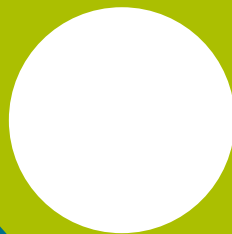
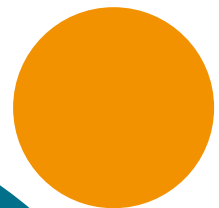
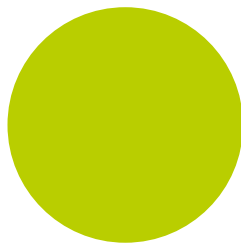




Veterinary Council of Ireland

Workforce Report



Trusted and Effective Veterinary Regulation



Contents

1.	Executive Summary	4
2.	Headline Recommendations	5
3.	Purpose of the Workforce Review	10
4.	Workforce Review Working Group	11
5.	Objectives	12
6.	Analysis of the Registers	14
7.	Research, Reports & Methodology	15
8.	Major Findings & Observations	16
9.	Detailed Recommendations	25
10.	Sector Forecast & Projected Availability of Veterinary Professionals in Ireland	34
11.	Factors in the Attraction, Recruitment & Retention of Veterinary Professionals in Ireland	41
12.	VCI Accredited Programmes of Education	46
13.	International Landscape & Initiatives	47
14.	Acknowledgements	51
15.	Glossary	52
16.	References	54
	Appendix 1. VCI Data Analysis	55
	VCI Register Numbers Overview	56
	Veterinary Practitioner Register Data March 2021-2024	60
	Veterinary Nurse Register Data March 2021-2024	70
	Veterinary Practice Premises Register Data March 2021-2024	76
	Veterinary Practitioner Register Data October 2020-2023	77
	Veterinary Nurse Register Data October 2020-2023	84
	Veterinary Practice Premises Register Data October 2020-2023	89
	Registered Veterinary Premises Data April 2024	93
	Migration Around the Register Data May 2024	101
	Appendix. 2. VCI Register Analysis Report by Niall Devitt	103
	Appendix 3. VCI Survey of Veterinary Practitioners & Veterinary Nurses Leaving the Registers	139

Executive Summary



01

This Workforce Report analyses and presents data and information gathered on Registered Veterinary Practitioners, Registered Veterinary Nurses and Registered Veterinary Premises in Ireland from 2020 to 2024. Maintaining the Veterinary Practitioner, Veterinary Nurse and Veterinary Premises Registers is fundamental to the Veterinary Council of Ireland's statutory role in managing the practice of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing in Ireland, in the interests of animal health and welfare and public health.

The data held on the Veterinary Council Registers provides valid and robust insight into the veterinary workforce in Ireland. This report emphasises the clinically active veterinary workforce in Ireland, presenting quantitative analysis of demographics, geographics and nature of practise/species.

The data outlined in this report is the Veterinary Council's first analysis of the rich data held as a statutory regulator. Some of this data forms the basis for important observations, including recruitment and retention challenges in remote and vulnerable areas, projections for future veterinary service provision, consistent availability of out-of-hours emergency care, and work-life balance challenges. The vocational element associated with the high standards of commitment traditionally enjoyed by society in the veterinary professions, cannot be assumed in recognition of the associated work life impacts of younger generations.

Work conditions and progression opportunities need to be addressed, improved and supported to ensure more recently qualified or younger graduates are attracted and retained in veterinary services, to continue to meet the demanding challenges of veterinary practice, food safety and public health initiatives.

A growing population in Ireland, alongside increasing numbers of companion animal ownership, paves a path for increased demands on veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses. The data highlights workforce challenges across different practice areas, including a shift from rural large animal or farm animal practices to urban companion animal settings. It also indicates that a significant proportion of veterinary professionals in food animal services are approaching retirement age, and many are working in violation of the European Working Time Directive (EWTd).

It is planned to use the data contained in this report to help inform and support policies related to veterinary recruitment and retention strategies, veterinary medicine and nursing education policies, training development, animal health and food integrity policy in Ireland.

Effective and strategic workforce planning can be achieved through collaborative working amongst educators, regulators, and employers including the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and potentially a range of other stakeholders such as Veterinary Representative Bodies, Schools of Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Nursing, Health Products Regulatory Authority, Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Animal Health Ireland, Teagasc, Farming Bodies, the Department of Health and other stakeholders.

The Veterinary Council is committed to collaborating with all stakeholders to support effective planning for a strong and sustainable veterinary workforce, ensuring that animal services, food production, public health, and welfare standards are supported and enabled in the future, for the public good.

Headline Recommendations

02

Following analysis of the Register data collected, seven recommendations have been developed with the aim of supporting the delivery of veterinary services into the future for the betterment of animal health and welfare and public health. The recommendations are:

- ▶ **Recommendation 1: Promoting the Role of the Veterinary Nurse**

Registered Veterinary Nurses are an integral part of the veterinary team, working alongside veterinary practitioners to provide high levels of care for animals. Due to their varied skills, employing veterinary nurses offers numerous benefits to veterinary practices, enhancing both the quality of care provided to animals and the overall efficiency of the practice.
- ▶ **Recommendation 2: VCI to Host Public Stakeholder Consultation on Out of Hours Emergency Veterinary Care**

The availability of 24-hour emergency care is a mandatory requirement to ensure that animals always have access to emergency veterinary care, in the interest of animal health and welfare. It is recommended that the VCI conducts a public consultation, open to all stakeholders, to gather views regarding out of hours emergency animal care and the current requirements in place.
- ▶ **Recommendation 3: Actions to Support Registrants & Improve Work Life Balance**

During its review, the Workforce Review Working Group agreed that it must look at the areas of retention and possible factors which would entice and enable people to return to the VCI Register, as a sustainable and effective workforce is integral to delivering safe, high-quality care. A number of recommended actions to support Registrants have been prepared.
- ▶ **Recommendation 4: Financial Supports and Subsidies**

It may be prudent for the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine to consider making some financial provision and/or alternate supports or subvention of veterinary services in remote or vulnerable areas of the country, in the interests of animal health and welfare and public health.
- ▶ **Recommendation 5: Increased Engagement with the Public and Service Users**

As an independent body, acting in the public's interest, it is important that the VCI engages with the public and service users. By doing so, the VCI can create more effective, fair, and practical regulations that better serve the public interest and adapt to changing circumstances.
- ▶ **Recommendation 6: Increased Veterinary Engagement across State Agencies, Government Bodies and Other Relevant Stakeholders**

Increased engagement and cooperation between veterinary practitioners, veterinary nurses, state agencies, and other stakeholders can benefit public health, animal welfare, One Health initiatives, food safety, economic development, sustainability, and environmental protection.
- ▶ **Recommendation 7: Economic and Social Research Institute Further Analysis**

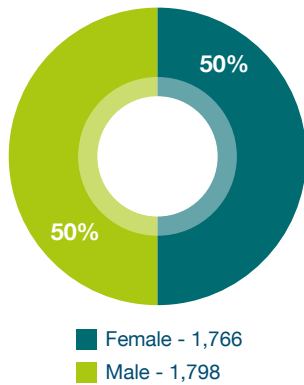
Commissioning an independent research institute like the Economic and Social Research Institute to examine current supply of, and demand for, veterinary services, would assist the VCI, and other relevant stakeholders, in formulating policy around veterinary services into the future, for the public good.

Further information regarding each of the recommendations and associated actions are included in Section 9 of this report.

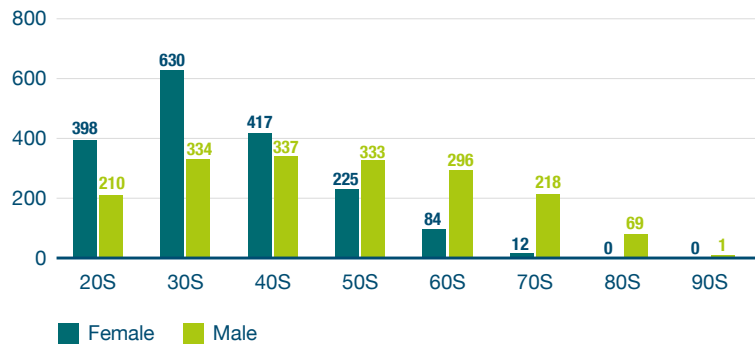
A snapshot in numbers – March 2024

Registered Veterinary Practitioners

No. of Veterinary Practitioners - 3,564

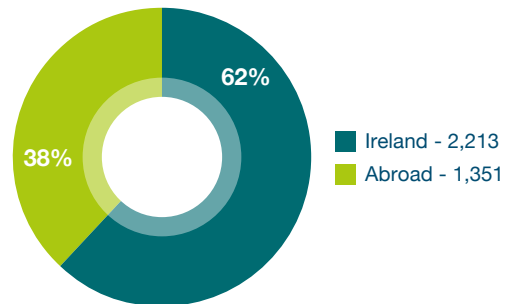


Age Range



Primary Practice Field 2024	% Overall
Clinical Practice	68.2%
Government Agency/Local Authority	19.1%
Industry and/or Commerce	3.1%
Research	0.5%
Other	2.5%
Universities and/or Colleges	3.9%
Retired or Non-Practising	2.7%

Place of Graduation



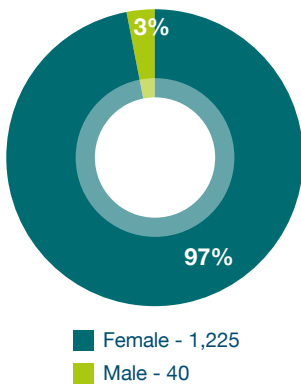
Clinical Practice Type 2024	% Overall	% Full Time	% Part Time
Companion Animal Practice	40.6%	74.4%	25.6%
Equine Practice	11.4%	83%	17%
Farm Animal Practice	12.5%	86.6%	13.4%
Mixed Practice	35.5%	89.9%	10.1%

82 Total Veterinary Medicine training places available via CAO in Ireland in 2024

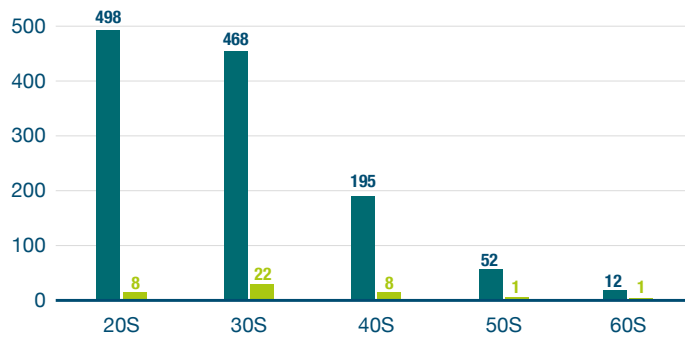
A snapshot in numbers – March 2024

Registered Veterinary Nurses

No. of Veterinary Nurses - 1,265

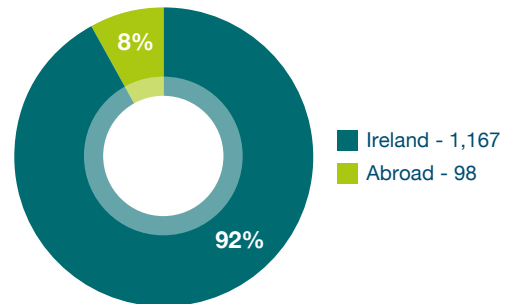


Age Range



Primary Practice Field 2024	% Overall
Clinical Practice	87%
Government Agency/Local Authority	0.5%
Industry and/or Commerce	1.9%
Research	0.3%
Other	5.3%
Universities and/or Colleges	4.8%
Retired or Non-Practising	0.2%

Place of Graduation



Clinical Practice Type 2024	% Overall	% Full Time	% Part Time
Companion Animal Practice	71.2%	79.3%	20.7%
Equine Practice	2.9%	89.3%	10.7%
Farm Animal Practice	0.5%	80%	20%
Mixed Practice	25.4%	76.8%	23.2%

199






Total Veterinary Nursing training places available via CAO in Ireland in 2024

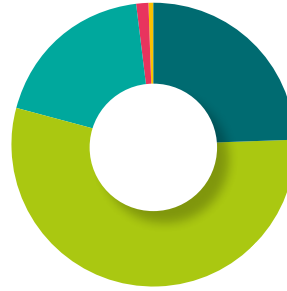
+50 places available between two course providers that offer an add on level 8 veterinary nursing course

A snapshot in numbers – March 2024

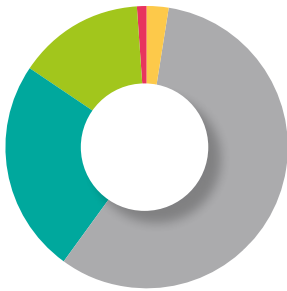
Registered Veterinary Premises

Total Registered Veterinary Premises – 764






-  Registered Veterinary Offices – 188
-  Registered Veterinary Clinics – 418
-  Registered Veterinary Hospitals – 145
-  Registered Veterinary Facilities – 9
-  Registered Mobile Veterinary Units – 4

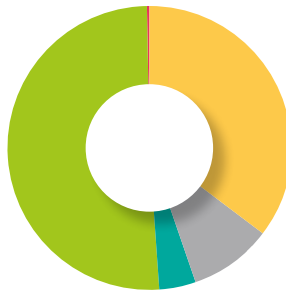


Breakdown of Registered Veterinary Premises by Practice Profile








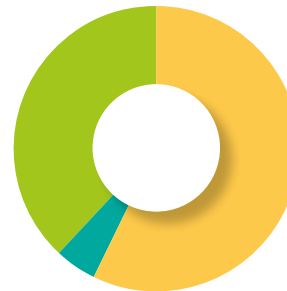
Registered Veterinary Offices - 188

-  Companion Animal – 5
-  Farm Animal – 108
-  Equine – 46
-  Mixed Practice – 27
-  Other – 2








