 43.4 per cent do not yet feel able to commit to staying in the UK.

**Table 4.3 Personal impact of Brexit – ‘undecided’ statements**

Statement	N	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither disagree nor agree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Mean 2021	Mean 2018	Mean 2017
The situation is still not clear for me	2194	10.3	20.0	23.2	35.6	11.0	<b>3.17</b>	-	-
I am undecided whether to stay in the UK or leave	2182	17.8	28.1	18.3	28.6	7.1	<b>2.79</b>	-	-
I do not feel able yet to make a commitment to staying in the UK	2164	14.0	22.5	20.1	30.4	13.0	<b>3.06</b>	-	-
I am waiting to see how the situation will unfold.							-	3.86	4.01
I will make no decision about my future in the UK until I understand the situation better.							-	3.53	3.72
I have put major ‘life decisions’ on hold since the vote.							-	3.04	3.16

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals

### 4.3.1 Further analysis of statements suggesting indecision

- **Gender:** Although the differences in views between men and women are not large, it is noticeable that women are somewhat more likely than men to agree with all three of these indecision-related statements.
- **Age:** There are some differences in response to the three statements when analysed by age group:
  - Those in the youngest age group (23 to 27) are more likely than average to agree that the situation is still not clear for them, scoring 3.35, while those in the 53 to 57 and 58 to 62 age groups are more likely to disagree (2.89 and 2.94, respectively).
  - The mean scores for ‘*I am undecided whether to stay in the UK or leave*’ decreased in line with age, with those aged 23 to 27 being most likely to agree (at 2.89) and those aged 63 and over least likely to agree (2.45); however, it is worthy of note that all age groups, on average, returned scores below the midpoint of 3.
  - There was a clear age-related response pattern to ‘*I do not feel able yet to make a commitment to staying in the UK*’, with respondents in the youngest three groups (23 to 27, 28 to 32, and 33 to 37) on average agreeing with the statement, ie returning a mean score above the midpoint of 3, while all the older groups on average scored below the midpoint of 3, indicating disagreement overall.

## 4.4 Further overall analysis of all statements

- Working within or outside clinical veterinary practice:** Broadly, VSs who worked within the profession, but outside clinical veterinary practice, were positive overall but less so than their counterparts working within clinical veterinary practice; that is, their mean scores for positively-worded statements were lower and their mean scores for negatively-worded statements were higher. The only exception was *‘My employer is more supportive now’*, where their mean score was 2.89, higher than the 2.75 returned by those working within clinical veterinary practice. Figure 4.3 shows the statements displaying the greatest differences between these two groups.

**Figure 4.3: Mean scores for selected statements comparing VS respondents working within and outside clinical veterinary practice – 2021**



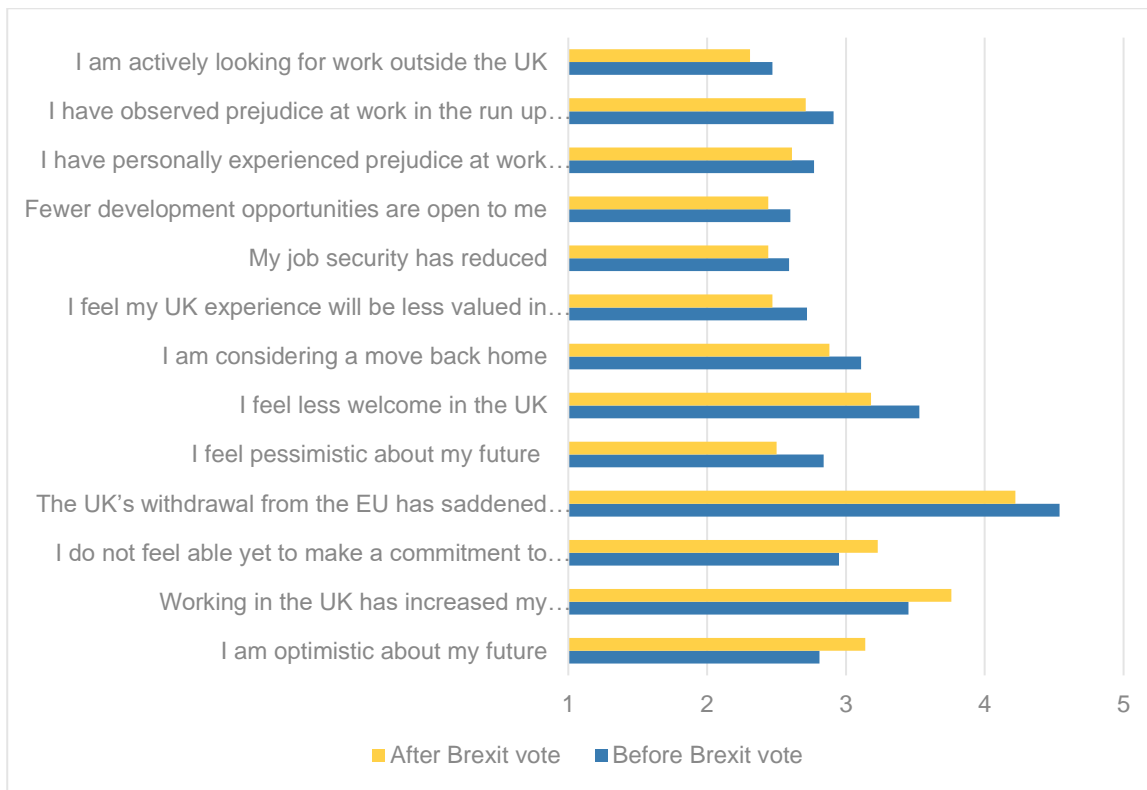
Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021

- Type of practice:** Some differences are apparent among respondents from different types of practice:
  - Respondents in small animal practices scored notably higher than average for *‘I am more stressed at work’* (3.39 compared to an overall average of 3.09).

- Those in equine practices were more likely to express indecision, scoring 3.42 for *'The situation is still not clear for me'* and 3.00 for *'I am undecided whether or not to remain in the UK'*, compared to overall averages of 3.16 and 2.75.
  - Respondents in referral/consultancy practices were more satisfied than average for *'I am satisfied with my career progression since coming to the UK'* (4.05 compared to an overall average of 3.77) and *'Working in the UK has increased my employment prospects abroad'* (3.77 compared to 3.53). However, these respondents returned the highest scores of any practice-type group for *'I feel less welcome in the UK'* (3.68 compared to 3.34 overall), *'I am considering a move back home'* (3.20 compared to 2.95 overall), *'I am more likely to leave the UK'* (3.28 compared to 2.97 overall) and *'I am actively looking for work outside the UK'* (2.45 compared to 2.29 overall).
  - In general, respondents working in farm/production animal practices were more positive than average for every positively-worded statement, and less negative than average for every negatively-worded statement.
  - Those in mixed practices were the only practice-type group to return an overall positive score for *'Nothing much has changed for me'* (3.16 compared to 2.88 overall), and returned the least negative score of all groups to *'I feel less welcome in the UK'* (3.04 compared to 3.34 overall). Respondents in this group were also the most likely to want to stay in the UK (3.67 compared to 3.47 overall) and were less likely than average to agree to *'Working in the UK has increased my employment prospects abroad'* (3.23 compared to 3.53 overall).
- **Advanced Practitioners (APs):** APs (N = 352) were more positive than those who were not APs in response to the statement *'I am satisfied with my career progression since coming to the UK'* (3.86 compared to 3.77 for those who were not APs). However, for every other positively-worded statement they were less positive, and for every negatively-worded statement they were more negative.
  - **Specialists:** A similar picture to that for APs applied to the smaller group of respondents who identified as Specialists (N = 207), although the differences were more pronounced. Specialists were more positive than those who were not Specialists in response to the statement *'I am satisfied with my career progression since coming to the UK'* (3.91 compared to 3.78 for those who were not Specialists); but for every other positively-worded statement they were less positive, and for every negatively-worded statement they were more negative, with the scores being even less positive/more negative than those for APs.
  - **When arrived in the UK:** There are marked differences between those who had come to the UK before the Brexit vote on 23 June 2016, and those who came afterwards, with the former being generally more pessimistic and less positive. Figure 4.4 presents the statements with the biggest differences.



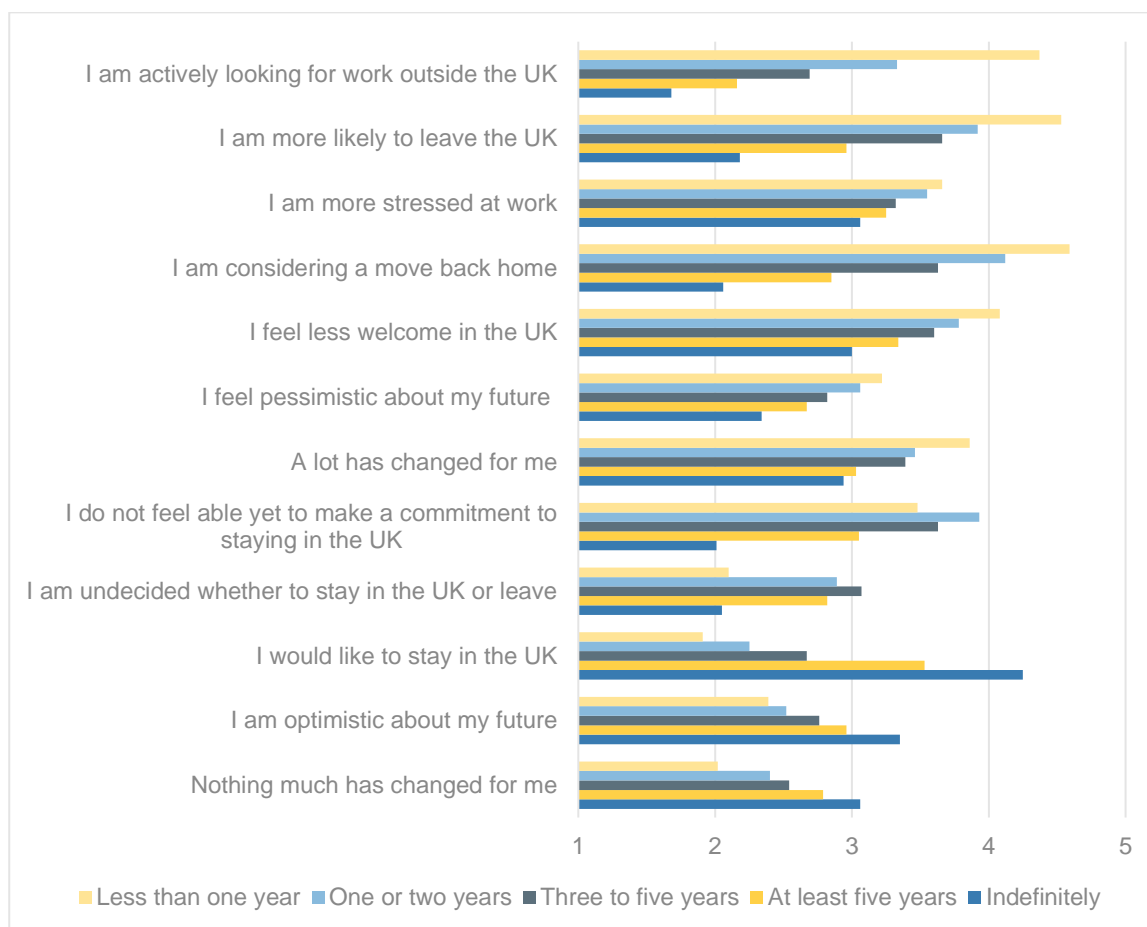
**Figure 4.4: Mean scores for selected statements comparing VS respondents by time of arrival in the UK – 2021**



Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021

- Intended stay from now in the UK:** Unsurprisingly, there are some big differences depending on respondents' intentions regarding length of stay in the UK from the time of participating in the survey onwards, with those planning to stay indefinitely being the most positive and those planning to stay for less than one year the most negative; those who were 'uncertain' on the whole returned scores close to the overall mean. Figure 4.5 presents the statements where these differences are most pronounced, omitting the 'uncertain' responses.

**Figure 4.5: Mean scores for selected statements comparing VS respondents by planned length of stay, from now, in the UK – 2021**



Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021

## 4.5 Has Brexit changed original intentions?

### 4.5.1 Intended length of stay when came to the UK

When asked about their intended length of stay when they first arrived in the UK, 24 per cent said they planned to stay indefinitely (27% in the second survey), while another 24 per cent said they intended to stay for a long period (at least five years) but not indefinitely. Further analysis by age group and gender shows some differences:

- **Age:** The most frequently chosen intended length of stay was '*I had no clear plans at the time*', selected by respondents in seven of the nine age groups. This differs from the responses in the second survey that were predominantly to '*stay indefinitely*'. The indefinite stay answer was still frequently-given by respondents and was either the second or third most chosen answer for all age groups.
- **Gender:** Similarly, the highest response for both male and female respondents was '*I had no clear plans at the time*' (27 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively). Female respondents were less likely to intend to '*stay indefinitely*' and to '*stay for a long period*'

(at least five years) but not indefinitely' than male respondents (24% and 22% for women compared to 25% and 27% for men).

#### 4.5.2 Changed plans since first arriving in the UK

Almost one third (30.2%) of respondents said their plans had not changed, 14.3 per cent said they currently did not have clear plans and 2.3 per cent gave other responses, such as having already left the UK. Of the remaining 53.1 per cent whose plans have changed, 40.0 per cent said they had already been in the UK longer than they originally planned, 29.4 per cent said they planned to stay longer than they originally expected, and the remaining 30.6 per cent said their stay was likely to be shorter than originally intended.

Respondents were then asked how long, from now, they planned to stay in the UK. The replies are given in Table 4.4, alongside respondents' original intentions. Although over one quarter (27.5%) were uncertain about their intentions, over one half (51.5%) said they planned to stay for a long period or indefinitely, and only 4.9 per cent were very likely to leave the UK, in that they said their planned length of stay was less than one year from the time of the survey.

**Table 4.4 Intended length of stay in the UK**

	% when first arrived	% now
Stay indefinitely	24.2	29.1
Stay for a long period (at least five years) but not indefinitely	24.3	22.4
Stay for three to five years	10.1	9.7
Stay for fewer than three years	10.6	-
Stay for one or two years	-	6.4
Stay for less than one year	-	4.9
I had no clear plans at the time	30.9	-
I don't recall	0.7	-
Uncertain		27.5

Source: RCVS survey of non-UK European veterinary professionals 2021

#### 4.5.3 Brexit and Covid-19 influences on intention to stay

A possibly confounding factor influencing intentions to stay or leave was the Covid-19 pandemic. Respondents were therefore asked firstly whether Brexit had influenced their intentions, and secondly whether the Covid-19 pandemic had influenced their intentions.

- **Brexit:** Three per cent said that Brexit has encouraged them to stay longer, but a much larger 54 per cent said that it has made them think of leaving sooner; the remaining 43 per cent said that Brexit has had no influence on their intention to stay or leave the UK.

- **Covid-19 pandemic:** Four per cent said the pandemic had encouraged them to stay longer, while a larger 33 per cent said it had made them think of leaving sooner; however, almost two-thirds (64%) said that the Covid-19 pandemic had not had an influence on their intention to stay or leave the UK.

The above results suggest that both events have had an influence, but that Brexit has had a notably stronger influence than the Covid-19 pandemic on VSs' intentions to stay in, or leave, the UK.

## 4.6 Applying for settled status

When asked if they had applied for settled status in the UK, 69.4 per cent of respondents said yes, and that the application had been successful; a further 0.8 per cent had been successful after appeal, while 2.6 per cent were awaiting the outcome of their application. Some respondents had not needed to apply, 6.7 per cent due to having Irish citizenship or dual British and Irish citizenship, 5.8 per cent because they had British citizenship, and 1.3 per cent because they had indefinite leave to enter and/or remain in the UK.

The remaining respondents either said their appeal had been rejected (0.4%), or they did not meet the criteria (10.8%), or they had decided not to apply, despite meeting the criteria (2.4%). These applicants were asked if they had applied for pre-settled status: 70.9 per cent had done so, successfully, and 0.9 per cent were awaiting the outcome of their application; however, 0.6 per cent had had their application rejected, 15.4 per cent said they did not meet the criteria, and 12.2 per cent met the criteria but decided not to apply.

### 4.6.1 The experience of applying for settled or pre-settled status

Respondents who had successfully obtained settled or pre-settled status were asked about their experiences of the process, and around 1,450 provided their views. A sample of 10 per cent of these responses indicates that the vast majority experienced no difficulty with the application process for themselves and (if relevant) for their families, describing it as 'easy/relatively easy', 'fine', 'straightforward / relatively straightforward', 'quick', 'good', 'smooth', and with 'no problems' and 'no concerns'. A much smaller number said it was 'stressful', 'bureaucratic' or 'tedious'. Some (especially those who have been in the UK for a long time) said they resented having to apply, or were disappointed and felt insulted, even though the process was not difficult. A small number mentioned technical difficulties, such as having to obtain or borrow the right type of mobile telephone, experiencing a website crash, or documents failing to scan. A few described a specific issue that had caused a delay, such as obtaining a National Insurance number or applying for a very young baby without a passport. Finally, although most said they received an answer fairly quickly, such as within two weeks, a small number said they were still waiting or had waited a long time.

### 4.6.2 Reasons for deciding not to apply

Respondents who had decided not to apply for settled or pre-settled status, even though they met the criteria, were asked why they had made this decision. A small number gave reasons, almost all relating to having decided to return home or move to another EU country, or having already done so; some added that they did not want to live outside the EU or in a country that did not appear to want them. A very small number of respondents had only recently arrived and were unsure how long they would stay.

### 4.6.3 Plans to stay or leave

Respondents who did not meet the criteria for settled or pre-settled status, or who had decided not to apply, or whose applications had been rejected (N=270), were asked what their plans were now. Responses were very variable, but broadly fell into four categories:

- Some respondents had already left the UK, or planned to do so soon, or would do so over the next few years when their current visa ran out.
- A larger number wanted to stay, and intended to apply for settled or pre-settled status (or in some cases British citizenship) as soon as they could, or when their visa ran out.
- A smaller number were undecided and still trying to make up their minds; some of these wanted to complete existing studies, or a period of residency, before deciding, while others had complicating factors such as a partner from a different country whose needs and preferences also required consideration.
- A small number had established working arrangements that they wanted to continue, typically living and working abroad but coming to the UK for short periods of locum work.

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

### 5.1 How will Brexit impact on the veterinary profession in the UK?

As in the second survey, a set of statements, using a five-point scale from ‘*strongly disagree*’ to ‘*strongly agree*’, VSs were asked to consider the impact of Brexit on the UK veterinary profession, rather than the personal impact of Brexit. Four statements were included in the second survey; all other statements are new to this survey.

The new statements were included to get a greater understanding of EU VSs’ views about the impact on the veterinary profession of the UK’s departure from the EU. A statement regarding the Covid-19 pandemic has also been included to understand how much of an impact EU vets believe this has had.

Table 5.1 shows that VSs believe that, although EU VSs are less likely to come to the UK, employers are still likely to employ them; they believe this more strongly than in the second survey. They also have strong feelings that Brexit is having a negative impact on all areas of the veterinary profession and that the veterinary profession is experiencing recruitment difficulties due to Brexit. They also believe that VSs and VNs are leaving the UK due to tighter controls over freedom of movement due to Brexit. Considering the context of this survey, VSs also believed that Brexit will have a bigger impact on the veterinary profession than the Covid-19 pandemic in the long-term.

Figure 5.1 presents the mean scores in graphic form and shows very starkly the strength of VSs’ views.

**Table 5.1 Views about the impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession**

Statement	N	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither disagree nor agree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Mean	2018 mean
The veterinary profession in the UK is experiencing recruitment difficulties due to Brexit	2225	1.5	1.3	6.5	28.0	62.8	<b>4.49</b>	-
Brexit is having a negative impact on all types of work within the veterinary profession	2211	1.2	3.3	12.1	35.0	48.4	<b>4.26</b>	-

Statement	N	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither disagree nor agree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Mean	2018 mean
European veterinary surgeons are less likely to come here	2253	1.1	3.0	9.0	45.5	41.4	<b>4.23</b>	3.96
European veterinary nurses are less likely to come here	2183	1.1	2.9	17.9	38.2	39.9	<b>4.13</b>	3.94
Tighter controls over freedom of movement are causing European veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to leave the UK	2192	0.9	3.9	19.9	39.2	36.1	<b>4.06</b>	-
Longer term, Brexit will have a bigger impact on the veterinary profession in the UK than the Covid-19 pandemic.	2178	1.2	3.1	19.0	42.5	34.2	<b>4.05</b>	-
I personally know European veterinary surgeons and/ or nurses who have left the UK because of Brexit	2222	4.3	12.5	12.5	36.4	34.3	<b>3.84</b>	-
The Covid-19 pandemic is masking the impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession in the UK.	2188	3.2	11.5	21.2	41.6	22.6	<b>3.69</b>	-
The Government should increase funding available to UK veterinary schools in order to decrease the UK's dependence on overseas-qualified veterinary surgeons	2132	6.1	12.6	43.7	29.2	8.4	<b>3.21</b>	-
Veterinary schools in the UK should enlarge their intakes in order to decrease the UK's dependence on overseas-qualified veterinary surgeons	2159	7.0	15.0	42.0	28.9	7.0	<b>3.14</b>	-
Veterinary employers are less likely to employ European veterinary nurses	2143	9.1	27.5	33.5	20.3	9.6	<b>2.94</b>	3.05
There should be more veterinary schools in the UK in order to decrease the UK's dependence on overseas-qualified veterinary surgeons	2146	9.5	20.2	42.3	22.6	5.4	<b>2.94</b>	-
Veterinary employers are less likely to employ European veterinary surgeons	2204	9.9	29.6	29.0	22.6	8.9	<b>2.91</b>	3.10

Statement	N	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither disagree nor agree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Mean	2018 mean
Brexit is having a negative impact on the veterinary profession, but only in certain types of work	2146	9.4	33.4	30.4	20.8	6.0	<b>2.81</b>	-
European veterinary surgeons and nurses have been leaving the UK because of the Covid-19 pandemic, not Brexit.	2167	20.0	40.3	31.3	6.4	2.0	<b>2.30</b>	-
European veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses are still coming to the UK because of the opportunities offered to them	2232	26.5	38.7	20.7	12.7	1.4	<b>2.24</b>	-
Brexit will not have a lasting impact on the veterinary profession in the UK, after the initial few years.	2171	26.7	43.3	21.3	7.1	1.6	<b>2.13</b>	-
Any negative impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession in the UK will be short term	2164	29.8	44.3	20.8	3.9	1.3	<b>2.03</b>	-
Brexit is having no, or very few, negative impacts on the veterinary profession in the UK	2254	57.8	26.7	6.7	5.1	3.7	<b>1.70</b>	-

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021 and 2018

## 5.2 Which areas will be most affected?

Vs were asked to rate the impact of Brexit on 12 areas of the veterinary profession, both inside and outside of clinical practice, using a five-point scale from 'very negative impact' (scoring 1) to 'very positive impact' (scoring 5).

Table 5.2 displays their ratings and shows that respondents believe that every area will be adversely affected, in that every area has a mean score of less than the mid-point of 3; this was also the case in the second survey. The areas that Vs believe will be most negatively impacted, all of which have a mean score below 2.0, are meat industry/animal products - official controls (with over 60% of respondents selecting 'very negative impact'), official veterinary work, small animal practices, farm/production animal practices, and mixed practices.