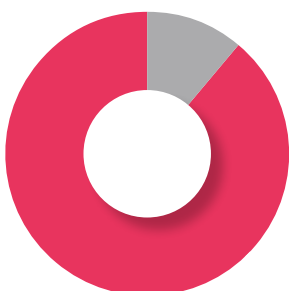
Registered Veterinary Clinics - 418

-  Companion Animal – 148
-  Farm Animal – 39
-  Equine – 18
-  Mixed Practice – 212
-  Other – 1








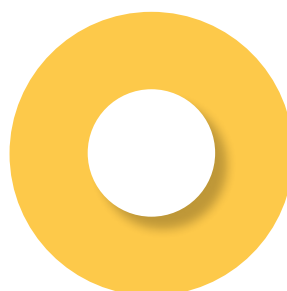
Registered Veterinary Hospitals - 145

-  Companion Animal – 83
-  Farm Animal – 0
-  Equine – 7
-  Mixed Practice – 55
-  Other – 0








Registered Veterinary Facilities - 9

-  Companion Animal – 0
-  Farm Animal – 1
-  Equine – 0
-  Mixed Practice – 0
-  Other – 8



Registered Mobile Veterinary Units (Charities) - 4

-  Companion Animal – 4
-  Farm Animal – 0
-  Equine – 0
-  Mixed Practice – 0
-  Other – 0

A snapshot in numbers

Human & Animal Population in Ireland 2024



Population of Ireland **5,380,000**



Number of Cattle in Ireland **7,183,100**



Number of Sheep in Ireland **5,175,700**



Number of Pigs in Ireland **1,679,900**



Number of Horses in Ireland **159,000**



Estimated Number of Companion Animals in Ireland
920,000



Estimated Number of Exotic Animals in Ireland
130,000

Purpose of Workforce Review

03

About the Veterinary Council of Ireland

The Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI) is an independent statutory body set up under the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended. For public accountability purposes, the Veterinary Council of Ireland operates under the aegis of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The principal function of the Veterinary Council of Ireland is to regulate the practice of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing in Ireland, in the interest of animal health and welfare, and public health. The Veterinary Council of Ireland acts in the public interest, promoting optimal animal health, veterinary public health and supporting sustainability in line with the principles of One Health, One Welfare.

Other responsibilities of the Veterinary Council of Ireland include public protection through the maintenance of standards in the practice of veterinary medicine and nursing through the accreditation and supervision of veterinary education, safeguarding and maintenance of the Register of Veterinary Practitioners and Register of Veterinary Nurses, certification and registration of veterinary practice premises, standards for veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing required in a binding Code of Professional Conduct.

The Veterinary Council also maintains the Register of Veterinary Specialists. This is a register of veterinary practitioners who meet certain entry criteria and are entitled to use the title 'specialist'. For recognition as a Veterinary Specialist, a veterinary practitioner must have successfully completed post-graduate diploma-level qualifications, usually entitling them to diplomat status in approved European institutions, and they must apply to the Veterinary Council for registration as a Veterinary Specialist. The purpose of the register is to provide a clear indication to the profession and the public of those veterinary practitioners who have been accredited as specialists. Use of the title 'Veterinary Specialist' is protected by law, meaning any use of the title or any term that implies specialist status or expertise, by someone who is not accredited as such by the Veterinary Council, is not permitted. In 2024 there were 62 Veterinary Specialists registered with the Veterinary Council, specialising in areas such as equine internal medicine, small animal surgery and orthopaedics, large animal surgery, anaesthesia and analgesia, and diagnostic imaging.

Workforce Review Working Group

The Veterinary Council of Ireland has been gathering an increasing level of data on its Register of Veterinary Practitioners, Register of Veterinary Nurses and Register of Veterinary Practice Premises, with each annual renewal process. This enables a richer insight to the information it holds and the trends that may emerge into the future. As a proactive regulatory body acting in the public interest, an opportunity now arises for the Veterinary Council of Ireland to harness the data it holds and look to analyse this information, for the public good and with a view to offering policy recommendations for policy makers into the future.

Accordingly, the Veterinary Council of Ireland established a Workforce Review Working Group under the aegis of the Veterinary Council of Ireland's Practice Premises Committee to consider the Register data collected and to consider and propose recommendations to support the delivery of veterinary services into the future for the betterment of animal health and welfare, enrichment of society and public health.

The overall goal of the workforce review is to produce an analysis of the Veterinary Council of Ireland's Registers, identify and quantify key trends and factors related to the recruitment and retention of veterinary professionals in Ireland, and to assess the demand for veterinary services currently and into the future.

The Veterinary Council of Ireland worked to collect and analyse Register data to deepen its understanding of the veterinary workforce in Ireland. The Workforce Review Working Group output has been recommended by the Practice Premises Committee to the Veterinary Council and has been approved by the Veterinary Council as a pathway to support policy recommendations for the future. By enabling a deeper understanding of the veterinary workforce in Ireland and identifying key challenges it faces, the review aims to support evidence-based recommendations to veterinary industry stakeholders and policymakers.

Workforce Review Working Group

04

Stage 1

The Workforce Review Working Group consisted of members connected to veterinary practice, including Registered Veterinary Practitioners, Registered Veterinary Nurses, veterinary representative bodies, veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing course providers, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and members of the Veterinary Council of Ireland.

This initial group was responsible for the preliminary analysis of the available data, recognising any additional data or information required and developing potential policy recommendations.



Stage 2

Following the initial considerations and analysis, additional members were invited, in the form of a focus group, to broaden discussions and to assist with potential policy recommendations. The focus group brought input, insight and expertise from a range of stakeholders gathered around a table to sense check and contribute to the draft recommendations, including Animal and Plant Health Ireland, the Central Statistics Office, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Greyhound Racing Ireland, Health Products Regulatory Authority, Horse Racing Ireland, Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Association, Irish Creamery & Milk Suppliers Association, Irish Farmers' Association, Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board, Teagasc, Vet Space Ireland, Veterinary Defence Society and XL Vets.



Stage 3

Finally, the report was reviewed by the Veterinary Council of Ireland's Practice Premises Committee and then finalised and endorsed by the Veterinary Council of Ireland at its meeting on 5 December 2024.

Objectives

05

Veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses play a critically important role in society. They care for the health and welfare of companion animals, livestock, performance animals, laboratory animals and wildlife. They also play a vital role in biosecurity, protecting public health, assuring food safety, and supporting sustainability. Accordingly, veterinary workforce challenges can pose significant risks. A veterinary workforce shortage, either regionally or nationally, would not only affect animal health and welfare, but also animal owners, the food supply chain, the wider agri-sector as well as economic development and the environment. An increased workload for the remaining veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses would also likely lead to increased burnout and retention challenges.

Maintaining a sustainable and effective veterinary workforce is integral to delivering safe, high-quality care to the animal population of Ireland. It is also essential to ensure the prevention, early detection, and control of notifiable diseases, such as tuberculosis, foot-and-mouth-disease and avian influenza, amongst others.

Due to the significance of the potential effects a veterinary working shortage would cause, the Veterinary Council of Ireland wish to act in a proactive manner; by analysing the information it holds to identify any trends and the key challenges affecting the veterinary workforce, to inform public policy with a view to offering recommendations that assist in combatting these key challenges.

The main objectives of the Workforce Review Working Group included:

- ▶ Analysing data garnered from VCI Registers.
- ▶ Determine factors which influence the challenges to recruitment and retention in the veterinary professions in Ireland.
- ▶ Review research and workforce reports produced in other jurisdictions regarding veterinary workforce challenges that may have relevance to the Irish situation.
- ▶ Develop policy recommendations and potential actions to stem and resolve the rising challenges in veterinary workforce matters.
- ▶ Consider the potential engagement with any other agencies to conduct research, analysis, and to conduct a capacity review of veterinary services to inform public policy.





Profile of Workforce Review Working Group Members:

Kevin McConnell (Chair)	Veterinary Council of Ireland Deputy President & Practice Premises Committee Chair
Rachel Brown	Veterinary Council of Ireland President
Hannah Callaghan	Irish Veterinary Nursing Association Nominee
Bernadette Doyle	Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine Nominee
Vivienne Duggan	Veterinary Council of Ireland Member
Karen Dunne	Veterinary Nursing Course Providers Nominee
Shane Guerin	Registered Veterinary Specialist
Niamh Hogan	Veterinary Council of Ireland Member
Niamh Lewis	Irish Equine Veterinary Association Nominee
Donal Lynch	Registered Veterinary Practitioner & Certificate of Suitability Holder
Náóimh McCann	Registered Veterinary Nurse
Eimer McGrath	Registered Veterinary Practitioner & Certificate of Suitability Holder
Séamus McManus	Veterinary Council of Ireland Conjoint Committee Chair
Joe Moffitt	Veterinary Council of Ireland Member
Donal O'Mahony	Veterinary Officers Association Nominee
Eoin Ryan	Progressive Veterinary Network Nominee & author of peer reviewed publication "Factors affecting retention of veterinary practitioners in Ireland: a cross-sectional study with a focus on clinical practice (2022)"
Cliona Skelly	UCD School of Veterinary Medicine Nominee
Máiréad Ann Wallace-Pigott	Veterinary Ireland Nominee

Analysis of the Registers

06

One of the main objectives of the Workforce Review Working Group was to analyse data garnered from the Veterinary Council of Ireland's Registers.

The data gathered and considered included:

- ▶ Overview of the Register of Veterinary Practitioners, Veterinary Nurses and Veterinary Practice Premises
- ▶ 2020-2024 Register Analysis
- ▶ Registrant Gender Breakdown
- ▶ Registrant Age Range
- ▶ Place of Graduation
- ▶ Place of Practice
- ▶ Migration around the Registers
- ▶ Premises Accreditation Scheme Statistics

A copy of all the data gathered and analysed is included in Appendix 1 of this report.



Research, Reports & Methodology



07

Data Gathering & Analysis

Veterinary Council of Ireland Register data and annual reports were reviewed to develop a profile of the veterinary professions in Ireland, such as data on age, gender, place of education and place of practice.

Further information about trends in the industry and factors impacting the demand for veterinary services was also gathered and reviewed from sources including the Central Statistics Office and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Secondary Reports & Data Sources Considered

To assist the working of the Workforce Review Working Group, it reviewed a variety of secondary data sources and workforce reports from Ireland and abroad, including:

- ▶ Canadian Veterinary Medical Association Workforce Report (2019)
- ▶ Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland Workforce Report (2023)
- ▶ Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Workforce Action Plan (2022)
- ▶ Veterinary Schools of Australia and New Zealand Independent Expert Review (2023)
- ▶ Federation of Veterinarians of Europe Workforce Report (2024)
- ▶ American Animal Hospital Association Workforce Report (2024)
- ▶ Factors Affecting Retention of Veterinary Practitioners in Ireland: A Cross-Sectional Study with a Focus on Clinical Practice (2022)
- ▶ Fiona Reardon's Investigation into the Prevalence of Burnout in Irish Veterinary Surgeons and Associated Stress Factors (2023)
- ▶ Irish Medical Council Workforce Intelligence Report (2022)
- ▶ Mental Health and Veterinary Professionals in Ireland (2021)
- ▶ Irish Equine Veterinary Association Retention Survey (2023)
- ▶ Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Evaluation of Farm Animal Vet Services (2020 & 2023)

VCI Survey of Registrants Leaving the Register

To assist its review, the Workforce Review Working Group identified the need for more information on why Registrants are removing their name from the Register and whether persons leaving the Registers intend to return. To gather this information the Workforce Review Working Group determined to commission a survey of those who have voluntarily removed themselves from the Register over the last five years. Survey results are included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Focus Group

Following the completion of the Workforce Review Working Group, a focus group took place which brought input, insight and expertise from a range of stakeholders gathered to sense check and contribute to the draft recommendations prepared by the Workforce Review Working Group. The focus group was attended by various organisations and government agencies relating to areas such as registrant welfare, animal welfare, food production, farming, animal sporting organisations, environmental and public health and consumer protection.

Major Findings and Observations

08

Veterinary Practitioners

The number of Registered Veterinary Practitioners has increased from 2,322 in 2004, to 3,534 in 2023.