**Table 5.2 Views about the impact of Brexit on different areas of veterinary work**

Area of veterinary work	N	Very negative impact %	Negative impact %	No significant impact %	Positive impact %	Very positive impact %	Mean	2018 mean
Meat industry/animal products - official controls	1845	61.4	28.2	7.0	2.3	1.0	<b>1.53</b>	1.66
Official Veterinary work eg Animal & Plant Health Agency, Food Standards Agency	1835	47.8	33.3	14.8	2.9	1.1	<b>1.76</b>	-
Farm/production animal practices	1801	38.4	48.4	11.5	1.1	0.6	<b>1.77</b>	1.94
Small animal practices	2127	38.9	48.6	10.8	1.4	0.3	<b>1.76</b>	2.00
Referral/specialist/consultancy practices	1857	25.4	42.4	30.5	1.5	0.2	<b>2.09</b>	2.05
Animal pharmaceutical industry	1705	24.0	40.8	33.3	1.4	0.5	<b>2.13</b>	-
Pet insurance industry	1653	8.4	18.1	69.3	3.1	1.0	<b>2.70</b>	-
Mixed practices	1746	24.6	58.7	15.2	1.1	0.3	<b>1.94</b>	2.09
Veterinary education	1786	16.0	38.1	43.1	2.5	0.4	<b>2.33</b>	2.20
Veterinary Research Councils	1601	13.6	32.0	52.8	1.2	0.3	<b>2.43</b>	2.24
Equine practices	1730	19.4	48.3	31.0	1.0	0.3	<b>2.15</b>	2.26
Animal charities	1704	17.4	34.2	45.5	2.5	0.3	<b>2.34</b>	2.38
Other area 1	701	16.1	18.5	63.1	1.3	1.0	<b>2.52</b>	2.51
Other area 2	548	11.9	17.9	69.2	0.9	0.2	<b>2.60</b>	
Other area 3	494	10.5	18.2	70.6	0.4	0.2	<b>2.62</b>	

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021 and 2018

■ Those who selected ‘*other area*’ were asked to name additional areas of veterinary work that would be adversely impacted by Brexit. 240 responses were collected, with many respondents naming areas that were included in the table, for example ‘pharmaceutical industry’, or made general comments, such as ‘loss of funding’ or ‘burnout’ without naming specific areas of veterinary work. The list of areas not already included that were named by five or more respondents is:

- Imports and exports (27 mentions)
- Research (13)
- Laboratories (6)

- Locum (6)
- Telemedicine (6)
- Portal (5)
- Wildlife (5)
- Zoo (5).

## 5.3 Is the RCVS working effectively to support EU VSs and VNs?

Respondents were fairly divided on their response, with 38 per cent believing that the RCVS has been working effectively to support EU VSs and VNs, but more could be done (63% in the second survey). Thirty-six per cent said ‘*yes, definitely*’ (30% in the second survey) and 25 per cent said ‘*no*’ (8% in the second survey). This dramatic change in opinion from the second survey could suggest that respondents want more to be done and that they do not think what has been done so far is sufficient. Further analysis indicates that:

- Unlike the previous survey, men are more positive about the RCVS than women, with 39 per cent (59 per cent in the second survey) of men selecting ‘*yes, definitely*’ compared to 35 per cent (65 per cent in the second survey) of women. The number of men and women saying ‘*no*’ has increased, with 23 per cent of women and 29 per cent of men selecting this answer.
- Of those working in clinical practice, 40 per cent said ‘*yes, but more could be done*’, while only 32 per cent of those working outside of clinical practice selected that answer. Forty-two per cent of those working outside of clinical practice said ‘*yes, definitely*’, whereas only 34 per cent of those working in clinical practice agreed.

### 5.3.1 What more could be done by the RCVS?

Those who did not think the RCVS was working effectively to support European VSs and VNs were asked for their views about what more could be done. 688 responses were collected, and an analysis of these free text comments shows that the majority of comments fall under seven headings:

- Make it easier for EU vets to work in the UK, by supporting visa applications and accepting EU qualifications and universities (27% of suggestions)
- Improve support for EU vets, including financial support, and have more concern for their welfare (21%)
- Improve the working conditions of EU vets, specifically by recruiting more staff to reduce the strain experienced from staff shortages (14%)
- Remove or lower the required score on the English language test (12%)
- Lobby or put pressure on the government on behalf of EU vets in the UK (10%)

- Improve the sharing of information and communication with EU vets in the UK (8%)
- Not aware of any support or actions from the RCVS (8%).

## 5.4 Advising others to come to the UK to work in the veterinary profession

Respondents were asked whether or not they would advise other European VSs and VNs to come to the UK to work in the veterinary profession. Thirty per cent said 'no' and 29 per cent said that they were 'unsure'. Other respondents said 'yes', with 26 per cent saying 'yes, to work longer term and perhaps even settle here' and 15 per cent saying 'yes, but only for a limited period of time'.

## 5.5 Final comments about the impact of Brexit

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked if they had any further comments to make about the survey or Brexit. A thematic analysis of the 409 comments provided by VSs was conducted, with 14 clear themes emerging. They are described below, with illustrative quotes.

- Sixty-five respondents commented that Brexit was bad and the UK leaving the EU was a mistake or a disaster and should not have happened. Examples are: *'I am sad about the whole mess we are currently in. A foolish act of self-harm'* and *'Brexit is the biggest disaster I have seen within my career affecting all areas of the profession, practice, small, large, meat industry, exports of animals'*.
- Fifty-seven respondents commented on the recruitment crisis, staff shortages and people leaving the profession as a result of Brexit: *'Lack of employment of foreign vets/nurses in first opinions/referrals/OOH practices has a negative impact on the quality of animal care. Practices are asking vets/nurses to work more without improving the salary. For these reasons there is more risk of burnout and people are considering leaving the UK'* and *'Brexit was a disaster. Current staff shortages together with clients' high demand and puppy/kitten boom will cause even bigger shortage. Nobody will be able to stand this without mental health damage'*.
- Fifty-one respondents were concerned about the future and the lack of certainty: *'Brexit will have a detrimental effect in people's life, especially EU citizens in UK, which will last for several years'* and *'It will take decades for the UK to train the necessary professionals the country requires. Brexit will leave a lasting impact without any major gains for the society'*.
- Thirty-eight respondents commented on how difficult it is to come to the UK post-Brexit: *'It will be too complicated for an EU vet to come in the UK now'* and *'I will miss every single day my beloved UK. Always. But I know it will be difficult for me to come back'*.
- Thirty respondents provided comments or concerns about the survey itself, including some about the questions that were asked. Examples include: *'The survey seems to be biased since there is no option 'I do not know' to certain question, eg impact of*

*Brexit on equine practices. I have no clue whatsoever, but my only option is to choose one of the provided answers' and 'This survey is very self-indulgent and does not address the fact that there is a recruitment crisis. Government policy is one thing, but RCVS policy does not seem to be addressing problems in practice'.*

- Twenty-eight respondents commented on the lack of support they feel, specifically from the RCVS: *'RCVS should be more supportive to EU vets and vets in general'.*
- Twenty-six respondents expressed feeling unwelcome in the UK, examples include: *'When half of the nation votes to kick you out of the country, it is difficult to feel welcome' and 'Within the profession I have not seen any change of attitude towards me. I have seen a change from the general public. Since Brexit I have felt less welcomed, and some people feel that they can talk to you in a manner that they would not have used before'.*
- Twenty-two respondents were grateful for the survey and appreciated being asked. Many were thankful for the opportunity to voice their opinions and felt that the RCVS cared more: *'Thanks for doing the survey. Maybe our thoughts will be heard. I worked here 23 years and feel like I'm an immigrant rather than part of British society. Over the years, I feel more racism around me, and I don't want my boys to grow up here anymore. I feel very sad about it all' and 'Thank you for asking those questions, up to now I have always felt that nobody cares. Thanks again'.*
- Eighteen respondents said that they want to leave, or are thinking about leaving, the UK. Examples of comments include: *'Definitely made me think about leaving sooner, feel prejudice on a daily basis' and 'Brexit really makes me want to leave this country. It has been very bad since that and the pandemic has made things worse by masking lots of Brexit's negative effects'.*
- Thirteen respondents believed that the RCVS should have done more to help vets during Brexit: *'Please do better, the profession is struggling. We need action not token gestures' and 'Brexit has caused a major crisis in this sector and RCVS is not doing anything to help the existing veterinary businesses to get European vets back'.*
- Thirteen respondents discussed well-being concerns for people working in the veterinary profession. Comments included: *'Things are just getting worse for this profession. I am looking to re-qualify as a landscaper due to my mental health as a result of 5 years of Veterinary Industry in the UK' and 'The impact of Brexit has been huge for me and my personal well-being. The uncertainty of the situation and the lack of clarity from the government have increased my levels of stress to the brink of a mental breakdown'.*
- Eleven respondents commented on the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic and how it masked the consequences of Brexit: *'Covid has caused more problems than Brexit in terms of getting vets to work in the UK'; 'It is very difficult to know exactly if the issues/advantages are, and have been caused, due to Brexit or COVID-19, politicians say it's been COVID, but Brexit is being disappointing in all the aspects for people living and working in the UK'.*
- Another 11 respondents said that the UK is becoming more isolated from Europe. Comments include: *'Leaving the European union was a short-sighted decision, that*

*cripples sharing of medical knowledge, diversity and cultural acceptance and growth and it isolates the UK from its neighbours' and 'Britain is isolating itself more and more and becoming economically and culturally poorer due to anti-immigration propaganda during and post-Brexit'.*

## 6 The follow-up interviews with VSs

### 6.1 The interviewees

After the closure of the online survey, follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with 20 veterinary surgeons. In order to understand the impact of Brexit over time, all previous interviewees (from both the baseline and the second survey interviews) were invited to return for an interview. Of the 20 people interviewed this year, 12 had been previously interviewed, 11 of whom had been interviewed twice, and a further eight were randomly selected, based on those who had indicated in the online survey that they would be happy to be contacted for an interview. Table 6.1 outlines the demographic details of the interviewees.

**Table 6.1: Overview of demographic details of interviewees**

Demographic		Number of interviewees
Gender	Female	13 (65%)
	Male	7 (35%)
Area of practice/work	Small animal	10 (50%)
	Laboratory	2 (10%)
	Locum	2 (10%)
	Farm	2 (10%)
	APHA	1 (5%)
	Equine	1 (5%)
	Exotics	1 (5%)
	Mixed	1 (5%)
Nationality	Spanish	4 (20%)
	Italian	3 (15%)
	German	3 (15%)
	Dutch	2 (10%)
	Portuguese	2 (10%)
	Polish	2 (10%)
	Belgian	1 (5%)
	Irish	1 (5%)
	Israeli	1 (5%)
	Czech	1 (5%)
Year qualified	Mean	2006
	Mode	1992, 2000, 2014, 2018
	Range	1988-2019

Demographic		Number of interviewees
Year arrived in UK	Mean	2011
	Mode	2020, 2021
	Range	1989-2021

Source: RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021

## 6.2 New interviewees

### 6.2.1 Personal details

Eight interviewees were interviewed for the first time in this round of interviews. Their average age was 40 years old, ranging between 26 and 54. They were from, and also qualified from, Czech Republic, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Israel (qualified in Slovakia), Poland, and Spain. The average qualification year is 2010, ranging from 1992 to 2019.

### 6.2.2 Job details

The new interviewees also work in a variety of different sectors and jobs, which are outlined below:

- Two are working as VSs in small animal practices
- Academic and working in a private practice
- Two VSs are working as locums, mainly working night shifts
- VS and animal welfare officer in a laboratory
- Working as a VS with exotic animals
- Referral hospital conducting MRI and CT scans.

### 6.2.3 Coming to the UK

All eight arrived in the UK after the Brexit vote in June 2016, with two arriving after January 2021, once the transition period had ended. Reasons for coming to the UK included the high standard and regard for the veterinary profession in the UK; to develop English language skills; more job opportunities in specific fields; and a more general interest in moving to the UK.

## 6.3 Career changes

The 12 participants that had been interviewed previously were asked if anything had changed in their career since they were last interviewed. All of the interviewees are still working within the veterinary profession. Half of the group (N = 6) had experienced no change to their career since 2018. One interviewee was on maternity leave when she was interviewed and is due to return to her role in March 2022. Two respondents had started new jobs – both were motivated to find a new role due to the practice that they were

working at being sold or bought by a corporate company. One interviewee was trying to sell their practice but was working in their current role until the practice sold. Two VSs had left the UK and were now working in Europe, but still within the veterinary profession.

## 6.4 Career and income progression

The majority of interviewees were happy with the way that their income and career had progressed since the last interview. All of the new interviewees agreed that they were happy with their income and career since coming to the UK.

Those who agreed that they were happy with their career and income progression attributed this feeling to a promotion, new job, or opportunities to develop new skills.

*'Yes, I am. It is a new job as it is not clinical practice anymore.'*

*'Yes, I'm pleased with my income progression. I was promoted shortly after the last interview.'*

*'I am reasonably pleased; I have achieved my goal of clinical director.'*

*'Yes, there have been no surprises. I've gone from being self-employed to being employed. I have less responsibility, but I am happy about that.'*

*'I have achieved my goals and I am learning new skills. I have achieved certificates, which have had a positive impact on my job.'*

*'There is a different culture to being a vet here – they want people to be trained in doing everything, so there is a lot of skill and knowledge sharing.'*

A smaller number were unhappy with their progression, mainly due to feelings of better paid opportunities outside the UK and feeling restricted in their current role.

*'It is difficult to say – not quite. The whole situation has changed for me. I would be better paid if I worked in Ireland or in Europe. Even a lower responsibility job in Europe would be better paid than it would be here.'*

*'I feel that there is more to be had and I am quite restricted with not many options at the moment.'*

Others expressed that their unhappiness came from the uncertainty and lack of motivation caused by Brexit.

*'Brexit has made this less secure and the government changes quickly and breaks commitments – you can't see what is happening in the future. Pay is better elsewhere but this is secondary to the issues brought on by Brexit. I am happy in the UK, but the uncertainty of the situation could influence my decision to leave.'*

*'Covid and Brexit have added to this lack of motivation, because of not being part of the EU any longer, and having difficulties in travelling and going back home to Italy.'*

New interviewees were, on the whole, very happy. Some did comment that they '*don't do the job for the money*', suggesting that they were not motivated by the financial side of the



veterinary profession. This was a common theme among VSs that arrived in the UK after the Brexit vote – finances were not what they would have liked, but they were still happy to be working in the UK. One expressed that the high standard of veterinary practice in the UK makes up for being unhappy in their current role.

*'I am struggling a little bit with my income, and this is part of the Brexit issue – I can't do any locum work [due to visa restrictions], so having to dip into savings.'*

*'I have had a raise since I started, but I am not earning as much as in previous roles.'*

*'I was told by my British colleagues that I could have earned more in my first job. I already thought it was a lot compared to Italy, but I didn't realise. I am personally happy with everything.'*

*'The UK has a different approach to veterinary practice; it is better and there is more knowledge sharing than other places.'*

## 6.5 Clarity for planning

When asked whether there was enough clarity to be able to make plans for the future during Brexit negotiations, nearly all interviewees expressed that they did not feel there was enough clarity for them to make plans. There were also concerns over how the government handled Brexit, which resulted in a loss of trust for many.

*'The negotiations were concerning; we did not know how these would end. The government seemed to backtrack, and this has led to a lack of trust.'*

*'It's not looking really good, and the government seem unclear. The future is uncertain.'*

*'No – it felt as if there were no proper plans around the EU exit, as if the UK Government didn't know how to do it. As a foreigner, things felt a bit unstable.'*

*'Under the terms of settled status, we can return to the UK as long as we're only away for up to two years, but I don't trust them!'*

Some said that this had encouraged them to look for opportunities outside the UK, and that, for those who had already left the UK, this confirmed their decision to leave.

*'There is a lack of clarity which has informed my future decisions. This makes me more determined to seek employment outside of the UK, but this depends on the opportunities available to me.'*

*'Not staying in the UK reassured me.'*

*'It made me want to leave, so it helped us make the decision.'*

Interviewees were then asked if they felt any more clarity for the future now that negotiations were over, and the UK had left the EU. Some still felt uncertain about remaining in the UK, with one interviewee feeling that there was still *'a lot to be ironed out'*. Another said that they were certain that they no longer wanted to stay in the UK.

*'I am still uncertain as to what they are going to do. I do not feel well supported.'*

*'Yes, it's clearer and clearer that we shouldn't be here. The country is going to the dogs, it's dire. They called it Project Fear, but it's all happening.'*

A few, mostly new interviewees, felt that they have more clarity and understanding of the situation, meaning they could begin to plan for the future. However, there was still some hesitation from even those who felt this way.

*'The situation is clearer now, but I still have little confidence and trust in the government. The rules could change and leave me exposed. No decisions make me feel uncertain and the lack of commitment by the government is concerning.'*

*'Yes, there is clarity now, but I'm worried that things could change at any time.'*

*'There is some more clarification now and I have a better understanding of the situation. The shortage of vets may have speeded things up.'*

## 6.6 Settled status, citizenship, and visas

A new question was included in this round of interviews that asked about arrangements under which the interviewees are entitled to stay in the UK and how they found the process of applying for said arrangements. Nine interviewees have settled status, five have pre-settled status, two gained visas that allow them to live and work in the UK, one interviewee has dual British and German citizenship, and one has gained British citizenship. Two of the interviewees did not comment on any of these processes as they had left the UK.

### 6.6.1 Settled and pre-settled status

The general consensus amongst those that applied for pre-settled and settled status was that it was straightforward and provided the results quickly. However, the issue of finding a specific device to complete the settled status application did make the process slightly more difficult for some; this was mentioned by four interviewees. Others mentioned that they knew others who had completed the process already, so they were able to go to them for guidance, or to use their device to complete the application. One new interviewee mentioned that *'it was more complicated to open a bank account'* than it was to complete the settled status application.

*'It was a straightforward process that I did in early 2021. I didn't think the process was unfair and it was quite quick.'*

*'It was ok, easy, annoying that you had to have a specific device to complete the application.'*

*'It took about 15 minutes and I felt it may have been more difficult if I did not have my friend there to help me. I have an iPhone and for a while the app did not work on my phone, so I had to borrow a friend's phone to do the application.'*

*'It was an easy process, and I was able to talk to my colleagues who were also doing the application and we could work together. I just filled in the forms.'*

Some interviewees were not so positive and mentioned that they found the process 'annoying', 'a nightmare' and 'insulting'. These responses came from interviewees who had been in the UK for a long time, which may be why they were unhappy to have to make the application to stay.

*'I don't know why it was so difficult. The process took about 2 to 3 weeks and was quite time consuming. It felt unnecessary. I don't know if I could say it was a fair process, I was mainly annoyed by it.'*

*'The application process for settled status was a nightmare. It took ages, collecting all the papers together, and I needed a smartphone. I'm not very good with technology and found it very stressful and tiring. I couldn't finish it in one go so had to carry on the next evening. I had to provide a LOT of information to prove I'd been here five years; it was really hard.'*

*'It's an insulting process, suddenly having to apply to stay instead of just registering. It made me feel unwelcomed.'*

### 6.6.2 Citizenship

One interviewee had dual British-German citizenship, while another had British citizenship. Both expressed how expensive the process was to complete but also how fortunate they were to have been able to put in the application. The reasons provided for applying for citizenship were very different, with one interviewee applying because they have a British partner and the other lacks trust in this current Government. Both appreciated how easy it will be for them to travel to and from Europe, both for work and to visit family.

*'After we'd made the decision to stay in the UK, I decided to apply for UK citizenship too – basically because I don't trust this Government!'*

*'I now have UK citizenship, which I applied for because I'm now engaged; ideally, we want my British partner to get an Italian passport as well as a UK passport, like me, to make things easier. The process wasn't easy and took a long time, around a year from when I started to look into it.'*

### 6.6.3 Visas

For both interviewees that had to apply for visas, the company that they now work for helped with the application process and associated paperwork. For one interviewee, the process was straightforward, but the visa only allows them to work within the company that did the application.

*'It was quite a straightforward process – they company helped me with everything. We did my wife's visa ourselves, but we had some help.'*

However, the other interviewee who had to obtain a visa found the relocation service and assistance provided to be rather a hinderance and would have rather processed the application themselves.

*'[My employers] have a contractor who did all the paperwork for me. There was a lot of paperwork and I ended up having a lot of complaints about the contractor. I would have actually preferred to do the application myself.'*

#### 6.6.4 English language test and requirements

Only one interviewee had joined the RCVS since the new English language test had been introduced in January 2021. They commented that the test was difficult, and that the RCVS asks for a high score which is hard to achieve. They also mentioned that they knew of others who had good English skills but did not pass the test.

*'I had to practise before it, luckily my wife is an English teacher! A few of my friends did not pass the test even though their English is good enough. To pass they ask for a score of 7 in each section which is hard to achieve. The written section was the most difficult.'*

### 6.7 Short-term plans

Similarly to the previous round of interviews, when asked about plans for the next two to three years, half of the interviewees stated that they are planning on staying in the UK, at least in the short-term. The most common reasons for wanting to stay were:

- They own a home and enjoy living in the UK.
- They have a family, and their children are at school in the UK.
- Their job and work and learning opportunities.

*'My daughter just started high school, so we will have to be here for the next four or five years at least. There is nothing that makes me want to leave.'*

*'Yes, we are pretty well established. I am very happy with my job. We now have the house, and I am happy with my life here.'*

*'Yes, I prefer working as a vet here. It's better pay, and my work-life balance is better than it would be at home.'*

A small group suggested that they will remain in the UK for the next few years, but only because they feel that they have to due to a practical reason rather than a desire to live in the UK. Some provided reasons including visa restrictions and children who are settled in higher education.

*'We will then make a decision then – currently we have no other reason to stay apart from the boys.'*

*'I have some doubts as I cannot switch to a new clinic due to my sponsorship visa. This stops my personal progress.'*

Two interviewees expressed an interest in living and working more flexibly, in both the UK and Europe. This would mean that they could be with family but also enjoy the opportunities that working in the veterinary profession in the UK provides.

*'We want to move to a situation over the next year or so where we live part of the year in England, part in Italy. I'm looking online into careers as a vet.'*

*'I plan to be in and out. I am currently between the UK and Portugal to see my family.'*

Others were clear in saying that they would not be living in the UK in the next two to three years. The main reasons for leaving were returning to family at home or to seek employment in Europe.

*'Over the next two to three years I'm planning to go back to Spain, where my family live.'*

*'I am more interested in having a job outside the UK, I would prefer to be in Europe. I have lots of concerns about not being in the EU – how will I get healthcare if I am in Europe? What will happen to my pension if I move? I have a lot of questions about these processes. I am happy to be in any EU country.'*

*'Probably not. I might be living here but as my partner cannot work in the UK, I think she may return to Poland with the children.'*

## 6.8 Long-term plans

A large group of interviewees were planning on staying in the UK long-term. Two plan to stay until they retire, while others feel welcome and want to stay in the UK. Others want to stay because of their job and the opportunities for progression that would be available to them if they stay.

*'I feel extremely welcome and feel that society accepts me.'*

*'I'm planning to stay here and work until we retire, at least.'*

*'I would like to stay in the UK, especially because of my new role as a clinic director.'*

*'I would like to achieve more certifications and carry on with my personal progress.'*

Others are planning on leaving the UK in the future, to be with family or to return to their home country to retire. Some suggested that the shortage of vets in the UK has caused a lot of stress so this may motivate them to leave sooner rather than later.

*'I am focusing on coming back to Spain, where I have family.'*

*'I will start to think about my retirement. I will reduce my hours gradually and start to spend more time outside the UK. Maybe somewhere else in Europe.'*

*'I'll go back to Spain to live but I wouldn't work as a vet in Spain... I wouldn't want to work permanently [in the UK] in clinical practice because the shortage of vets is making things so stressful, with increased workload and lots of paperwork.'*

Over a quarter of interviewees were unsure about their long-term plans. Some would wait and see how the Brexit situation settles over the next few years, others said that where they go depends on their career and where they can find good job opportunities. One interviewee who had left the UK mentioned that they may potentially return, as they enjoyed living in the UK and hope that the shortage of vets will lead to an improvement in working conditions.

*'It'll depend on how this transition period goes.'*

*'Not sure, I would like to travel and get involved in conservation.'*

*'If the right opportunity comes up, then we will move. This also depends on career progression.'*

*'I am not sure really. I think I may potentially leave the veterinary profession as it is quite stressful.'*

## 6.9 Repercussions of Brexit

The interviewees were asked if they, or their family, had experienced any repercussions after the Brexit vote or since. Over half of the interviewees said that they had not experienced any direct repercussions, although a few mentioned that they had heard of others having these experiences. Interviewees also commented that they had found people to be more apologetic and that people who voted 'remain' discussed the Brexit vote more than those who voted 'leave'.