Figure 1. Total Registered Veterinary Practitioners 2004-2023

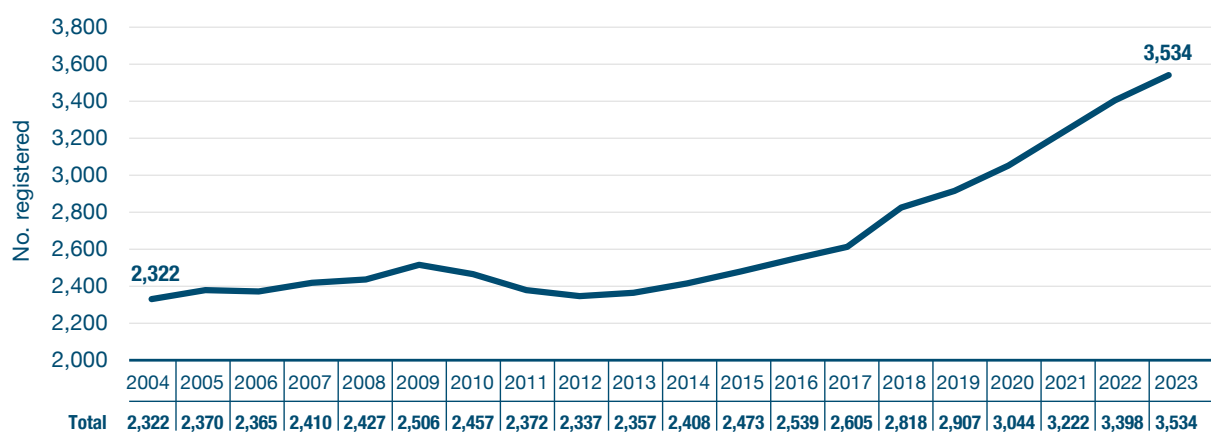
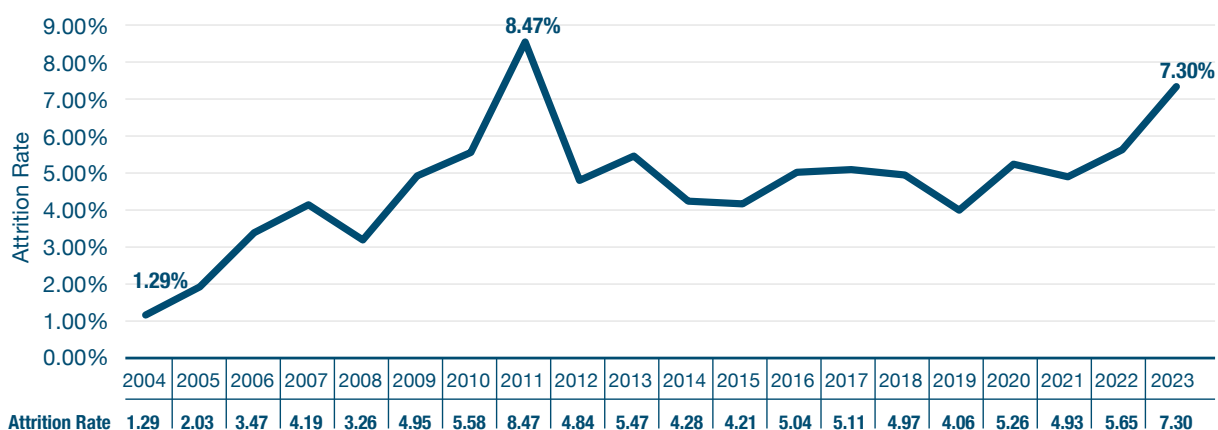


Figure 1 shows the growth in the Register from 2004 to 2023 with a 52% increase in the total number of veterinary practitioners across this period. The growth rate over the period was 2.27%, however, this also included a period of registration decline between 2008 and 2012 where the number of veterinary practitioners decreased by almost 7%. The growth rate from 2016 onwards has been much higher indicating an accelerated supply of veterinary practitioners in the Irish market.

The total number of new veterinary practitioners joining the Register of Veterinary Practitioners annually has increased from 127 joining in 2004, compared to 321 joining in 2023.

The total number of annual voluntary removals from the Register of Veterinary Practitioners has increased from 30 in 2004 to 258 in 2023.

Figure 2. Veterinary Practitioner Attrition Rate 2004-2023



The attrition rate is an important indicator of workforce trends. Figure 2 shows the attrition rate from 2004 to 2023, which is calculated as the number of veterinary practitioners that are voluntarily removed from the Register in a year as a share of the total Register. This attrition rate peaked at 8.47% and has shown increases again in the most recent years.

The number of veterinary practitioners joining the Register who graduated outside of Ireland has increased in recent years. This could be a factor in the increase in attrition rates as noted in a survey of vets who have left the Register over the last five years, the main reason for leaving, at 58%, is to practise in another country. It was further noted that of those who completed the survey, 55% graduated outside of Ireland so it is possible that those leaving were moving back to their country of origin to live and work.

The total number of veterinary practitioners restored to the Register annually, following voluntary removal, has increased from 3 in 2004 to 54 in 2023, relating to persons withdrawing from the Register for period of international travel, or personal circumstances, period of leave etc.

Figure 3. Registered Veterinary Practitioners by Gender 2020-2023

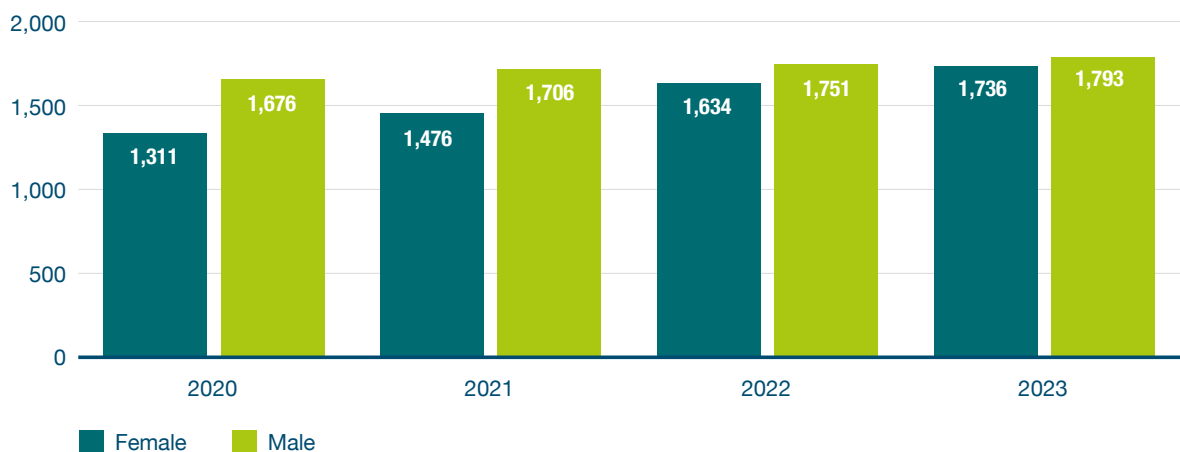


Figure 3 shows the gender composition of the Register from 2020-2023 with the number of female veterinary practitioners increasing by 32% and male veterinary practitioners by 7%. This has resulted in an increase in the share of female veterinary practitioners from 43.8% to 49.2%. At the time of publication, the share of female veterinary practitioners was 51%, marking the first time there has been more female Registered Veterinary Practitioners in a traditionally male dominated profession.

Figure 4. Veterinary Practitioner Age and Gender Profile 2023

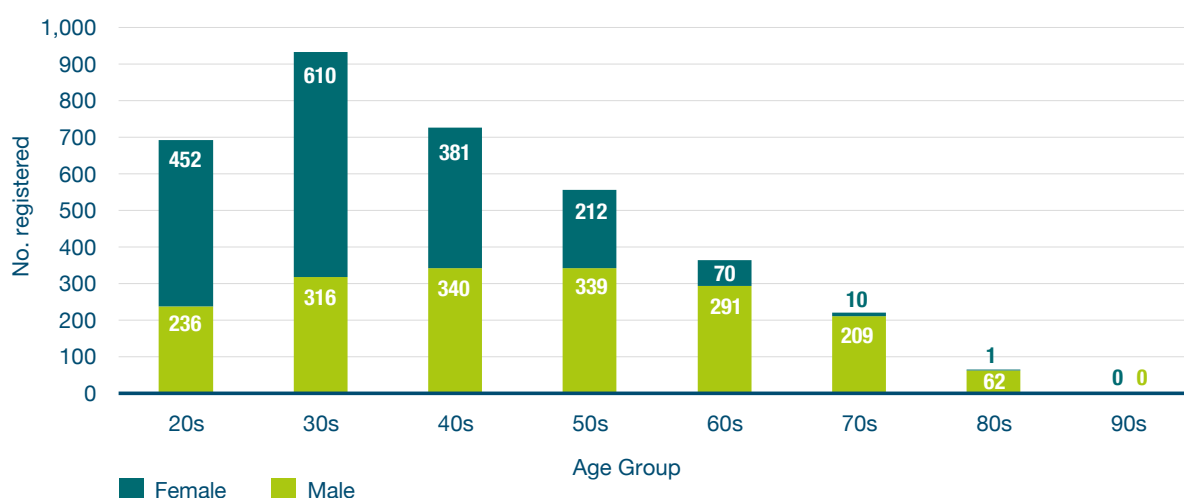


Figure 4 shows the relationship between age and gender in the Register of Veterinary Practitioners in 2023. There is a much larger share of female veterinary practitioners in their 20s, 30s and 40s but male veterinary practitioners dominate the older age groups.

The largest number of vets on the Register are aged in their thirties, accounting for 26% of the total Register of Veterinary Practitioners.

For veterinary practitioners practising in clinical practice, companion animal practice is the most popular with 40.6% of veterinary practitioners working in a companion animal practice in 2024.

Over the last four years there has been an 8.9% increase in those working in companion animal practice, a 1.4% increase in those working in equine practice, a 1.5% increase in those working farm animal practice and a 4.2% increase in those working in mixed practice.

Veterinary Nurses

The number of Registered Veterinary Nurses has increased from 324 in 2008, when the Register was established, to 1,256 in 2023.

Figure 5. Total Registered Veterinary Nurses 2008-2023

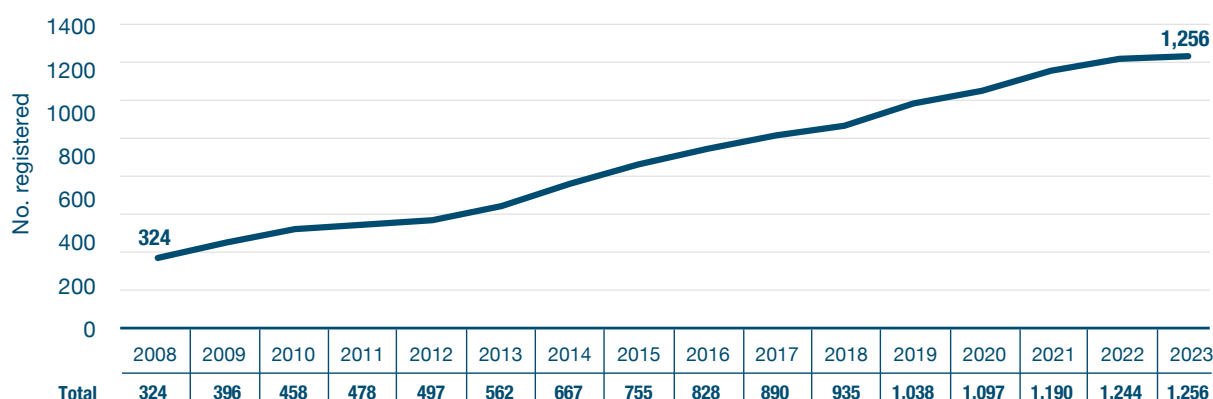


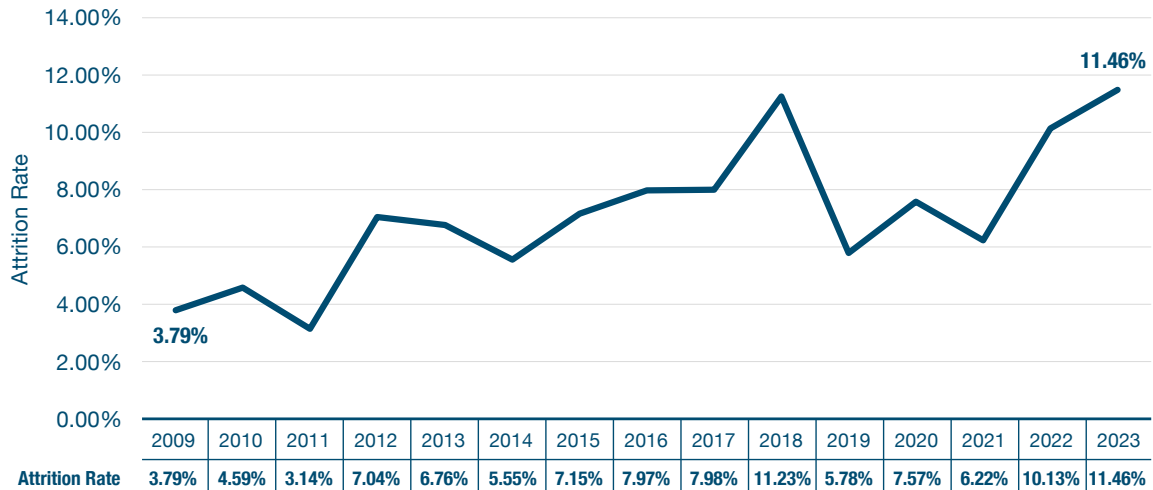
Figure 5 presents the number of veterinary nurses who are registered with the Veterinary Council from 2008 until 2023. The number of Registered Veterinary Nurses has been increasing consistently since 2008 and grew a remarkable 287% in the total period. For comparison, the number of Registered Veterinary Practitioners increased by 46% from 2008 until 2023. This is likely due to the fact that the Register of Veterinary Nurses was only established in 2008.

The total number of annual voluntary removals from the Register of Veterinary Nurses has increased from 15 in 2009 to 144 in 2023.

Figure 6. Veterinary Nurse Attrition Rate 2009-2023

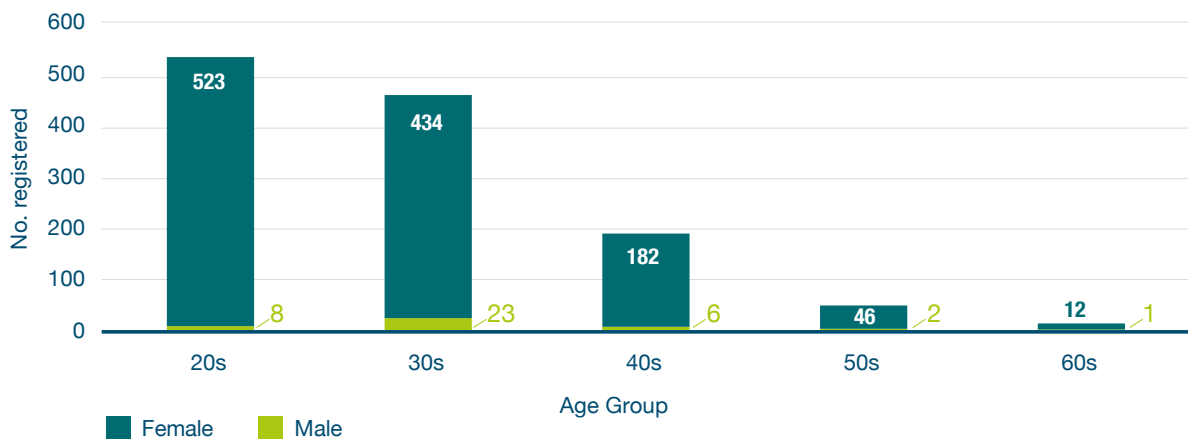
Figure 6 shows the attrition rate for Registered Veterinary Nurses calculated as the number who leave the register each year as a proportion of the total registered nurses. Similar to veterinary practitioners, the attrition rate has increased substantially from 3.79% in 2009 to 11.46% in 2023. Importantly, these higher attrition rates have not led to a decrease in the total registration. Retention in the veterinary nursing profession in the higher age categories is a notable challenge. This may be related to the terms and conditions of employment, potential for progression and remuneration levels.