*'Personally, no, but I have heard some horrible stories. I've always found Scotland very welcoming.'*

*'No, personally I haven't experienced this. If anything, it was the opposite after the vote, with colleagues reassuring me that I was wanted.'*

*'People who voted to 'remain' bring up Brexit more than those who voted 'leave'. What people are thinking, I don't know.'*

*'No, there have been no issues for me. I've actually found that people have been more apologetic! Especially when it was close to the vote.'*

A few of the interviewees who arrived in the UK after the transition period commented that the only repercussions that they had experienced were administrative issues, for example working visa restrictions and waiting times for documents and National Insurance numbers.

*'Not really. I feel I am stuck in my role for 3 years but there haven't been any issues for me at all.'*

*'A lot of people that are coming into the UK are having to wait six months to get visas etc. I don't think it is necessary to test everyone to such a high level. It is all an overcomplicated process.'*

*'I struggled initially getting a NI number which made financial things difficult, however I'm not sure if this was a Brexit or Covid-19 issue'*

*'I have found that getting things shipped from Italy hard – mainly documents and paperwork. My wedding invitations have been rejected for delivery twice!'*

A small group of interviewees expressed emotional repercussions, including feeling unwelcome and stressed in the wake of the Brexit vote. One interviewee described how their family members, particularly their children, have felt unwelcomed.

*'My two oldest sons, who weren't born in the UK, don't want to stay in the UK because they do not feel welcome.'*

*'It has generated stress and made me feel angry and fed up. I stopped watching the news.'*

*'It was more emotional for me when I worked in Kent because some people there were very pro-Brexit.'*

*'We had some terrible neighbours who were very xenophobic.'*

Other interviewees had experienced or observed negative comments relating to Brexit. Some were from clients, from management, and others were online.

*'There were a few comments from clients – "when are you going home?" – not malicious but they still hurt.'*

*'I put something on the practice's Facebook page, that pet passports might no longer being valid after Brexit, and someone had a go at me about this and said I should stick to treating their animals.'*

*'I have seen a few unfortunate events – rude comments towards friends. Mostly clients towards friends who are also vets. Comments about not speaking own language because they are in the UK.'*

*'I experienced some discrimination at one practice, mainly from the management.'*

## 6.10 Do you have any regrets about coming to the UK?

Most of the interviewees said that they do not have any regrets about coming to the UK, both professionally and personally. Professionally, interviewees said that they enjoyed a high level of job satisfaction and have gained good knowledge and experience working in the veterinary profession in the UK, despite any concerns over salary (or the weather).

*'It's been a good experience in general; it's been worth it, not just for the salary, but gaining knowledge and experience.'*

*'No, none at all – besides the rain!'*

*'I've always worked with decent people and have been provided with great opportunities.'*

*'You do have to make sacrifices but that has been important to achieve a good professional life. I am building a life here, it's a happy life.'*

*'The UK gives the highest level of job satisfaction, job quality and status a vet can attain.'*

Three interviewees expressed that they had mixed feelings about coming to the UK. Many had met partners here and enjoyed their jobs, but interviewees felt that Brexit may have 'sour' their feelings towards living and working in the UK.

*'This is difficult to answer. Yes, but that is not a fair answer. My time here has been happy – I'm happy with the jobs I've had and my friendships. Brexit changes it and makes me want to go away.'*

*'It's a difficult question, because I met my husband here, so in that sense, no! ... If I had my career over again, I wouldn't come to the UK after Brexit.'*

*'I'm happy I came here although I still feel ambivalent sometimes and think maybe I should have stayed only for a shorter time. But I met my partner, I have good friends, and I've been doing the job I wanted to do.'*

Only one interviewee agreed that they do regret coming to the UK. This was due to the restrictions that had been implemented post-Brexit.

*'I do now, in that it's all more tricky now. We thought we had our lives sorted and were planning to retire then stay in the UK permanently, and now we're having to change our plans and do something different.'*

## 6.11 Would you encourage a VS or VN to come to the UK?

Over half of the interviewees said that they would still encourage a friend or family member to come to the UK to work in the veterinary profession. Some suggested that they are still actively encouraging others to come to work in the UK, mainly due to the professional opportunities that working in the UK brings and the high standards of veterinary practice. A few interviewees mentioned that this would be particularly good for people who have just graduated or who are early on in their career.

*'Yes, it was a valuable experience and has a good standard of practice.'*

*'The profession is better considered here. There are more prospects and more opportunities to improve. Working conditions and salary are better here. It is a good place to work in this profession.'*

*'The UK provides developmental opportunities that Italy doesn't with the same ease. Most employers will pay the RCVS fee, this is not something that happens with the Italian equivalent, and it is expensive. Employers will also pay for certificates or provide CPD allowances in the UK.'*



*'The UK is a good place for vets early in their career.'*

Others would say 'yes' but they would only suggest coming for a short period of time (two to three years), but they would warn others that the paperwork involved in working in the UK has increased and may be a deterrent for some.

*'Yes, but it would be more complicated and more hassle for them.'*

*'Yes, I would make them aware that it is trickier than it was before with all of the tests and visas, but it is still worth it compared to working at home.'*

*'Yes, but it is more tricky now. It can be subject to a company providing a visa. Nowadays it is more complicated.'*

*'Yes, for their career, because it'll be lifted up – but for a couple of years to get experience, not to stay, and I'd advise them to be careful about the politics.'*

Only two interviewees were unsure of their answer. They were keen to express that choosing to come to the UK is a personal choice and they would question their motivation for coming to the UK before deciding either way.

*'I don't think that I would encourage friends or family to come to the UK, but it depends on their outlook. Maybe if they were planning on coming for a short amount of time (maybe a year or two) I think it would be marvellous. I wouldn't encourage coming for a long period of time due to the Brexit changes.'*

*'I am unsure, I think it is a very personal decision... I would ask them their motivation for moving to the UK. I wouldn't recommend coming if it is just for money or work. You have to come here for yourself.'*

Around a quarter of interviewees explicitly said 'no', they would not recommend coming to the UK to work in the veterinary profession. This was mainly due to the logistics of getting a visa and the paperwork that is involved in creating a life in the UK, rather than the work itself.

*'No, not now, unless perhaps they just wanted to come for a short time, like a year. Otherwise, I'd try to persuade them not to come, especially as they'd get a better quality of life in some other countries.'*

*'No, in fact I'd strongly discourage them, I'd say that you don't want to be in this country anymore.'*

*'Not currently as it is so difficult. It would be an easier process if the roles were placed on the occupational shortage list. There is so much difficulty getting into the sector at the moment. Finding a home, getting settled status... it's complicated and expensive.'*

## 6.12 Impact on the veterinary profession

Interviewees were asked what they thought the impacts of Brexit would be on the veterinary profession over the next five years or so. Nearly all of the interviewees

acknowledged the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and how this may also be concurrently impacting the veterinary profession along with Brexit.

Nearly all of the interviewees referred to or discussed the significant staff shortages and the consequent recruitment issues that the veterinary profession is currently facing as a result of Brexit. Some accounted these issues to the additional administration and cost that it takes to hire an EU candidate to work in the UK, whilst a few argued that there is a shortage of applicants. The potential difficulty in getting to the UK may put some EU VSs off from coming at all, which could make the shortage of staff even more of an issue.

*'The UK is experiencing a shortage of vets and more work than ever.'*

*'There is a big issue with staffing – there are no people to fill vacancies. Practices are struggling to hire. There are lots of vets from the EU that have gone back home.'*

*'In the UK it is difficult to recruit veterinary staff, due to a shortage of applicants.'*

*'It is more difficult to get a visa in place as employers are more reluctant to employ EU candidates, then there is more pressure on employment market because the vacancies are not filled.'*

The newly introduced (in January 2021) English test required by the RCVS was also raised as a concern by interviewees. The high level of English that is required to pass and the cost of the test were both raised as potential deterrents that could influence applicants' decisions to come to the UK.

*'The English test is difficult, and it puts people off as they are too scared of failing. I know a lot of people who would cope here with the English language, but they are too scared that they wouldn't pass.'*

*'The level of English tests is really tough. It is difficult to obtain the marks required, it's not realistic for young vets.'*

*'A grade this high isn't needed – a six or six and a half would be better – something more similar to university requirements.'*

The additional paperwork and administration that has been introduced post-Brexit was also mentioned by interviewees as having an impact on the veterinary profession. The shortage of staff also means that this work has increased along with the new rules and regulations.

*'The certification required for transport, food, etc has increased but is not fully implemented due to a lack of time and resources.'*

*'I wouldn't recommend becoming a vet these days – it's so specialised and technical.'*

A few interviewees explained how the impact of Brexit has led some to leave the veterinary profession, along with travel issues caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Burnout and depression are also impacting vets, mainly due to the increasing workload and diminishing workforce.

*'It's awful. The way vets are working is impossible – people are leaving the profession by buckets!'*

*'I know people who have left the profession after 8 to 10 years because of complications due to going back home.'*

*'I think it will have an impact on people's mental health, especially burnout and depression. There is too much work and not enough people to do it.'*

### 6.12.1 Impact on sectors

Interviewees were also asked which veterinary sectors will be impacted the most by Brexit, the most common answers are:

- Slaughterhouses and meat inspection
- Food safety/hygiene
- Small animal practices, including corporate and high street practices
- Farming, including TB testing
- Official Veterinarians
- Academics at veterinary schools
- Out of hours services
- Imports and exports of animal products and medicines.

The main reason that interviewees suggest that they may be impacted is staff shortages and difficulty in recruiting people to fill the role of those who have left the UK.

*'I think any area will be affected – from food to ministry vets, etc. Everyone is struggling to employ.'*

*'There are more people who are expats and immigrants than nationals working in the practice – around 70% are not from the UK.'*

## 6.13 Views about the RCVS

### 6.13.1 Do you feel well supported by the RCVS?

When asked if they felt well supported by the RCVS, similarly to the second survey, opinions were mixed. Around a third of interviewees felt that they were unable to answer as they felt that they had no relationship or communication with the RCVS, other than receiving newsletters and having to be registered in order to practice.

*'I don't have a relationship with the RCVS, I have to subscribe for my job. I feel there is no added value, and it is purely procedural.'*

*'I don't really know. There is nothing that I would have needed from the RCVS so I don't really know how they could have helped me.'*

*'I haven't had much experience with the RCVS, but that is because I haven't needed any support from them. I think I receive their newsletter?'*

There was a similar sized group of respondents who suggested that they did feel well supported by the RCVS. They were particularly happy with the information and guidance, specifically regarding continued education, CPD and training that they receive from the RCVS. Some explained how the support they receive from the RCVS is much better than what they would receive from the equivalent regulatory body in their home country.

*'The requirements for continued education are good. The support they provide is good too, better than in my home country.'*

*'I feel well informed through emails with important information.'*

*'The RCVS produces quite a lot of information, and I can access it easily because I'm on the computer all day.'*

*'Yes. They have been very quick in responding to any of my questions. They have offered help and support.'*

A final group of interviewees felt strongly that they had not been well supported by the RCVS. They particularly felt that the RCVS should have done more to lobby the government to address the shortage of vets by making it easier for EU vets to work in the UK. They also felt that there was little additional support for EU vets who were already in the UK during the Brexit vote and transition periods.

*'They should have been lobbying the government to add vets to the occupational shortage list – there is no reason why they should not. They are not doing much – what are you doing to make changes?'*

*'No, I'm quite annoyed. We are treated like a "second class vet" as a European vet. The RCVS did not do anything regarding comments made by Gove or the government.'*

*'Neither the RCVS nor the BVA have pushed the government hard.'*

*'They should have other priorities – address the shortage of vets. They need to do more. They need to put more pressure on the government and make it easier to work in the UK – assistance with visas? It is too complicated, and people don't want to do it.'*

### 6.13.2 What else can the RCVS do?

The vast majority of interviewees suggested that the RCVS could make the process of coming and working in the UK from abroad easier, for example, by providing additional information to applicants to support them in the application process. They also suggested that this would help to ease the demand on the veterinary profession that was brought on by the staff shortages.

*'People already here know how things work; I think there needs to be more information available for people who want to come here to work.'*

*'For the vets already here, no. Those wanting to work in the UK, yes. They do a lot already but there is more they could do. They must offer the same opportunities to everyone, British or not.'*

*'They could offer specific help with applications, for example, there was a lot of confusion over the app that was used. This meant that lots of my colleagues were stressed. Having practical advice options on a range of topics (families, houses) available would help.'*

Others, especially newer arrivals to the UK, would ask the RCVS to lower the English test requirements, as this would also help to address the staff shortages.

*'The exam is expensive and only lasts for two years and it will put people off from doing it if they think that they won't pass.'*

*'It's silly to say lower the bar for the English test but I think that would help. Before Brexit a lot of Europeans came into the UK with way less English. This has been the only dealbreaker that I have heard about from friends.'*

Around a quarter explicitly said that the RCVS need to urgently address the shortage of vets by lobbying the government. A few also suggested that the RCVS should have seen this staffing and recruitment issue coming and should have been better prepared.

*'There is a shortage of vets – they need to lobby the government more. Small, independent practices are disappearing. The industry is becoming monopolised by big corporations who want to make more profits... I don't see anyone doing anything at the RCVS.'*

*'Maybe they could lobby the government and make it easier to get into the UK to work in the veterinary profession.'*

*'There is a shortage of vets, so they need to be prepared.'*

*'The RCVS should have seen this coming and done more to help, and to understand people's position. It wasn't hard to see the problems coming: borders, exports/imports, it wasn't rocket science to see what would happen.'*

## 6.14 Additional comments

Interviewees were given the opportunity to add anything else that they thought was relevant. Over half of those interviewed provided additional comments.

Appreciation of the chance to talk about the situation was expressed by a few interviewees. They also expressed their disappointment and concern for the future.

*'It has been good to chat and think about the topic. I am a bit disappointed about everything and it takes resilience to continue.'*

*'It's been good to have the opportunity to talk about this over the years, so thank you. It's an important issue that's close to our hearts.'*

*'I am curious to see what happens next.'*

*'I do feel the RCVS and the BVA let us down and missed opportunities to help.'*

*'It's going to get worse and worse for a while yet.'*

Similarly to the previous survey, interviewees expressed concern over the shortage of vets in the UK and how this could have more serious consequences for the profession in the coming years post-Brexit.

*'There are other things to worry about other than Brexit – why are vets leaving the profession? More pressure will only push them away.'*

*'I have also encountered four vets that I have previously worked with in other jobs, showing that people are moving hundreds of miles for jobs. I think they need to get vets into the UK.'*

One VS commented that the additional paperwork that was introduced after the UK officially left the EU could be contributing to this issue:

*'When I came to the UK it took less than three months to get my paperwork through when I came to the UK, but it is now taking longer than six months to get sorted.'*

## 6.15 Summarising interviewees' views

The final round of interviews with VSs provided great insight into how views and opinions of Brexit have changed over the past five years. The interviews have offered illuminating detail to further elaborate on the survey findings and previous reports. There have been changes in attitudes and opinions since the previous interviews, with nearly half of the interviewees being interviewed for the first time. We have also had the opportunity to talk with VSs who arrived in the UK after the transition period ended and VSs who have returned to their home country, allowing us to fully understand how the Brexit vote has impacted VSs and the veterinary profession. The Covid-19 pandemic has also influenced conversations within this round of interviews and has impacted the veterinary profession alongside Brexit.

Similarly to the second round of interviews, most interviewees were happy with their current career progression due to promotions, new jobs and new skills learnt. A small group did not agree and thought there were better paid opportunities outside of the UK and that there was a lot of uncertainty about the future. Newer arrivals to the UK felt that, despite a few financial concerns, they were very happy to be working in the UK.

There were concerns about planning for the future too, despite negotiations having come to an end. Some felt that there was a lack of clarity about the future, and this made them feel hesitant to make any major decisions. Others, at least for the short term, are keen to stay living and working in the UK, for the work opportunities and because they enjoy the lifestyle in the UK. Others were planning on living flexibly across Europe and the UK, and a small group were planning on leaving the UK altogether.

Longer term plans were varied too, with some interviewees planning on staying until retirement and others hoping to leave for their home country to be with family. Around a quarter felt uncertain about these plans too and said that they are still waiting to see how Brexit unfolds and that it really depends on where their career takes them.

As observed in the previous two rounds of interviews the majority of interviewees had not experienced any direct repercussions of the Brexit vote. Some had observed or heard negative comments from staff or online, whilst others had mainly administrative repercussions including visa restrictions and waiting times for paperwork. A small number did express more emotional repercussions of feeling unwelcome in the UK.

Despite this, most interviewees did not have any regrets about coming to the UK, reporting high job satisfaction, learning opportunities and extensive work experience. A small number had mixed feelings and one expressed that they did regret staying in the UK post-Brexit. Nevertheless, interviewees stated that they would encourage others to come to work in the veterinary profession in the UK, mainly for the professional opportunities and the high standard of veterinary practice in the UK. Around a quarter of interviewees said that they would not encourage this as the logistics of coming to the UK are not worth it anymore.

Interviewees did feel that Brexit had a great impact on the profession, especially on staff numbers. The additional costs and administration involved in employing an EU VS has put many employers off from hiring and this then causes burnout and stress for those who are still working in the profession. The English tests that are required by the RCVS were thought to be a deterrent for many EU VSs as they are considered too hard and expensive. These issues have led many to leave the profession which has only worsened the strain on the remaining staff. Interviewees were also keen to add that the Covid-19 pandemic may have also only exacerbated these issues.

Similarly to the previous rounds of interviews, opinions on the RCVS were mixed, with some feeling well supported and others feeling that they should be doing more to protect and look after EU VSs in the UK. They thought that more should be done to lobby the government to address the shortage of vets and that there was little support for those who were already in the UK during the vote and transition period. Many felt that they were unable to say whether or not they felt supported as they did not see that they had a relationship with the RCVS other than having to be registered to practice in the UK. Interviewees agreed that the RCVS needed to work towards reducing the staff shortage by making the process of coming to work in the UK easier by providing more information and making the English language test less strict and also lobbying the government to ensure better treatment and protection for all VSs working in the UK.

## 7 The views and intentions of European veterinary nurses

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This chapter summarises the views of 67 VNs (compared to the smaller group of 19 for the baseline survey in 2017 and 20 for the second survey in 2018) who participated in this survey. Due to the small size of the respondent group, an in-depth analysis cannot be conducted, so headlines only are given in this chapter, with some comparisons with the previous survey results; **these comparisons should be treated with caution due to the very small sample sizes obtained from the baseline and second surveys.**

### 7.1 Personal details

- The gender breakdown was 82 per cent female and 18 per cent male, compared to 74 per cent female and 26 per cent male for the baseline survey and 80 per cent female and 20 per cent male for the second survey.
- Respondents were aged between 24 and 53 years old (24 and 38 for the baseline survey; 25 and 28 for the second survey), with a mean average of 33.4 years (baseline mean 28; second survey mean 29.75). The modal age was 31 (baseline mode 27; second survey modes 25, 27 and 28).
- Ninety-four per cent identified as white, with the remaining six per cent identifying as mixed, other, or preferring not to say. All identified as white in the baseline and second survey, except one baseline respondent preferred not to identify their ethnicity.
- Fifty-two per cent (baseline 53 per cent; second survey 60 per cent) had a spouse, civil partner, or long-term partner.
  - Of those, 86 per cent had a partner who lives in the UK (baseline 100 per cent; second survey 67 per cent).
  - One hundred per cent of the spouses that lived in the UK worked in the UK.
  - Of those whose partners did not live in the UK, 60 per cent said there were no plans for this to happen. All of those in the second survey said that this was the case.
- Eight respondents (12 per cent) had a dependent child or children (baseline: two respondents; second survey: one respondent).
  - 80% of respondents who had dependent children said these children lived in the UK (baseline: two respondents, second survey: one respondent).
  - All of the respondents who had dependent children not living in the UK had plans for their children to come and live in the UK.



- The respondents qualified between 2000 and 2021 (baseline 2003 and 2014; second survey 2004 and 2014), with 77 per cent qualifying from 2011 onwards (baseline: 79 per cent from 2011; second survey: 75 per cent from 2012).
- Twenty-eight VNs qualified in Portugal (baseline six; second survey eight), 13 in Ireland (baseline seven; second survey 10), four in the Netherlands, Poland and Italy, three in Germany, and two in Belgium, Denmark and Spain. Greece, Lithuania, Romania, and the UK were all identified as the country of qualification for one VN, with one VN selecting 'Other'. More EU countries were represented in this survey by VNs compared to the baseline and second survey.
  - Ninety-one per cent of VNs had the same country of qualification and nationality; this was 100 per cent for the baseline and second survey.
- Fifty-four per cent of VNs arrived in the UK before the Brexit vote on 23 June 2016 (all baseline respondents and 10 per cent of second survey respondents): of these VNs, 71 per cent have been in the UK for between five and 10 years. Of the 46 per cent who arrived after the Brexit vote, 90 per cent arrived before the 31 January 2020, three per cent arrived during the transition period and seven per cent after the 1 January 2021.
- When first coming to the UK, 30 per cent of VNs had no clear plans at the time (baseline 47 per cent; second survey 35 per cent); 27 per cent intended to stay for a long period of time (more than five years) but not indefinitely (baseline 26 per cent; second survey 25 per cent); 25 per cent planned to stay indefinitely (baseline 0 per cent; second survey 20 per cent); 10 per cent intended to stay for less than three years; and seven per cent intended to stay for between three and five years.
- Twenty-nine per cent of respondents said that their plans have not changed since they came to the UK (79 per cent of baseline survey respondents said that the Brexit vote did not change their plans – 58 per cent in the second survey); 20 per cent are planning to stay in the UK longer than they had originally expected; 15 per cent said that their stay in the UK is likely to be shorter than originally planned; whilst another 15 per cent said that they have been in the UK longer than they expected to stay; and three respondents chose the 'other' option.
  - Seventeen per cent of VNs said that they currently have no clear plans.
- Considering their future plans, 23 per cent of VNs planned to stay in the UK indefinitely, whilst 28 per cent intend to stay for a long period of time (more than five years) but not indefinitely. A quarter of respondents (25 per cent) were uncertain of their intentions to stay in the UK. Three per cent planned to stay in the UK for less than a year; 11 per cent intend to stay for between one to two years; and another 11 per cent intend to stay for between three and five years.
- The impact of Brexit has made 56 per cent of VNs consider leaving the UK sooner and five per cent to stay in the UK longer; 39 per cent said that Brexit has not had an impact on them staying in the UK.
- Sixty-three per cent of respondents said that the Covid-19 pandemic has not influenced their decision to stay in the UK; 33 per cent said that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has made them think of leaving the UK sooner than originally

planned; while only four per cent said that the impact has encouraged them to stay in the UK longer.

- The most common reasons (selected by at least 40 per cent of respondents) given by the VNs for coming to the UK were ‘*to gain experience*’ (60 per cent; 53 percent in the baseline and second survey), ‘*better pay and conditions*’ (52 per cent; 58 per cent in the second survey survey), ‘*better career opportunities*’ (49 per cent; 58 per cent in the baseline survey and 63 per cent in the second survey), ‘*to work abroad*’ (48 per cent; 58 per cent in the baseline survey and 48 per cent in the second survey), and ‘*veterinary work has a higher status in the UK*’ (42 per cent; 42 per cent in the second survey).
- In this current survey, five responses attracted a response from at least 40 per cent of respondents, compared to three responses in the baseline survey and seven responses in the second survey. The two responses that achieved a 40 per cent and above response rate from respondents in the second survey were ‘*lack of work in home country*’ and ‘*better attitude to animals in the UK*’, both of which had a 34 per cent response rate in the third survey.

### 7.1.1 Free text answers

Respondents were asked ‘*has Brexit influenced your views about staying in, or leaving, the UK?*’ and those who said that it has influenced their views suggested feelings of being unwelcome and the financial consequences of Brexit:

*Don't want to stay in a country that doesn't welcome me anymore and potentially also my future family.*

*I don't think Brexit was good for the economy and will show in the long run.*

Respondents were also asked about how the Covid-19 pandemic had influenced their views about staying in, or leaving, the UK. The increased costs of living and the increased barriers to visiting family members who do not live in the UK were common amongst their answers.