The total number of veterinary nurses restored to the Register annually, following voluntary removal, has increased from 0 in 2009 to 23 in 2023.



Registered Veterinary Nurses are predominantly female, with only 3% of the Register identifying as male, showing a clear gender imbalance within the profession. As shown in the figure 7, the vast majority of veterinary nurses are female and in their 20's and 30's.

Figure 7. Veterinary Nurse Age and Gender Profile 2023



For veterinary nurses practising in clinical practice, companion animal practice is the most popular with 71.2% of veterinary nurses working in a companion animal practice in 2024.

Over the last four years there has been an 8.2% increase in those working in companion animal practice, a 0.3% increase in those working in equine practice, a 0.2% increase in those working in farm animal practice and a 2.3% decrease in those working in mixed practice.

Registered Veterinary Premises

The number of Registered Veterinary Premises has increased by 17.3% since the Register was established in 2007.

Practice Profile Changes

Every registered veterinary premises must provide the Veterinary Council with a percentage breakdown of the kind of animals treated by the practice. If a practice lists an animal type as greater than 90%, it is considered to operate within that practice type.

The below tables show the share of activity that each practice provided the Veterinary Council and aggregates this at a national and county level in 2016 compared to 2022. Overall, we see a slight decrease in Mixed and Equine practices, but the greatest movement has been in Companion services (+18%) and Farm services (-21%). This varies across the country however all regions saw a decrease in farm animal provision.

Since 2022 there have been slight increases in the number of companion animal, farm animal and equine practices, with the only decrease seen being in the number of mixed practices indicating that more practices are choosing to focus on one specific animal group. However, mixed practices are still the most common practice type, comprising 39% of the total number of registered veterinary premises in 2024, followed closely by companion animal practices at 32%, in third is farm animal practices at 18%, followed by equine practices at 9% and finally other practices (e.g. labs & drug companies) at 2%.

COS Register 2016				
	Number of Practices			
	Mixed	Companion >90%	Equine >90%	Farm >90%
National	352	192	66	113
Border	49	5	0	14
Dublin	4	62	1	2
Mideast	47	35	20	8
Midlands	29	8	6	15
Midwest	59	20	15	18
Southeast	40	17	12	13
Southwest	72	31	6	27
West	52	14	6	16

COS Register 2022				
	Number of Practices			
	Mixed	Companion >90%	Equine >90%	Farm >90%
National	345	227	65	89
Border	48	4	1	10
Dublin	5	72	0	0
Mideast	39	46	20	6
Midlands	30	14	6	11
Midwest	59	23	14	13
Southeast	40	15	11	10
Southwest	69	34	6	26
West	55	19	7	13

Change from 2016-2022				
	Percentage Change 2016-2022			
	Mixed	Companion >90%	Equine >90%	Farm >90%
National	-2%	+18%	-2%	-21%
Border	-2%	-20%	+100%	-28%
Dublin	+25%	+16%	-100%	-100%
Mideast	-17%	+31%	0%	-25%
Midlands	+3%	+75%	0%	-27%
Midwest	0%	+15%	-7%	-28%
Southeast	0%	-12%	-8%	-23%
Southwest	-4%	+9%	0%	-3%
West	+5%	+35%	+17%	-19%

Below are figures relating to the three most populous premises classifications from over the last four years:

Registered Veterinary Offices

- ▶ The number of Registered Veterinary Offices has decreased over recent years from 214 in 2020 to 193 in 2024.
- ▶ Over the last 4 years there has been an increase of 66.67% in the number of Registered Veterinary Offices providing companion animal services, a 11.2% increase in the number of Registered Veterinary Offices providing farm animal services, a 15% increase in the number of Registered Veterinary Offices providing equine services and a 44.64% decrease in the number of mixed animal Registered Veterinary Offices.
- ▶ It is of note that a Registered Veterinary Office is a premises to which no animals can be seen at the premises, offering the most cost effective premises category from which the delivery of veterinary services may be offered.

Registered Veterinary Clinics

- ▶ The number of Registered Veterinary Clinics has increased over recent years from 403 in 2020 to 426 in 2024.
- ▶ Over the last 4 years there has been an increase of 30.5% in the number of companion animal Registered Veterinary Clinics nationwide, a 61.9% increase in farm animal clinics, a 30% increase in the number of equine clinics and a 9.2% decrease in the number of mixed animal clinics.

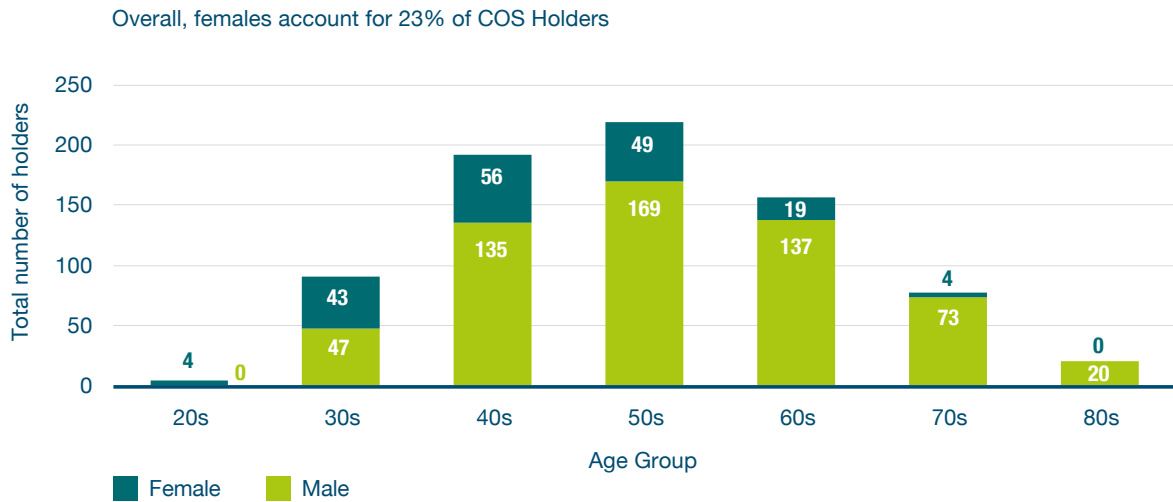
Registered Veterinary Hospitals

- ▶ The number of Registered Veterinary Hospitals has decreased over recent years from 151 in 2020 to 138 in 2024.
- ▶ Over the last 4 years there has been a decrease of 10.1% in the number of companion animal Registered Veterinary Hospitals nationwide, a 12.5% decrease in the number of equine hospitals and a 1.9% decrease in the number of mixed animal hospitals.

Practice Size

- ▶ Based on statistics gathered in April 2024, practices with only 1 veterinary practitioner are the most common practice size, accounting for 27% of the total number of 756 practice premises registered with the Council at the time.
- ▶ Based on statistics gathered in April 2024, larger veterinary practices have a higher percentage of female vets, while smaller veterinary practices have a higher number of male vets, with 71% of all 1 vet practices being run by a man.
- ▶ The size of companion animal practices varies with 71% of companion animal practices having between 1 – 5 vets working there. 66% of vets working in companion animal practices are female, while 34% are male.
- ▶ The majority of farm animal practices are 1 vet practices, with 71% of vets in farm animal practices being men.
- ▶ The majority of equine practices are 1 vet practices at 47%, while 21% have 2 vets. Of the vets working at equine practices, 55% are female, while 45% are male.
- ▶ The size of mixed animal practices varies with 68% having 1 – 5 vets working there. 56% of vets working in mixed practice are men, with 44% being women.
- ▶ Based on statistics gathered in April 2024, 50.7% of premises have at least 1 Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) working there.
- ▶ The number of RVNs at companion animal practices varies with 65% of companion animal practices having between 1 – 3 RVNs working there. 96% of RVNs working in companion animal practices are female, while 4% are male.
- ▶ 92% of farm animal practices have no RVN. Of the ones that do, 6% have 1 RVN, 1% have 2 RVNs and 1% have 3 RVNs.
- ▶ The majority of equine practices have no RVN at 86%, with 6% having at least 1 RVN. The remaining 8% have between 2 and 7 RVNs.
- ▶ 44% of mixed animal practices have no RVN, with 22% having at least one RVN, 15% having at least two RVNs and the remaining 19% having between 3 and 10 RVNs.
- ▶ Based on statistics gathered in April 2024, 77% of Certificate of Suitability Holders are male, with 23% being female.

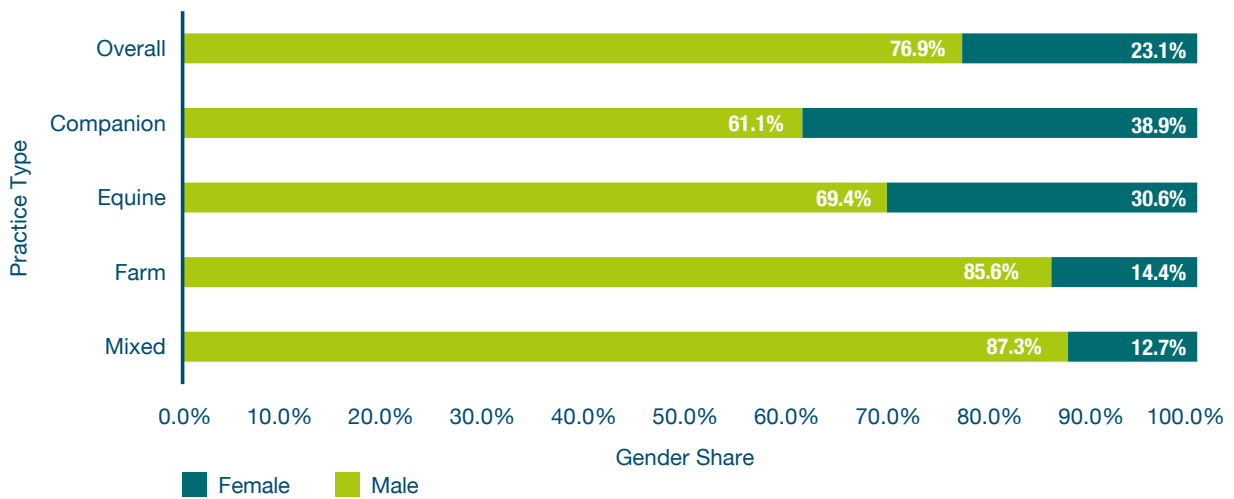
Figure 8. COS Holder Profile – Age and Gender



A Certificate of Suitability (COS) is the certificate required to open a veterinary practice premises in Ireland, founded in legislation and granted by the Veterinary Council. The Certificate of Suitability Holder is the registered person to whom the COS is granted by the Veterinary Council.

Figure 9 breaks down the different practice types by COS Holder gender. Overall, 23% of COS holders are female, but this varies across type. Both farm and mixed practice type premises have an exceptionally low share of female COS Holders at 14.4% and 12.7%, respectively.

Figure 9. COS Holder Gender Share by Practice Type



Key Challenges Affecting Retention Identified

Following consideration of various workforce reports and the survey results of those who have recently left the VCI Register, the Workforce Review Working Group compiled a list of the key challenges affecting the retention of veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses in Ireland.

Poor work life balance



- ▶ In a 2022 study on the factors affecting retention of veterinary practitioners in Ireland, 51.4% of respondents cited work-life balance as their reason for leaving their last job. ⁽¹³⁾
- ▶ The results of the 2023 Irish Equine Veterinary Association Retention Survey show that one of the main factors causing Irish equine vets to leave their current position is due to poor work life balance. ⁽¹⁷⁾
- ▶ In a 2024 survey of veterinary practitioners who have left the VCI Register over the last 5 years, 32.5% stated it was due to work life balance.
- ▶ In a 2024 survey of veterinary nurses who have left the VCI Register over the last 5 years, 65% stated it was due to work life balance.

The effects of veterinary practice on mental and physical health



- ▶ In a 2021 research study into the mental health of veterinary professionals in Ireland, anxiety levels were high amongst all occupational groups. Veterinary nurses indicated higher levels of psychological distress, self-harm, and suicidal behaviour than other veterinary professionals. ⁽⁹⁾
- ▶ In a 2023 survey conducted by the Irish Veterinary Nursing Association, 99.43% of respondents noted high stress levels. While 54.33% feel their practice has adequate health and safety procedures. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- ▶ In a 2024 survey of veterinary practitioners who have left the VCI Register over the last 5 years, 32.5% stated it was due to their personal wellbeing.
- ▶ In a 2024 survey of veterinary nurses who have left the VCI Register over the last 5 years, 58.75% stated it was due to their personal wellbeing.