*Costs of visiting family are a lot higher.*

*It's made it much more difficult to visit family or have family visit me which is very isolating.*

## 7.2 Job details

- Most respondents were working full time (82 per cent; compared to 89 per cent for the baseline and 75 per cent for the second survey). Ten per cent of VNs were working part time (baseline: five per cent, second survey: 15 per cent) and eight per cent were not working currently (baseline: five per cent; second survey: 10 per cent).

- Sixty per cent of those who are not currently working were in education (none in either the baseline or second survey).
- All the respondents who said they are currently working were working within the veterinary profession (baseline: 95 per cent; second survey: 85 per cent).
- Of those working within the veterinary profession, 95 per cent (baseline 90 per cent; second survey 88 per cent) worked within clinical veterinary practice. The remaining five per cent worked outside clinical veterinary practice.
- 59 per cent of respondents were working as a VN (95 per cent in both the baseline and second surveys), with 26 per cent working as a head, deputy head or senior vet nurse. Three respondents were working as a locum, two work as an employed assistant and one respondent is a director. Two respondents selected 'other'.
- Of those working in clinical practice, 72 per cent (baseline 95 per cent; second survey 67 per cent) worked in a small animal practice, 18 per cent in a referral/consultancy practice (second survey 27 per cent), and four per cent in an equine practice.
  - Three respondents (six per cent) worked in a mixed practice, one in a charity/trust and the other two in 'other' practices.
- Ten per cent were specially qualified practitioners (SQPs).
- As in the baseline and second surveys, nobody worked mainly or entirely within the meat industry/official controls sector.
- Eighty-nine per cent of VN respondents were currently in their preferred role (baseline 95 per cent; second survey 80 per cent)
- Fourteen per cent of respondents (compared to none for the baseline and 15 per cent for the second survey) have changed their area of work since coming to the UK.

### 7.2.1 Free text answers

Respondents who said that they were not currently in their preferred role (around 10 per cent of respondents) were asked which roles they would prefer and why and a range of different answers were provided. One VN said that their dream would be to '*work with exotics and/or wildlife and/or environment*' and another would like to '*specialise in neurology as a veterinary nurse*'.

One respondent called for more hands-on work with better pay and hours, while another would prefer non-clinical work for better career progression.

The answers provided covers seven different job roles and shows the variety of jobs within the sector.

## 7.3 Geographical details

- Most respondents (84 per cent) lived in England, with seven per cent living in Scotland, five percent in Northern Ireland, and four per cent in Wales.
- VNs lived in eight different regions of England:

- thirty-three per cent in the South East
  - thirty per cent in London
  - eleven per cent in each of the South West and East Midlands
  - the remaining VNs in Yorkshire and the Humber, the East of England, the West Midlands and the North West.
- Over half (51 per cent) of VNs lived in a mixed urban/rural area; 43 per cent lived in an urban or predominantly urban area; and only six per cent in a rural or predominantly rural area.

## 7.4 Settled status and British citizenship details

VNs were asked about their experience of applying for settled status and/or citizenship in the wake of the UK leaving the EU.

- Fifty-six per cent of respondents successfully applied for settled status on their first application. Seven percent were awaiting their outcome on their settled status application. One respondent applied but their application was rejected; they did not appeal their rejected application.
- Twenty percent of respondents did not need to apply for settled status because they had Irish or dual British and Irish citizenship; another five per cent did not need to apply because they have British citizenship.
- Ten per cent of respondents have not applied because they did not meet the application criteria, while one respondent did meet the criteria but decided not to apply.
- Others applied for pre-settled status: six respondents were successful in their application; one did not meet the criteria; and another met the criteria but chose not to apply.

### 7.4.1 Free text answers

Respondents were asked to describe their experience of applying for settled status. There were many responses that were positive in nature, describing the process as ‘*easy and quick*’ and their ‘*decision came through quickly*’, while others were more negative:

*They make it very difficult to apply and make you feel like an illegal immigrant.*

*Successfully applied and also my partner but didn't like the experience of having to apply to stay.*

One respondent commented that they found the application easy to do but the technological barrier of requiring an Android phone to complete the application process made it much more difficult.

Respondents who applied for pre-settled status were asked to discuss their experience with the process. The comments were generally positive, one suggested that it ‘*all worked*

*without a problem*'. Another respondent explained that they were '*never concerned about not getting pre-settled status*'.

VNs were also asked about their plans with regards to staying in or leaving the UK. Many were unsure, whilst a few were planning on staying in the UK for the job opportunities.

*No plans yet, but I'm quite convinced I won't get old here.*

*My plans are finish studies and use this to apply in the UK.*

*Probably staying here as partner doesn't speak German and doesn't intend on leaving the UK due to work.*

*I'm comfortable and happy here. The amount of opportunities I have already been given in these last 2 years is huge and I'm excited about continuing to grow, so leaving the UK is not something I'm considering at the moment.*

## 7.5 Personal impact of Brexit

Respondents were asked to give their views about a variety of aspects relating to how Brexit had impacted on their working and personal lives, by responding to attitudinal statements on a five-point scale from '*strongly disagree*' to '*strongly agree*'. These statements are given in the tables below, together with the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed. Positively worded statements (to which agreement indicates a positive view) are in Table 7.1. Negatively worded statements (to which agreement indicates a negative view) are in Table 7.2. Table 7.3 contains the responses to neutrally worded statements that relate to waiting for the situation to become clearer. Where the statement was included in either of the previous surveys, the percentage of respondents who answered in the same way is included.

As in the baseline survey, not all respondents gave their views about these statements; for most statements, 53 of the 67 respondents replied, compared to 14 of the 19 for the baseline survey and 16 of the 20 respondents for the second survey.

Table 7.1 indicates that views of VNs were notably less positive overall compared to the baseline and second surveys, as a lower percentage agree or strongly disagree to nearly almost every statement. Only two statements – '*working in the UK has increased my employment prospects abroad*' and '*my colleagues are more supportive now*' – garnered more positive reactions than the previous survey responses.

The statements '*despite Brexit, coming the UK has been a positive move for me*' and '*I am pleased I came to the UK*' were new for the current survey and were agreed with by the majority of respondents.

**Table 7.1: Personal impact of Brexit – positively worded statements**

Statement	N	Agree or strongly agree	Agreed or strongly agreed in second survey (%)	Agreed or strongly agreed in baseline survey (%)
I am satisfied with my career progression since coming to the UK	55	62	75	100
I would like to stay in the UK	55	44	67	78
Nothing much has changed for me	55	33	63	71
Working in the UK has increased my employment prospects abroad	55	55	50	65
I am satisfied with my pay/income progression since coming to the UK	55	40	50	57
I am optimistic about my future	56	32	38	50
My employer is more supportive now	54	11	13	36
My colleagues are more supportive now	54	13	6	7
People I meet in the course of my work are friendlier towards me now	54	4	0	0
Despite Brexit, coming to the UK has been a positive move for me	55	71	-	-
I am pleased I came to the UK	54	67	-	-

*RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017*

Table 7.2 suggests that, in general, views have changed somewhat to become more negative compared to the previous two surveys, in that there was a larger percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statements than in either previous survey.

In the second survey, half of respondents suggested that they were actively looking for work outside of the UK, but this number has now dropped down to 15 per cent, which is closer to the numbers in the baseline survey (14%).

More respondents reported feeling stressed at work (45%, compared to 13% in the second survey) and feeling that a lot has changed for them (39%, again compared to only 13%). The issues of job security and limited opportunities for promotion or advancement were not seen as a great concern by respondents in the second survey (only six per cent of respondents agreed to each statement), but more respondents agreed with these statements now than in any previous surveys, all receiving around a quarter of respondents agreeing with the statement (27% and 23%).

The statements '*I have observed prejudice at work in the run up to, or since, the UK's withdrawal from the EU*'; '*I have personally experienced prejudice at work in the run up to, or since, the UK's withdrawal from the EU*'; '*My qualifications are less valued*'; '*I feel my UK experience will be less valued in Europe now*' and '*I regret coming to the UK*' were all included in the current survey for the first time. The response from respondents

suggested that up to a third were observing or experiencing prejudice at work in the run up to or since withdrawal from the EU; this was similar to the second survey.

**Table 7.2: Personal impact of Brexit – negatively worded statements**

Statement	N	Agree or strongly agree	Agreed or strongly agreed in the second survey (%)	Agreed or strongly agreed in baseline survey (%)
The Brexit vote has saddened me	56	84	75	92
I am more likely to leave the UK	53	50	50	50
I am considering a move back home	52	42	50	50
I am actively looking for work outside the UK	53	15	50	14
I feel less welcome in the UK	53	51	44	58
I am fearful about the future	53	38	31	57
I am more stressed at work	53	45	13	31
I feel pessimistic about my future	53	21	13	21
A lot has changed for me	51	39	13	21
Fewer development opportunities are open to me	53	13	6	29
My skills are less valued	53	15	6	7
My job security has reduced	52	27	6	7
My opportunities for promotion/advancement are more limited	53	23	6	7
People I meet in the course of my work are less friendly towards me now	52	10	6	0
My colleagues are less supportive now	52	8	6	0
My employer is less supportive now	53	4	0	0
I have observed prejudice at work in the run up to, or since, the UK's withdrawal from the EU	53	38	-	-
I have personally experienced prejudice at work in the run up to, or since, the UK's withdrawal from the EU	53	28	-	-
My qualifications are less valued	53	15	-	-
I feel my UK experience will be less valued in Europe now	54	13	-	-
I regret coming to the UK	53	8	-	-

*RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017*

Finally, Table 7.3 suggests that European VNs were divided on making any decisions or commitments regarding staying in the UK. This may reflect the confusion and uncertainty about the future that was expressed in free text answers by VNs. The three statements included were asked for the first time in this current survey, so a direct comparison with the previous two surveys cannot be made, but a similar sentiment of uncertainty about the future was apparent across all three surveys.

**Table 7.2: Personal impact of Brexit – neutrally worded statements**

Statement	N	Agree or strongly agree (%)
The situation is still not clear for me	54	52
I am undecided whether to stay in the UK or leave	53	45
I do not feel able to make a commitment to staying in the UK	52	48

*RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021*

### 7.5.1 Free text answers

As shown above, respondents were asked to indicate whether to what extent they agree with the following statement ‘*I have personally experienced prejudice at work in the run up to, or since, the UK’s withdrawal from the EU*’, 28 respondents indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed. Respondents were asked to expand on this answer and 15 provided comments.

Most of the responses given by VNs outlined their experience of observing or experiencing prejudiced comments or issues regarding the language barrier. This appeared to come mainly from clients, but on a few occasions the comments were from colleagues, management and other staff members within the practice.

*People being rude, pretending that they did not understand the accent, changing of posture when they realise they will be seen by a foreigner...*

*I have had clients be incredibly rude to me when I've asked them to repeat themselves because I can't understand their accent or the slang they've used.*

*I have been told by a vet that and I quote "Portuguese nurses are as bad as Irish nurses", been mistreated by that vet but also suffered questions about my origins and why I came by clients in a pejorative way or tone.*

Other VNs suggested that it has caused them to have issues finding a job and staying in a job long term. It has also made staying in their place of work uncomfortable or difficult.

*A general disregard. I changed my place of employment.*

*European vets/nurses not even being considered for roles due to the ‘uncertainty’ surrounding Brexit and their status.*

*I've seen clients requesting not to see a foreigner vet. Just wanted a British one. This I've seen more than once since Brexit.*



## 7.6 Views about the impact of Brexit on the UK veterinary profession

A separate set of statements, also using a five-point scale from ‘*strongly disagree*’ to ‘*strongly agree*’, asked VNs to consider the impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession as a whole. These statements are given in Table 7.4, together with the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed and with the baseline and second survey percentages for comparison, and in Table 7.5, which contains percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to statements that were only asked in this final survey.