Employment terms and conditions & lack of flexible working hours



- ▶ In a 2022 study on the factors affecting retention of veterinary practitioners in Ireland, remuneration is noted as one of the main considerations influencing the likelihood of veterinary practitioners leaving their current job within two years. ⁽¹³⁾
- ▶ In a 2023 survey conducted by the Irish Veterinary Nursing Association, a significant 40.65% plan to leave the profession within the next five years, primarily due to pay dissatisfaction and poor work conditions. Other concerns highlighted in the survey results are the need for established pay scales, job descriptions, and transparency in employment conditions. ⁽¹⁸⁾

Career progression



- ▶ In a 2024 survey of veterinary practitioners who have left the VCI Register over the last 5 years, respondents were asked if they plan to rejoin the VCI Register in the future. Of those who answered no or maybe, career progression was a recurring answer. Some respondents expressed interest in returning to Ireland if the right role became available, while others have no plans to return for work, particularly due to salary concerns or lack of suitable positions and career progression.
- ▶ The results of a 2023 survey conducted by the Irish Veterinary Nursing Association show that one of the highest concerns for veterinary nurses is the lack of career progression with only a small percentage working as practice managers or head nurses. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- ▶ In a 2024 survey of veterinary nurses who have left the VCI Register over the last 5 years, 56.25% stated it was due to lack of pathways to progression.

Improper utilisation of veterinary nurses in practice



- ▶ The results of a 2023 survey conducted by the Irish Veterinary Nursing Association show a main concern for veterinary nurses is the underutilisation of veterinary nurses in practice. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- ▶ In a 2024 survey of veterinary nurses who have left the VCI Register over the last 5 years, a common issue noted in the responses received is that veterinary nurses feel underappreciated and underutilised in terms of their clinical skills.

Workplace culture and practice management



- ▶ In a 2024 survey of veterinary practitioners who have left the VCI Register over the last 5 years, 25% stated it was due to their working environment. Respondents were asked if they plan to rejoin the VCI Register in the future. Of those who answered no or maybe, a significant number cited negative work experiences in Ireland, such as poor working conditions, long hours, lack of work-life balance, and toxic environments for their reasoning.
- ▶ In a 2024 survey of veterinary nurses who have left the VCI Register over the last 5 years, 46.25% stated it was due to their working environment. Respondents were asked if they plan to rejoin the VCI Register in the future. Of those who answered no or maybe, lack of respect from employers and colleagues was a common answer. Respondents stated that veterinary nurses do not receive the recognition they deserve for their hard work.

Detailed Recommendations



09

Addressing veterinary workforce challenges necessitates a multifaceted approach that requires engagement from various stakeholders, including regulators, professional and representative organisations, government bodies, veterinary course providers, and the veterinary professionals themselves. Collaboration and adaptability among these stakeholders are essential in addressing veterinary workforce challenges.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of any policies or recommendations put in place will aid in ensuring their long-term effectiveness and will highlight any changes or additions required. Furthermore, it is crucial that stakeholders, including the Veterinary Council of Ireland, stay informed about the evolving needs of the veterinary profession in Ireland to ensure successful long-term planning.

Registered Veterinary Nurses are an integral part of the veterinary team, working alongside veterinary practitioners to provide high levels of care for animals. Due to their varied skills, employing veterinary nurses offers numerous benefits to veterinary practices, enhancing both the quality of care provided to animals and the overall efficiency of the practice. Some key advantages include:

Enhanced Patient Care

- 1. Expertise in Animal Care:** Veterinary nurses are trained in various aspects of animal care, including monitoring anaesthesia, performing diagnostic tests, and providing post-operative care. This ensures high-quality care for patients, leading to better health outcomes.
- 2. Continuity of Care:** Veterinary nurses often have close, continuous interactions with patients, which can lead to improved monitoring of animal health and quicker identification of potential health issues.

Improved Efficiency

- 1. Support for Veterinary Practitioners:** By handling routine tasks such as administering medications, conducting lab tests, and preparing animals for surgery, veterinary nurses help free up veterinary practitioners' time.
- 2. Operational Efficiency:** Veterinary nurses contribute to the smooth operation of a veterinary practice by managing workflow, assisting in surgeries, and maintaining clinical records. This helps the practice run more efficiently and effectively.

Client Communication and Education

- 1. Client Interaction:** Veterinary nurses often handle client communications, providing education on animal care, answering questions, and offering support. This can enhance client satisfaction and trust in the practice.
- 2. Preventative Care Advice:** They can educate clients on preventive care measures, such as vaccination schedules, dietary needs, and routine health checks, which can lead to better long-term health outcomes for animals.

Professional Development and Team Morale

- 1. Team Support and Morale:** Having a well-trained team that includes veterinary nurses can boost overall team morale. When roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and shared, it reduces burnout and stress.
- 2. Alleviating Workload:** By sharing the workload, veterinary nurses help reduce stress and burnout among veterinary practitioners allowing them to maintain a better work-life balance and improve job satisfaction.

Veterinary Nurses registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland are educated and trained to standards benchmarked against the highest in Europe, enabling them to deliver important and skilled care within the veterinary clinical environment.

The Veterinary Council of Ireland recognises the essential role of the Registered Veterinary Nurse in the delivery of optimal patient care by veterinary clinical teams and believes that the delivery of enhanced patient care is best achieved when veterinary nursing care is a part of the holistic patient care plan.

There was also broad agreement amongst the Workforce Review Working Group regarding the need to promote the role and skills of Registered Veterinary Nurses and harness their varied capabilities, to the benefit of animal health and welfare, efficient delivery of clinical care via a team structure, the veterinary professions and the public. Using Registered Veterinary Nurses to their full capability, could help to realise capacity in the workload faced by veterinary practitioners, which in turn is likely to assist with creating a better working environment.

Recommendation 1. Promoting the Role of the Veterinary Nurse		
Recommended Actions	Owner	Involved
<p>The skills and capabilities of Registered Veterinary Nurses are promoted both within the professions and to the public.</p> <p>Recommendations to achieve this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ VCI to prepare shortened leaflet version of “Role and Scope of the Veterinary Nurse” guidance document for use by veterinary practices, veterinary organisations, colleges and universities and for use by the VCI when attending public events. ▶ VCI to acknowledge and promote the importance of interprofessional collaboration between vets and nurses to both students and graduates. 	VCI	Educational providers
VCI “Role and Scope of the Veterinary Nurse” guidance document to be expanded to include the role of veterinary nurses in farm animal and equine practice.	VCI	IVNA, Veterinary Nursing Course Providers
VCI website to host website links to all veterinary representative bodies for ease of access to news, survey, CVE resources etc.	VCI	Veterinary representative bodies

In accordance with the VCI Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Practitioners, vets in practice must make proper provision at all times for 24-hour emergency cover for the care of animals that during normal working hours could be considered as being under their care. A veterinary emergency is considered to exist where a veterinary practitioner has triaged the case and determined that it is an emergency. Emergency out of hours cover may be organised in cooperation with another veterinary practitioner/veterinary practice located within a reasonable distance.

The availability of 24-hour emergency care is a mandatory requirement to ensure that animals always have access to emergency veterinary care, in the interest of animal health and welfare.

However, being on call in a veterinary practice can present several challenges to your personal well-being, such as, disrupted work-life balance, sleep deprivation and increased stress and burnout. In Fiona Reardon’s 2023 thesis on burn out in Irish vets, three main stress factors associated with burnout are disruption of home life by work, long hours and tiredness affecting cognition. Also noted in her study was, of those providing their own out of hours service, 33% of respondents work on average 50-80 hours a week, with 19% working on average over 80 hours a week. ⁽¹⁶⁾

The results of the 2023 Irish Equine Veterinary Association Retention Survey show that two of the main factors causing Irish equine vets to leave their current position are due to poor work life balance and their rota. ⁽¹⁷⁾ In a 2022 study on the factors affecting retention of veterinary practitioners in Ireland, 51.4% of respondents cited work-life balance as their reason for leaving their last job, with 25.5% citing an out of hours rota as the reason. ⁽¹³⁾

Another issue reported by veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses providing emergency out of hours care, is the high number of “non-emergency” calls. In a 2021 study, conducted by VetSurgeon.org, 475 veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses were asked to recall the last out of hours call they received and whether it was a true emergency. Only 28.2% of the calls were genuine emergencies, meaning 71.7% of calls could have waited until normal working hours. ⁽²⁾

While on-call duties are a necessary aspect of providing comprehensive veterinary care, it can come with significant challenges for the veterinary staff offering the service. Addressing these issues requires careful management and support systems to ensure the well-being of veterinary practitioners, veterinary nurses, and their clients.

Recommendation 2. VCI to Host Public Stakeholder Consultation on Out of Hours Emergency Veterinary Care		
Recommended Actions	Owner	Involved
Request that the VCI conducts a public consultation, open to all stakeholders, to gather views regarding out of hours emergency animal care and the current requirements in place.	VCI	All stakeholders including, Registrants, Veterinary Representative Bodies, the public, veterinary employers, animal charities and welfare groups, farming organisations and consumer groups
A public information campaign on the importance of respect for out of hours veterinary care, reserved for matters of emergency only, is undertaken in a joint initiative between the VCI and veterinary representative bodies. Recommendations to achieve this include: ▶ VCI to prepare a poster for display at registered veterinary practices regarding out of hours and including examples of emergencies and non-emergencies.	VCI	Veterinary Representative Bodies and veterinary practice owners
Following the conclusion of any public consultation, recommend that the VCI review requirements in place regarding out of hours emergency care.	VCI	VCI

During its review, the Workforce Review Working Group agreed that it must look at the areas of retention and possible factors which would entice and enable people to return to the VCI Register, as a sustainable and effective workforce is integral to delivering safe, high-quality care.

As stated under Recommendation 2, one of the main reasons cited in recent Irish studies making veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses leave or consider leaving their current positions is due to poor work life balance.

In the survey of veterinary practitioners who have left the VCI Register over the last 5 years, 32.5% stated it was due to work life balance, while 32.5% stated it was due to their personal wellbeing. When asked what factors would make them reconsider rejoining the VCI Register, 34.15% said change in work life balance, while 18.29% stated changes to wellbeing supports.

In the survey of veterinary nurses who have left the VCI Register over the last 5 years, 65% stated it was due to work life balance, while 58.75% stated it was due to the personal wellbeing. When asked what factors would make them reconsider rejoining the VCI Register, 57.65% said change in work life balance, while 37.65% stated changes to wellbeing supports.

Maintaining a good work-life balance offers numerous benefits, impacting personal well-being, such as reduced stress, improved mental and physical health and better personal relationships. There are also professional benefits, including, increased productivity, higher job satisfaction and improved performance and retention.

Recommendation 3. Actions to Support Registrants & Improve Work Life Balance

Recommended Actions	Owner	Involved
A longitudinal study of the veterinary practitioner and veterinary nursing professions is conducted to gain a deeper understanding of causative links between stressors and burnout in both professions. Longitudinal studies allow researchers to observe how individuals or groups change over time, providing insights into developmental processes and long-term outcomes. These valuable insights can assist in guiding research, policy, and practice.	VCI	
The expansion and promotion of the range of mental health and wellbeing resources available to veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses.	Veterinary Representative Bodies	VCI
Encourage both veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses to actively discuss industry concerns themselves and offer any recommendations through the establishment of a dedicated forum for veterinary employers, employees and veterinary representative bodies, led by the representative bodies, with a view to discussing and proposing best practice in relation to working terms and conditions to ensure a sustainable veterinary workforce into the future. The focus of the forum could include, among other matters, pathways to progression, remuneration, rest periods/lunch breaks, employee benefits, and appropriate delegation of non-veterinary practitioner specific tasks.	Veterinary Representative Bodies	Registrants and veterinary employers

<p>Promote awareness and training on diversity amongst veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses to help make the veterinary professions more inclusive.</p> <p>it is important that the veterinary profession is inclusive. Creating and promoting an environment where all individuals feel welcome can help to improve people’s work life. If veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses are happy in practice, this will likely improve the retention of skilled and motivated team members, both in their workplace and in the veterinary profession overall.</p> <p>Recommendations to achieve this include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. VCI to develop an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy. 2. VCI to survey its Registrants to gather their views regarding equality, diversity and inclusion within the veterinary profession. Gathering this data would assist with putting relevant supports in place. 3. All educational providers asked to share their EDI policies. 	<p>VCI</p>	<p>Educational providers</p>
<p>VCI to continue to survey those leaving the Register on reasons for leaving practise in Ireland, and whether they intend to return, to monitor trends in this regard.</p>	<p>VCI</p>	<p>Vets and nurses who have voluntarily removed their name from the VCI Registers</p>
<p>Encouragement of post graduate study and/or continued learning throughout the lifetime of a veterinary career.</p> <p>It is important for veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses to have access to career development opportunities, enabling them to advance their skills. Clear career development and progression opportunities should be embedded throughout the career structure for effective workforce planning. Having clear opportunities for progression helps to keep careers rewarding and diverse, which in turn helps team members to feel motivated and satisfied at work.</p> <p>Recommendations to achieve this include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop post graduate guidance for veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses. It is important that the opportunities for progression within the veterinary profession are clearly indicated and that veterinary practitioners and nurses at all levels are actively encouraged to continuously advance in their career if they so wish. 2. Provide resources for those who have temporarily left the profession or moved into different areas of work to return to a veterinary role. To include, the VCI commissioning a ‘New to Practise/ Return to Practise’ module to support and assist those new or returning to work as a veterinary practitioner or veterinary nurse in Ireland. 3. Veterinary representative bodies advertise courses to assist with career progression on its website, social media, newsletters, etc. 	<p>VCI (1 & 2) Veterinary Representative Bodies (3)</p>	<p>Educational providers</p>

<p>It is recommended that mentoring programs are established to help students transition from education to veterinary practice. Such programmes would also be beneficial to those returning to clinical practice after a career break. Any such mentorship programmes merit consideration by the veterinary representative bodies and practice association groups, supported by education providers, and would require clear structures and supports within the programme for mentees and mentors.</p>	<p>Veterinary Representative Bodies and Practice Association Groups</p>	<p>Educational Providers</p>
<p>It is recommended that leadership amongst veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses is increased. Increased leadership has the potential to bring numerous benefits, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enhanced employee motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction. ▶ Better decision-making and strategic direction. ▶ Encouragement of innovation. ▶ Development of talent and professional growth. ▶ Stronger relationships and communication within the professions. ▶ Positive influence on organisational culture. <p>Recommendations to achieve this include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Veterinary representative bodies to advertise courses relating to leadership and management on their websites. 2. VCI to consider offering more CVE points for these courses to encourage Registrants in leadership roles to attend. 3. Interviews with Registrants who have completed the courses could then be included in the Veterinary Ireland Journal or other industry publications / newsletters to further encourage Registrants to participate. 	<p>VCI (2 & 3) Veterinary Representative Bodies (1 & 3)</p>	<p>Educational Providers</p>



Public interest and public health may also require further analysis and consideration by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine on the availability of veterinary services to all sectors and geographical areas of the country.

With a changing profile of veterinary practitioner, and increased numbers of veterinary practitioners being drawn to companion animal practice, away from farm animal practice, market conditions for the provision of veterinary services in remote or vulnerable areas may face increasing challenges. It may be prudent for the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine to consider making some financial provision and/or alternate supports or subvention of veterinary services in remote or vulnerable areas of the country, in the interests of animal health and welfare and public health. This is an aspect in the Department stated strategic objective to promote and safeguard public, animal and plant health and animal welfare for the benefit of consumers, producers, the economy and wider society (DAFM Statement of Strategy 2023-2026). ⁽¹¹⁾

Any consideration of financial supports and subsidies should be taken in line with State Aid and competition rules. If financial support and subsidies are provided, controls must be established to track and assess the impact of any subventions.

In Eoin Ryan’s 2022 study on factors affecting retention of veterinary practitioners in Ireland, remuneration is noted as one of the main considerations influencing the likelihood of veterinary practitioners leaving their current job within two years. ⁽¹³⁾ The availability of financial supports may enable practice owners to increase team remuneration and to hire more staff, reducing an individual’s workload. Likewise, subsidies for emergency out of hours providers may encourage more veterinary practices to become involved in a local out of hours rota, lessening the demand on other practices involved.

Financial supports or subsidies for veterinary practices in remote or vulnerable areas may help with retention and work life balance in these areas. There are schemes in place in both Scotland and France aimed as supporting veterinary practice in remote and rural areas, both with reporting positive outcomes. ⁽¹⁴⁾

In France, there is an initiative that aims to help maintain veterinary practitioners in rural areas. The government-funded tutored internship programme is offered in all four veterinary medicine schools in France and reports significant success, with 80% of the students taking the programme staying in rural practice. ⁽¹⁴⁾

In Scotland, Scottish Ministers operate the Highlands and Islands Veterinary Services Scheme (HIVSS)¹⁹ with the aim of ensuring the provision of an adequate veterinary service to prevent and eradicate animal diseases for all animals kept for agricultural purposes and belonging to crofters and others of like economic status, where no other provisions are available on the market. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Recommendation 4. Financial Supports and Subsidies		
Recommended Actions	Owner	Involved
<p>The Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine consider making some financial provision and/or alternate supports or subvention of veterinary services, in the interests of animal health and welfare and public health.</p> <p>In particular, financial supports may assist with maintaining a viable workforce of rural based veterinary practitioners and nurses able to protect the livestock industries and national biosecurity and food safety priorities.</p>	DAFM	VCI, Veterinary Representative Bodies, Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, and Practice Owners

The main function of the VCI is to regulate the practice of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing in Ireland in the interest of animal health and welfare and public health. Accordingly, as an independent body, acting in the public’s interest, it is important that the VCI engages with the public and service users. By doing so, the VCI can create more effective, fair, and practical regulations that better serve the public interest and adapt to changing circumstances.

Regulators should consult with the public and service users for several key reasons:

- 1. Informed Decision-Making:** Consulting with users provides regulators with first-hand insights into the practical implications of their policies and regulations. This helps in making more informed and effective decisions that are grounded in real-world contexts.
- 2. Enhancing Legitimacy and Trust:** When users feel that their voices are heard and considered, it builds trust and legitimacy for the regulator. Transparent and inclusive consultation processes can enhance public confidence in the regulatory body and its actions.
- 3. Identifying Unintended Consequences:** Users can highlight potential unintended consequences of regulations that the regulator may not have anticipated. This allows for adjustments to be made before policies are fully implemented, avoiding negative impacts.
- 4. Promoting Fairness and Equality:** Consulting with a diverse range of users ensures that the needs and perspectives of different groups are considered, promoting fairness and equality in regulatory outcomes. This helps prevent policies that disproportionately affect certain populations.
- 5. Adapting to Change:** User input helps regulators stay abreast of changes in the industry, technology, and societal expectations. This ensures that regulations remain relevant and adaptable to evolving conditions.
- 6. Encouraging Stakeholder Engagement:** Regular consultation encourages active participation from stakeholders, making them feel like partners in the regulatory process rather than passive recipients. This engagement can lead to more robust and resilient regulatory systems.
- 7. Accountability and Transparency:** Soliciting and responding to feedback shows accountability and transparency, enhancing reputation and credibility.

Increasing service user engagement is also important for veterinary practitioners, veterinary nurses, and veterinary employers. By consistently seeking and integrating the views of service users, it can enhance service quality, drive continuous improvement and innovation, and ultimately serve for the public good.

Recommendation 5. Increased Engagement with the Public and Service Users		
Recommended Actions	Owner	Involved
VCI to conduct constructive stakeholder consultations with the likes of clients, animal charities and welfare groups, farming organisations and consumer groups to help understand and service the veterinary services market better.	VCI	VCI Stakeholders such as clients, animal charities and welfare groups, farming organisations and consumer groups
Provide clear and accessible explanations of the role and scope of veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses to the general public.	VCI	
Promote awareness regarding veterinary qualifications/specialisations.	VCI	
Promote the areas outside of clinical practice where veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses play an important role, including biosecurity, protecting public health, assuring food safety, sustainability, education, government bodies, research, laboratories and wildlife supports.	Veterinary Representative Bodies	
Promote resources and training on communication skills and client communication.	CVE Educational Providers, Accredited Programme Providers, Veterinary Representative Bodies	

Veterinary services contribute a lot for the public good by ensuring the health and well-being of animals, which in turn safeguards public health. Due to the varied skills and expertise amongst veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses, increased engagement and cooperation with state agencies, government bodies and other relevant stakeholders, has the potential to bring about many benefits to areas such as public health, animal welfare, One Health initiatives, food safety, support for public initiatives and enhanced public services, economic development and sustainability, environmental protection and biosecurity.

Through these various roles, veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses can significantly contribute to the protection and improvement of public health, demonstrating the vital intersection between animal health and human well-being.

Recommendation 6. Increased Veterinary Engagement across State Agencies, Government Bodies and Other Relevant Stakeholders		
Recommended Actions	Owner	Involved
Recommend to the relevant State Agencies, government bodies and other relevant stakeholder organisations that the veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses should be more formally involved in a national effort to improve animal health and welfare and to collaborate on matters such as climate change, sustainability, water and soil quality and one health initiatives.	VCI	Veterinary Representative Bodies, State Agencies, Government Bodies and Other Relevant Stakeholders

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) undertakes independent, high quality research with the objective of informing policies that support a healthy economy and promote social progress. Their mission is to provide evidence to inform policy making and public debate. Commissioning an independent research institute like the ESRI to examine current supply of, and demand for, veterinary services, based on national herd data, levels of companion animal ownership and/or sport animals, would assist the VCI, and other relevant stakeholders, in formulating policy around veterinary services into the future, to ensure that the educational capacity, available human resources and veterinary service offering is available for society’s benefit and protection into the future. This research could also be used to assist in developing policies to support animal care, animal welfare, food product certification, disease control, public health and certification of animal byproducts.

Recommendation 7. Economic and Social Research Institute Further Analysis		
Recommended Actions	Owner	Involved
The VCI should request a review to be undertaken by the ESRI in relation to availability and analysis of veterinary services and associated matters.	VCI	ESRI

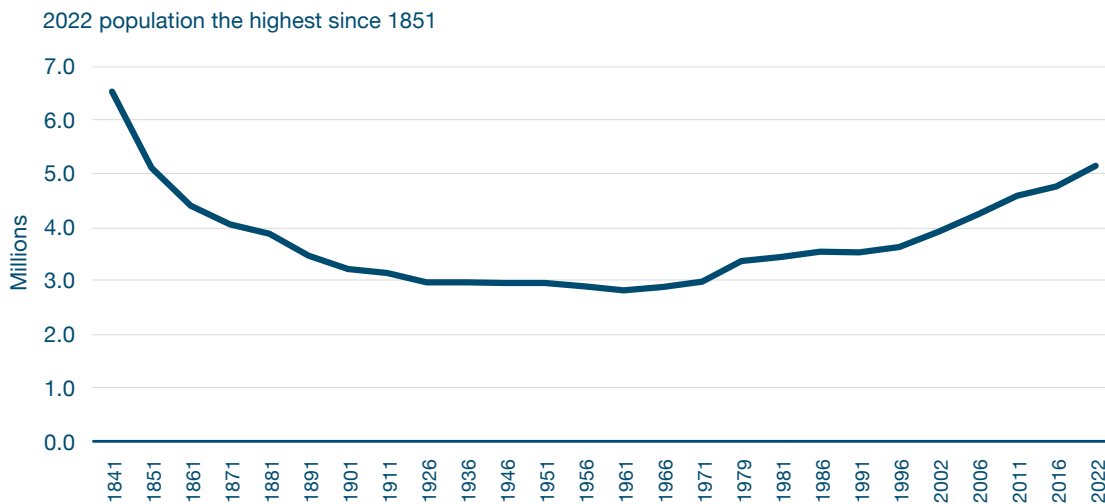
Sector Forecast & Projected Availability of Veterinary Professionals in Ireland



In order to support recommendations and decision-making the Veterinary Council of Ireland determined that it needed to gain a deeper understanding of the current and future supply of, and demand for, veterinary services in Ireland.

To assist with further analysis and interpretation of the data collected, the Veterinary Council of Ireland enlisted the services of data analyst and PhD candidate, Niall Devitt. Niall has lectured at undergraduate and postgraduate level for over 6 years, specialising in economic data analysis and econometrics and has previously worked as a data analyst for both private and public bodies. Included below is analysis carried out by Niall on veterinary market conditions and projections of the supply and demand for the veterinary market from 2023-2033. Niall's full report is included in Appendix 2. of this report.

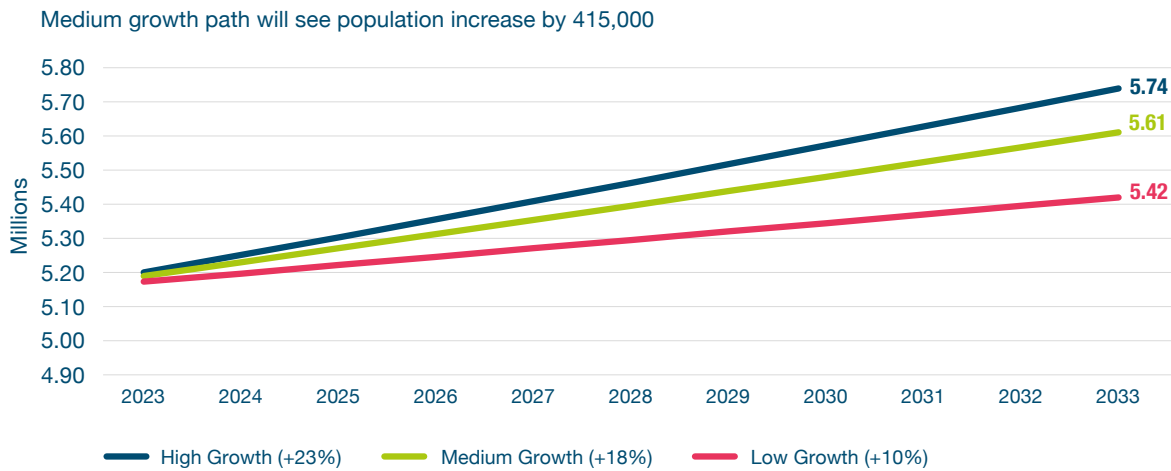
Figure 10. Irish Population 1841-2022 ⁽⁴⁾



A major component of the demand for veterinary services is the population of the economy. Ireland has experienced consistent population growth since the 1970s, with accelerated increases in recent years, which places pressures on the capacity of the veterinary care market.