**Table 7.3: Impact on the veterinary profession of Brexit (previously asked in baseline and second surveys)**

Statement	N	Agree or strongly agree (%)	Agreed or strongly agreed in the second survey (%)	Agreed or strongly agreed in baseline survey (%)
European veterinary nurses are less likely to come here	52	81	81	87
European veterinary surgeons are less likely to come here	52	83	69	80
Veterinary employers are less likely to employ European veterinary surgeons	53	32	56	50
Veterinary employers are less likely to employ European veterinary nurses	53	40	44	50

*RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021, 2018 and 2017*

**Table 7.5: Impact on the veterinary profession of Brexit (only asked in the current survey)**

Statement	N	Agree or strongly agree (%)
The veterinary profession in the UK is experiencing recruitment difficulties due to Brexit	53	91
Brexit is having a negative impact on all types of work within the veterinary profession	53	91
The Covid-19 pandemic is masking the impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession in the UK	50	86
Longer term, Brexit will have a bigger impact on the veterinary profession in the UK than the Covid-19 pandemic	50	78
Tighter controls over freedom of movement are causing European veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to leave the UK	52	75
I personally know European veterinary surgeons and/or nurses who have left the UK because of Brexit	53	60
The Government should increase funding available to UK veterinary schools in order to decrease the UK’s dependence on overseas-qualified veterinary surgeons	49	45

Statement	N	Agree or strongly agree (%)
There should be more veterinary schools in the UK in order to decrease the UK's dependence on overseas-qualified veterinary surgeons	51	31
Veterinary schools in the UK should enlarge their intakes in order to decrease the UK's dependence on overseas-qualified veterinary surgeons	51	29
Brexit is having a negative impact on the veterinary profession, but only in certain types of work	50	20
European veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses are still coming to the UK because of the opportunities offered to them	54	13
Brexit is having no, or very few, negative impacts on the veterinary profession in the UK	54	9
Brexit will not have a lasting impact on the veterinary profession in the UK, after the initial few years	51	6
European veterinary surgeons and nurses have been leaving the UK because of the Covid-19 pandemic, not Brexit	50	6
Any negative impact on the veterinary profession in the UK will be short term	52	2

*RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021*

Table 7.4 suggests that a lower percentage of European VNs believed that others were likely to come to the UK to work compared to the second survey; however, the current survey result was similar to that of the baseline survey. However, it seems that respondents in the current survey believed that UK employers are more likely to employ EU VNs and VNs than they did in the second survey. This may be due to the uncertainty that was present in 2018 when the second survey was conducted, or it may be due to the shortage of staff in the veterinary sector.

Table 7.5 includes statements that were included for the first time in the current survey. Nearly all VNs responded that the veterinary profession has an issue with recruitment and that Brexit will have a negative impact on all types of work within the profession. They also agreed that the Covid-19 pandemic is masking the impact that Brexit has had on the veterinary sector. However, there was strong agreement that Brexit would have a longer-term impact on the profession than Covid-19.

Other, more positively-worded, statements were much less agreed with. The statements *'Brexit is having no, or very few, negative impacts on the veterinary profession in the UK'*; *'Brexit will not have a lasting impact on the veterinary profession in the UK, after the initial few years'*; *'European veterinary surgeons and nurses have been leaving the UK because of the Covid-19 pandemic, not Brexit'*; and *'Any negative impact on the veterinary profession in the UK will be short term'* were agreed with by less than 10 per cent of respondents, suggesting that VNs believe Brexit will have a long-term impact on the veterinary profession and that anyone leaving the UK has been due to Brexit rather than Covid-19.

### 7.6.1 Areas of veterinary work

Table 7.6 shows that European VNs believed that most areas of veterinary work will be impacted negatively by Brexit, with others being relatively unaffected but none being positively impacted overall. The answers from the second survey have been included in brackets for comparison.

It is noticeable that European VNs believed the areas in which they were most likely to work – small animal, mixed and referral/specialist/consultancy practices – were particularly likely to be impacted negatively. This was the same for the second survey.

**Table 7.6: How will different areas of veterinary work be affected by Brexit?**

Statement	N	Very negative or negative impact (%)	No significant impact (%)	Positive or very positive impact (%)
Small animal practices	48	96 (88)	4 (6)	0 (6)
Referral/specialist/consultancy practices	43	88 (76)	12 (18)	0 (6)
Mixed practices	39	95 (71)	5 (29)	0 (0)
Meat industry/animal products - Official Controls	39	79 (67)	21 (33)	0 (0)
Official Veterinary work, eg Animal & Plant Health Agency, Food Standards Agency	40	67	33	0
Animal pharmaceutical industry	40	80	20	0
Farm/production animal practices	41	90 (59)	10 (41)	0 (0)
Equine practices	41	80 (59)	20 (41)	0 (0)
Animal charities	41	76 (50)	24 (50)	0 (0)
Pet insurance industry	39	41	59	0
Veterinary education	40	50 (44)	48 (56)	3 (0)
Veterinary Research Councils	39	21 (50)	79 (50)	0 (0)
Other area of veterinary work 1	17	47	53	0
Other area of veterinary work 2	15	33	67	0
Other area of veterinary work 3	12	25	75	0

*RCVS surveys of non-UK European veterinary professionals, 2021 and 2018*

Respondents provided other areas of veterinary work that they believed will be affected by Brexit including ‘*veterinary marketing*’, ‘*zoos*’, ‘*racecourses*’ and the ‘*shipping and delivery of goods*’.

## 7.7 Views about the support given by the RCVS

In response to a question about the support being given by the RCVS to European VNs and VNs, 46 per cent (71% in the second survey) said they ‘definitely’ feel supported by the RCVS and 33 per cent (29% in the second survey) said ‘yes, but more could be done’.

Twenty-one per cent of respondents said 'no', meaning that they did not feel the RCVS was working effectively to support European VSs and VNs. None of the respondents in the second survey selected this answer, but 13 per cent felt this way in the baseline survey.

Many respondents were keen to express actions that the RCVS could make to further support European VNs in the UK, with guidance for the RCVS ranging from financial support to support with the required qualifications:

*Fees have increased since the Brexit referendum which is not supporting those who are feeling the financial constraints of Brexit and now COVID.*

*The RCVS has made it quite difficult for me to qualify in the UK even though I already qualified in Germany. They also didn't give me any option to explain myself and just put me in an awkward position.*

A large proportion of the responses from the VNs expressed that they were unsure of the present support provided by the RCVS:

*So far, I have not experienced any particular support whatsoever from the RCVS re my employment in the UK as an EU citizen.*

*Was not aware of any support in place.*

Others would encourage better communication and representation of EU vets by the RCVS, specifically to the government:

*More pressure on the Government to get the funds needed to employ/form more Vet and vet nurses.*

*More representation in the media.*

## 7.8 Advice for other EU veterinary professionals

Respondents were asked whether they would advise a European VS or VN to come to the UK to work now that the UK has left the EU. The largest proportion of responses (32%) said that they were 'unsure'. Twenty-eight per cent said that they would advise coming to the UK to work longer term and perhaps even settle here, whilst 17 per cent said they would still advise coming to the UK but only for a limited period of time. Twenty-three per cent said that they would not advise coming to the UK to work as a VS or VN. The respondents were evenly split between each of the answers, suggesting that there was a lack of agreement between the VNs in their views of coming to the UK to work as a VS or VN.

## 7.9 Final comments

Two free text comments in response to the final question, '*Do you have any further comments to make about this survey or the impact of Brexit?*' indicated that Brexit has had a negative impact on some VNs' lives in the UK:

*I think everybody who voted Brexit has completely underestimated the impact of Brexit, which is worsened by Covid outbreak.*

*It has been difficult enough for nurses and vets, especially from Germany, so now I wouldn't even try anymore.*

## 8 Conclusions

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The final survey of European VSs and VNs who are registered to work in the UK, together with the follow-up interviews, yielded a mixed picture. Respondents were very clear in their opinions that Brexit had impacted on their personal lives, and on the veterinary profession, in a negative way; yet they are also, on the whole, pleased that they came to the UK, and believe it still offers opportunities to veterinary professionals to develop their careers and gain experience.

The 2021 survey received a notably lower response rate than those conducted in 2017 and 2018. One reason may be the fatigue that many veterinary professionals were experiencing as they emerged from a relentlessly busy period of working intensely during the Covid-19 pandemic, with veterinary professional within small animal practices, in particular, having experienced a big increase in workload. Another reason may be that European VSs and VNs felt that the Brexit negotiations were done, and their position was reasonably clear with regard to the terms for coming to, and staying in, the UK – whereas the uncertainty and anxiety five years ago resulted in high response rates in part because European veterinary professionals were unsure of their futures and wanted to share their disquiet about the Brexit vote, their anxieties, and their views about what should be done by the RCVS to support them.

The personal and work profile of respondents was broadly similar to previous surveys. European VSs were most likely to have come from Spain, Italy, Romania and Poland; 81 per cent of VSs worked within clinical practice (the majority in small animal practices); and outside clinical practice, FSA and APHA were the most likely employers, with a high percentage of these working in the meat industry/official controls. The small number of VN respondents also worked mainly within clinical veterinary practice, in small animal practices.

A fairly high 61 per cent of VS respondents had arrived in the UK before the Brexit referendum in 2016, and many of these had been in the UK for 10 years or more, had built their work and personal lives here, and thought of the UK as their home. However, European VSs have continued to come to the UK after the referendum and even after the UK finally left the EU and the exit terms were at last agreed; eight per cent of respondents had arrived in the UK after the transition period, from 1 January 2021. The reasons for coming to the UK have not changed over the years of running the three Brexit surveys: to gain experience and career opportunities in a country where veterinary professionals have status and the attitude towards animals is good.

Views about the personal impact of Brexit varied, but on the whole respondents were pleased they had come to the UK, feeling it had increased their employment prospects; they were satisfied with their career progression and pay/income progression, and wanted to stay in the UK (a large 79% disagreed with the statement 'I regret coming to the UK').

Around half (52%) planned to stay in the UK for at least five years from the date of the survey, with a low five per cent planning to leave within one year. A substantial minority (41%) said they would still advise other European VSs and VNs to come to the UK, despite the additional bureaucracy involved, because of the opportunities offered. However, respondents were very sad about the UK's withdrawal from the UK and felt that things had changed for them, and that they were less welcome; compared to previous surveys they were notably less in agreement with almost every positively-worded statement, and notably more in agreement with every negatively-worded statement. Those working outside clinical veterinary practice were less positive about almost every aspect than their counterparts within clinical practice.

Although the majority of respondents had not experienced observed prejudice since the Brexit vote and during the withdrawal period, a substantial minority had (34% observed and 27% experienced), and their comments were hard to read. They described casual prejudice and more serious abuse from clients and (though much less frequently) from colleagues, and perceived unfairness around job and promotion opportunities. However, some added that they felt welcome and supported most of the time, and the follow-up interviewees also reported mostly friendly and good relationships.

Applying for settled status had been, for most, a straightforward and easy process, with quick decisions; only a small minority had experienced any difficulties, stress or delays. However, some respondents – notably those who had lived in the UK for a long time and had previously felt settled and part of their communities – resented having to apply and were insulted that they had contributed so much to the UK but were now being treated as outsiders who should feel privileged to be permitted to remain.

Views about the impact of Brexit on the veterinary profession were bleakly pessimistic, with respondents believing that it was impacting negatively or very negatively on every area, especially the meat industry/animal production official controls, official veterinary work, small animal practices, farm/production animal practices, and mixed practices. The only area thought to be less at risk was the pet insurance industry. Questions about the relative impacts of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic suggested that respondents believed Brexit was having a notably bigger impact, and indeed that the pandemic was masking the impact of Brexit. Free text responses and interviewees referred to the serious shortage of VSs and VNs and the resulting stress and burnout for those remaining, which could have been ameliorated if veterinary professionals still had the freedom of movement removed by Brexit.

Although many respondents felt well supported by the RCVS, some did not, and others thought the RCVS could do more. Suggestions included lowering the bar on English language tests, which was considered too high (and above that required by other sectors); better facilitation of EU veterinary professionals who wanted to come to the UK, such as support with visa applications and acceptance of EU qualifications; more lobbying of the government on their behalf and on behalf of the veterinary profession in general; and more pressure on employers to provide better pay and working conditions.