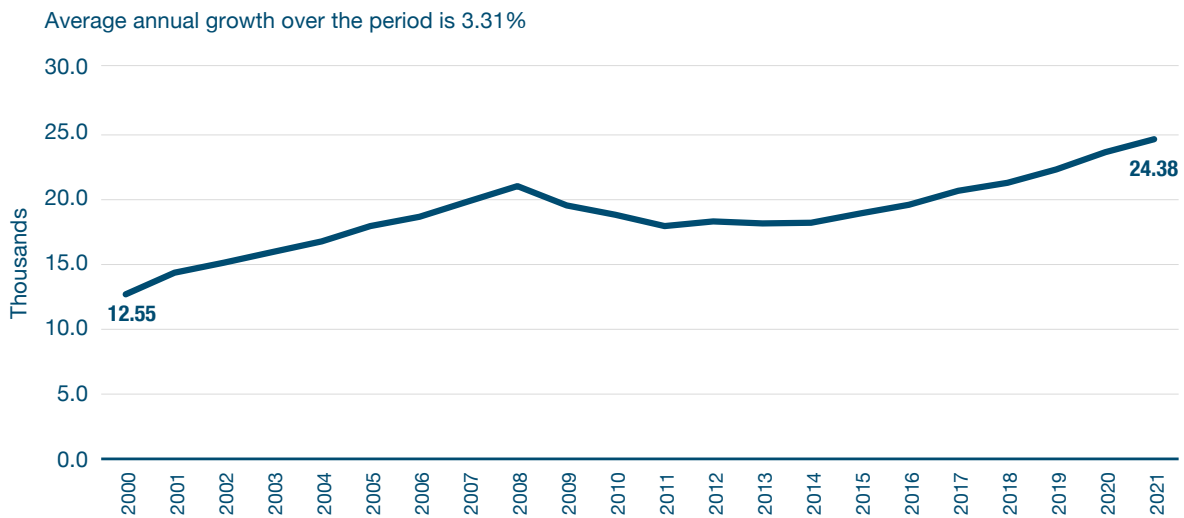
It is also worth noting the value of the agriculture sector to the economy. In 2023, Irish agri-food exports exceeded €18.1 billion, reaching 180 countries worldwide and accounting for over 9% of Ireland's exports.⁽¹⁰⁾

Figure 11. Irish Population Projection 2023-2033 ⁽⁴⁾



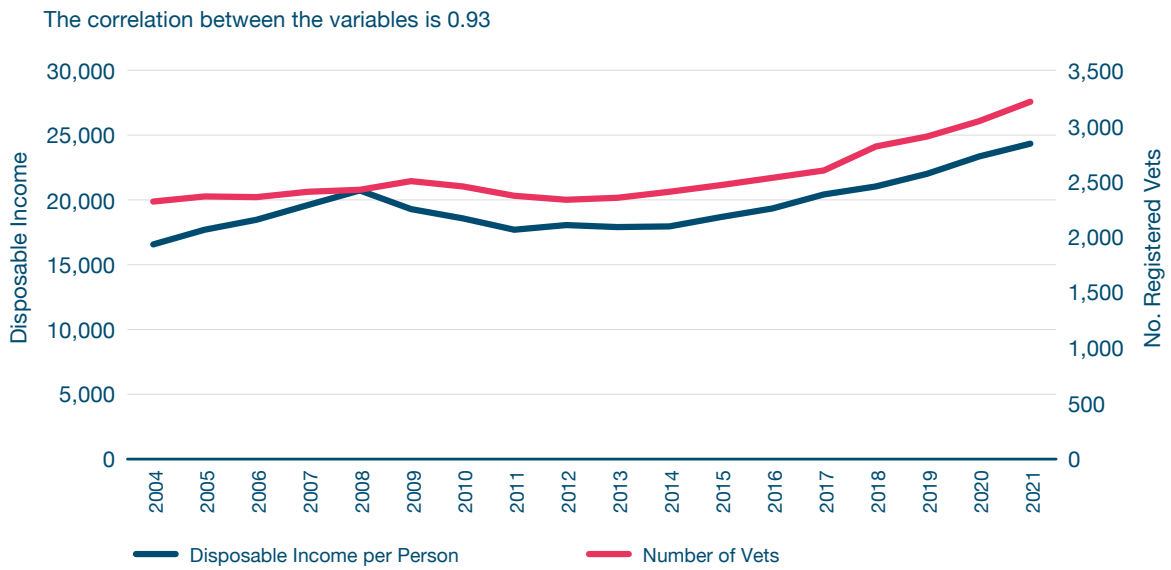
Using the 2016 census, the CSO uses six different development paths for the Irish economy to make predictions on the future population, with all indicating an increase in the total population. Figure 11 shows the three scenarios which represent the greatest increase in total population (M1F1), the lowest increase in population (M3F2), and a mid-range growth path (M2F1). To update the data with the most recent census figures in 2022, the forward projection of the population takes the compound annual growth rates from the three scenarios and projects these from the 2022 census population figure.

Figure 12. Disposable Income per Capita 2000-2021 ⁽⁵⁾



A commonly accepted measure of the demand for veterinary services, and specifically companion animal services, is the level of disposable income in the economy. Since the Celtic Tiger years of the 1990's, disposable income per capita has consistently increased with the trend expected to continue into future years.

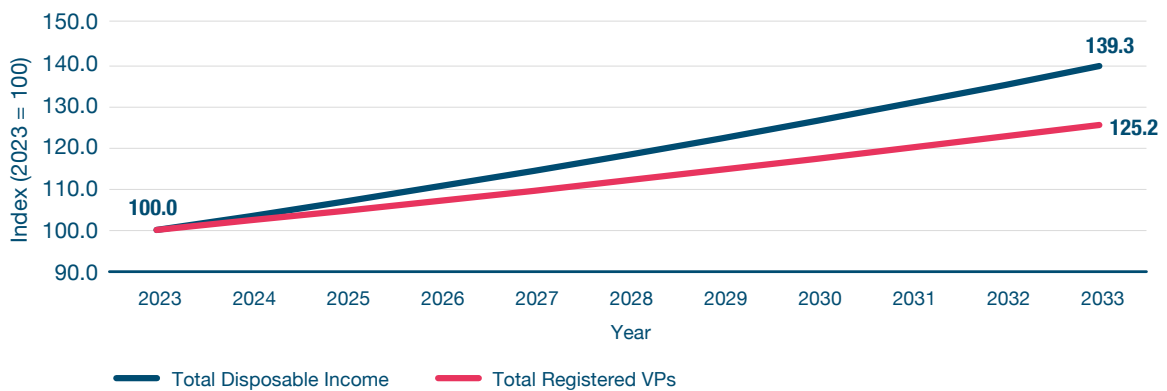
Figure 13. Disposable Income & Registered Veterinary Practitioners 2004-2021



One notable feature of the data is the economic cyclical nature of both disposable income and the number of registered vets. When these are plotted together it is apparent that there is a high correlation between the two. This is in concurrence with the literature and shows how strong the relationship is in determining activity. Moreover, it points to a market which is especially dependent on economic conditions which may require government support in times of distress.

The long-run growth rate in the number of registered veterinary practitioners from 2004-2023 has been 2.27%, with even greater increases noted in the most recent years. This long-run growth rate is assumed to continue from 2023 to 2033 which results in an overall growth of 25.2% in the registered numbers. Likewise, disposable income is assumed to follow its own long-run path over the preceding twenty years and grow by 3.37% resulting in a 39.3% overall increase. If VP growth rates slow down, the shortfall in VP numbers may be greater than above. If we estimate the growth rate in the register before 2018 it only averages 0.91% i.e. from 2004-2017.

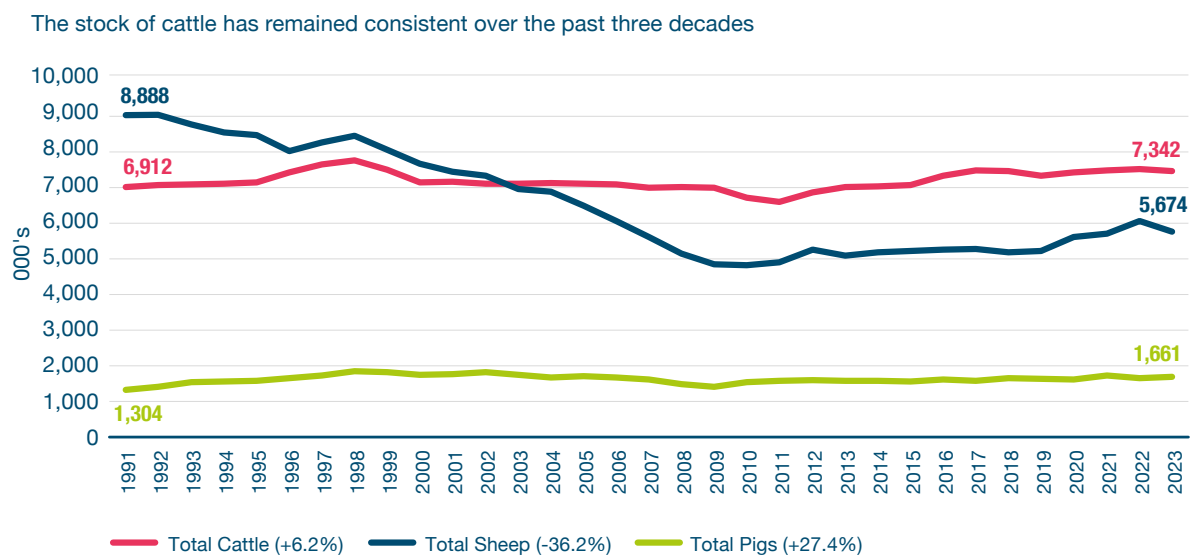
Figure 14. Projected Market Conditions 2023-2033



Projected Veterinary Market Conditions			
Number of Veterinary Practitioners	Demand Growth (3.37%)	Supply Growth (2.27%)	Veterinary Practitioner Shortage
2023	3,534	3,534	-
2025	3,776	3,696	100
2027	4,035	3,865	170
2029	4,311	4,043	268
2031	4,607	4,229	378
2033	4,922	4,423	499

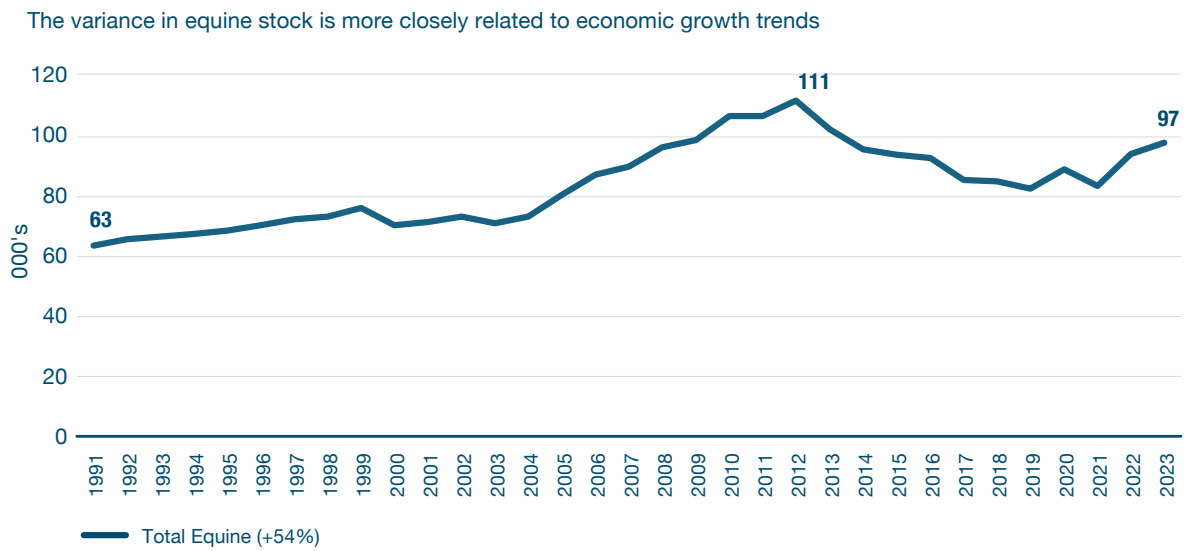
Using the projected growth in disposable income per capita and veterinary supply, it is possible to estimate the absolute number of veterinary practitioners which are required in the market each year. Within five years, there will be a shortage of 217 vets with this increasing to 499 by 2033. If a lower supply growth rate of 0.91% is assumed, the shortfall could amount to 1,026 veterinary practitioners.

Figure 15. Irish Livestock Numbers 1991-2023 ⁽⁶⁾



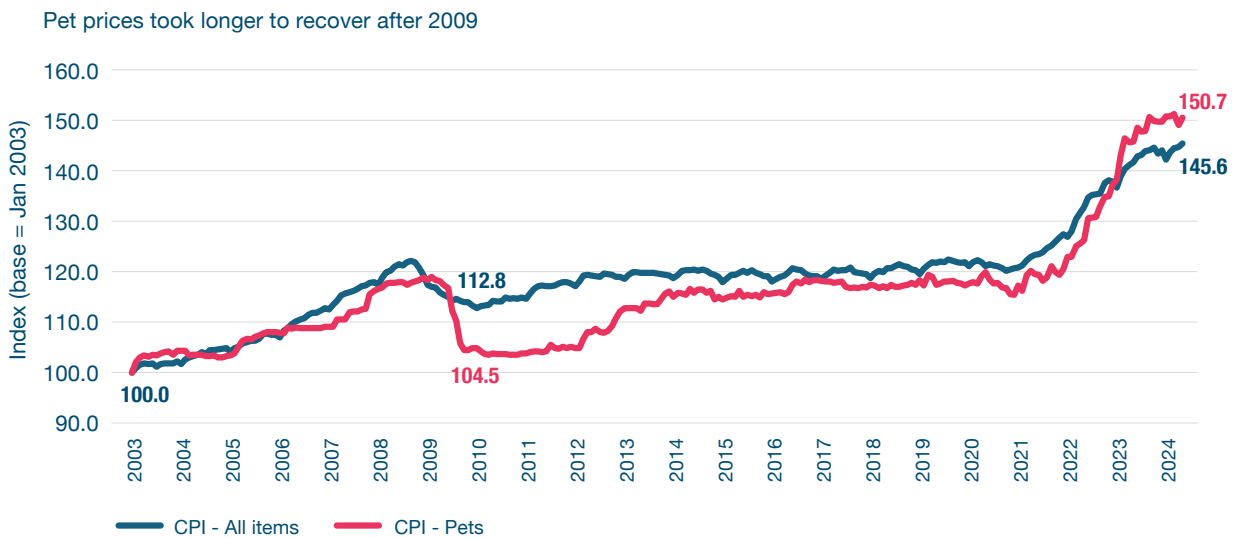
The livestock numbers are a strong indicator of the demand for farming veterinary services. Although there has been a notable decrease in sheep numbers and an increase in pig numbers, the national herd of cattle has remained consistent over the past thirty years.

Figure 16. Irish Equine Numbers 1991-2023 ⁽⁶⁾



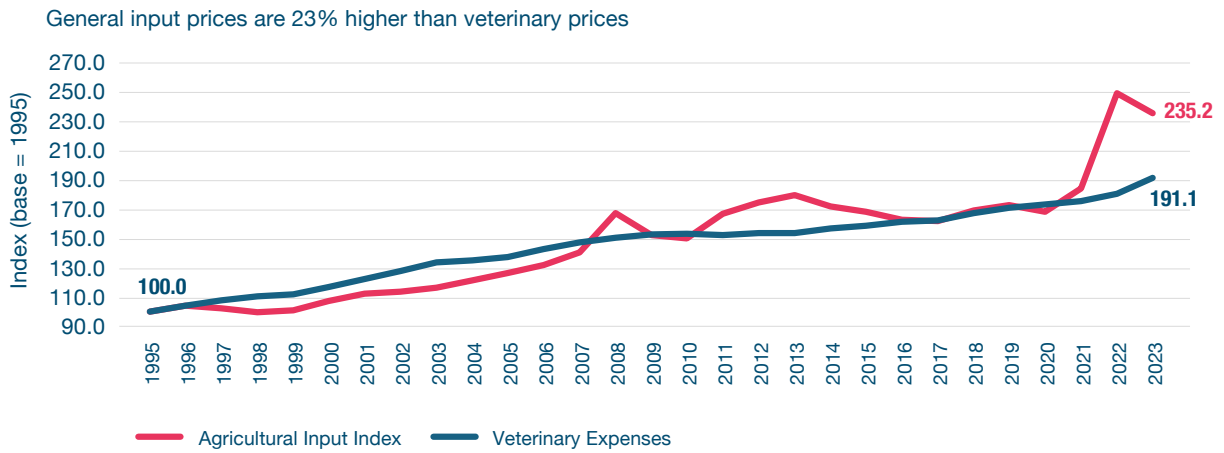
The total of the stock of horses and ponies on agricultural holdings has increased from 63,100 in 1991 to 97,100 in 2023.

Figure 17. Consumer Price Index 2003-2024 ⁽⁷⁾



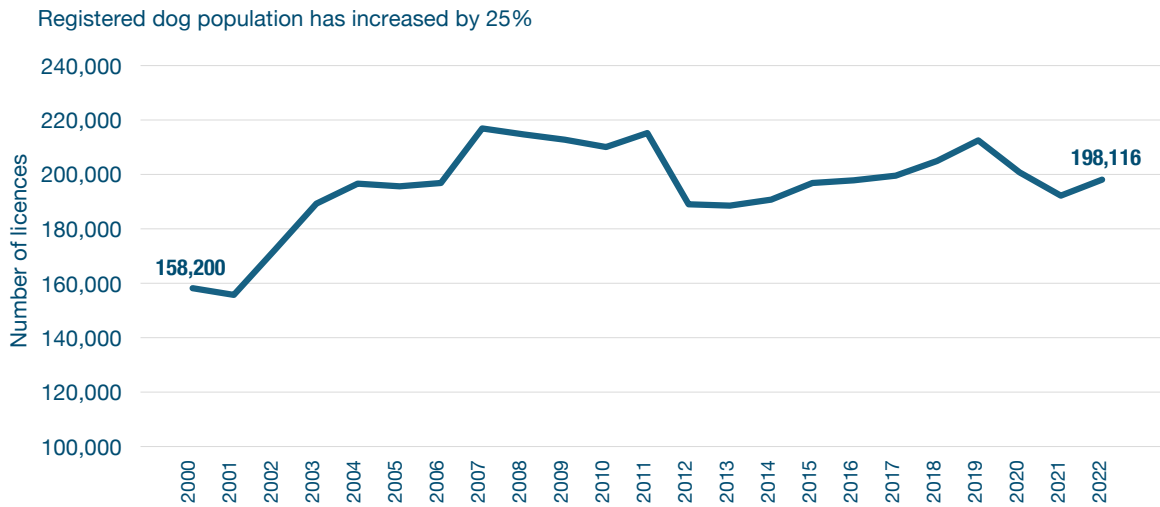
The price of goods in the market is a reliable indicator of the supply and demand conditions i.e. if prices are rising, it indicates either an increase in the demand for goods, or a fall in supply. The financial crisis had a more pronounced effect on pet prices than those in the general economy with the recovery taking a much longer time period. In the most recent inflationary period since 2021, pet prices have risen by more than those in the general economy.

Figure 18. Agricultural Input Price Index 1995-2023 ⁽⁸⁾



Another measure of farming demand and supply conditions is the agricultural price index. Similar to the consumer price index it is possible to identify a component that relates to veterinary services. Veterinary expenses show a more consistent rate of growth that appears less prone to general economic conditions than both the consumer price index equivalent and the general agricultural input price index. The notable increase in general prices in 2021 has moderated in 2023 however it is now 23% higher than veterinary expenses. The future path may see further increases in veterinary expenses as it returns to parity with the overall index.

Figure 19. Dog Licences Issues 2000-2022 ⁽¹²⁾



Federation of Veterinarians of Europe Survey of the Veterinary Profession in Europe 2023 ⁽¹⁵⁾

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe is the representative body for the veterinary profession in Europe. The FVE 2023 Survey of the Veterinary Profession in Europe was conducted between October 2022 and April 2023 across FVE members in 37 European countries. It drew 12,397 responses, including 253 responses from Ireland.

Included below is data from the 2023 FVE Survey regarding veterinary sector predictions:

- ▶ Veterinary practitioners expect greater demand for their services in companion animal care and exotics but a decline in demand for equine, goat and sheep veterinary care and treatment.
- ▶ They see specialist services and telemedicine as growth areas of practice.
- ▶ They also predict strong demand for training in communication skills, business and digital skills.
- ▶ High workloads and staff shortages are the top challenges facing the veterinary profession.
- ▶ Top three challenges for veterinary businesses: increasing costs of products and medications; clients who are unable to pay their bills; administration.
- ▶ The trajectory for future veterinary practice is greater specialisation, with the corporate sector likely to pursue this more aggressively.
- ▶ As well as undertaking specialist training, veterinary practitioners expect colleagues to build skills in communication, business and digital skills in the next five years.
- ▶ Veterinary practitioners strongly back the goal to achieve a One Health agenda – eight out of 10 agree with the statement: ‘As a profession we need to stand out globally and demonstrate our One Health commitment’.



Factors in the Attraction, Recruitment & Retention of Veterinary Professionals in Ireland



11

During its analysis, the Workforce Review Working Group recognised the need to examine the areas of recruitment, retention and possible factors which would entice and enable people to return to the Veterinary Council of Ireland Register.

To assist it in identifying the key factors affecting recruitment and retention of veterinary professionals in Ireland, the Workforce Review Working Group considered a number of papers and reports on the matter.

Irish Equine Veterinary Association Retention Survey 2023 ⁽¹⁷⁾

The Irish Equine Veterinary Association conducted a survey on the working conditions and burnout rates among Irish equine vets in 2023, as well as their career satisfaction and retention issues. The survey had 153 responses, which is approximately 44% of the total number of equine vets in the country. The survey gathered information regarding gender balance, place of graduation, working hours and conditions and factors causing vets to both stay and leave their current positions.

The survey results show that the main factors causing Irish equine vets to leave their current position include:

- ▶ Work life balance
- ▶ Rota
- ▶ Salary
- ▶ Team/management

The survey results show that the main factors causing Irish equine vets to remain in their current position include:

- ▶ Proximity to family/social network
- ▶ Location
- ▶ Standard of care
- ▶ Work life balance

Suggestions provided by respondents on ways to improve retention included:

- ▶ Better working conditions – better pay, hours, rota, more support, flexibility, support for part time working and support for working parents
- ▶ Undergraduate level – train more vets, better selection of undergrads (lower points & reestablish male/female balance)
- ▶ Managing expectations on the reality of practice
- ▶ Change culture
- ▶ Charge more
- ▶ Better use of nurses
- ▶ Hire foreign graduates
- ▶ Communication and collaboration between practices

Factors affecting retention of veterinary practitioners in Ireland: a cross-sectional study with a focus on clinical practice (2022) by Eoin G. Ryan, Stephen H. Beatty, Elizabeth Gray, Niamh Field, Rory Liston, Victoria Rhodes & John Donlon ⁽¹³⁾

The study presents findings from a survey conducted to understand the recruitment and retention challenges faced by veterinary practitioners in Ireland. The survey collected data from 370 respondents, analysing their demographics, employment status, job satisfaction, and future aspirations. The survey reveals that the majority of respondents received their veterinary education from University College Dublin, with a smaller percentage attending other European universities.

Most respondents described themselves as associate veterinarians or employees of a practice, while a smaller percentage identified as practice owners/partners or clinical directors. The average length of time since qualification as a veterinary practitioner was 8.7 years, with a slightly longer duration for male vets compared to female vets. In terms of employment status, the majority of respondents were in full-time employment, while a smaller percentage worked part-time or had other employment statuses such as locum or maternity leave. Among those in clinical practice, the majority were employees, followed by practice owners/partners/clinical directors and self-employed individuals.

The survey also revealed that a significant percentage of respondents were still in their first job, indicating potential challenges with job stability and career progression. Job satisfaction was assessed in various aspects, including satisfaction with the current job, work-life balance, and likelihood of staying in the veterinary profession. The results showed that a majority of respondents were either somewhat satisfied or extremely satisfied with their current job. However, when it came to work-life balance, only 37.5% of respondents expressed satisfaction, while 52.9% were dissatisfied. This highlights the importance of addressing work-life balance issues in the veterinary profession.

The survey also explored the likelihood of respondents leaving their current job or the veterinary profession within the next 5 to 10 years. It revealed that 32.8% of respondents considered it likely to leave their current job, while 55.3% were unlikely to do so.

This suggests a significant proportion of veterinary practitioners may be considering alternative career paths or leaving the profession altogether. Furthermore, the study highlights the gender pay gap in the veterinary profession in Ireland. This finding underscores the need for addressing gender disparities in the profession and ensuring equal opportunities and compensation for all veterinary practitioners.

In conclusion, the study sheds light on the challenges faced by veterinary practitioners in Ireland, including issues related to work-life balance, job satisfaction, and the gender pay gap. It emphasises the importance of addressing these challenges to improve recruitment and retention in the veterinary profession.

Investigation into the prevalence of burnout in Irish veterinary surgeons and associated stress factors (2023) by Fiona Reardon ⁽¹⁶⁾

The research findings suggest that burnout is a significant issue among veterinary surgeons in Ireland, with high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion reported. The study identifies various stressors, both individual and organisational, that contribute to the development of burnout. These stressors include long working hours, lack of support, emotional labour, and the demands of the profession.

The implications of burnout in the veterinary profession are significant, affecting not only the well-being of veterinary surgeons but also patient care and the overall functioning of veterinary practices. The study emphasises the importance of addressing burnout and implementing interventions to prevent and mitigate its effects. Recommendations are provided for industry stakeholders, including veterinary organisations and employers, to create supportive work environments, promote work-life balance, and enhance communication and teamwork.

The document includes several recommendations for addressing burnout among Irish veterinary practitioners:

1. Create Supportive Work Environments:

Veterinary organisations and employers should prioritise creating supportive work environments that promote the well-being of veterinary practitioners. This can include implementing policies and practices that prioritise work-life balance, provide adequate resources, and support, and foster a positive and collaborative workplace culture.

2. **Address Workload and Working Hours:** Efforts should be made to address the workload and working hours of veterinary practitioners. This can involve implementing strategies to manage and distribute workload effectively, ensuring reasonable working hours, and providing opportunities for rest and recovery.
3. **Enhance Communication and Teamwork:** Improving communication and teamwork within veterinary practices can help reduce stress and burnout. This can be achieved through regular team meetings, fostering open and transparent communication channels, and promoting a supportive and collaborative team culture.
4. **Provide Emotional Support and Resources:** Veterinary practitioners should have access to emotional support and resources to help them cope with the challenges and stressors of their profession. This can include providing access to counselling services, peer support networks, and resources for self-care and stress management.
5. **Promote Work-Life Balance:** Encouraging a healthy work-life balance is crucial in preventing burnout. Veterinary organisations and employers should support and promote activities that help veterinary practitioners maintain a balance between their personal and professional lives, such as flexible work arrangements and time off.
6. **Foster Professional Development and Growth:** Providing opportunities for professional development and growth can contribute to job satisfaction and reduce burnout. Veterinary practitioners should be encouraged to pursue continuing education, engage in mentorship programs, and have opportunities for career advancement.
7. **Advocate for Industry-wide Changes:** Veterinary organisations and professional bodies should advocate for industry-wide changes to address systemic issues that contribute to burnout. This can involve advocating for improved working conditions, fair compensation, and regulatory changes that prioritise the well-being of veterinary practitioners.

Mental Health of Veterinary Professionals in Ireland (2021) ⁽⁹⁾

The Veterinary Council of Ireland commissioned a research study on the mental health and wellbeing of veterinary professionals in Ireland, to expand the evidence base on the mental health needs of veterinary professionals.

There were 747 complete or almost complete responses to the online survey carried out in April 2021, which covered topics of depression, anxiety, stress, burnout, deliberate self-harm, suicide, mental health knowledge, stigma, help-seeking and sources of support.

Key findings included:

- ▶ Anxiety levels were high amongst all occupational groups. Overall, 34.7% of participants were in the normal range for anxiety, 22.9% in the borderline abnormal range and 42.5% in the abnormal range. There was a significant association between occupational group and anxiety category whereby veterinarian managers were more likely and veterinary nurses were less likely to be in the normal range.
- ▶ Work-life balance was reported as a significant stressor for all occupational groups. Long working hours, COVID-19 restrictions, salary, and recruitment were other stressors commonly reported by the respondents.
- ▶ Veterinary nurses indicated higher levels of psychological distress, self-harm, and suicidal behaviour than other veterinary professionals. This is likely associated with the age and gender profile of veterinary nurses given that being young and identifying as female were observed to be risk factors for poor mental wellbeing.
- ▶ Respondents who indicated that they work as veterinary practitioners in a managerial position indicated significantly better mental wellbeing than their colleagues on several indicators. However, it was observed that veterinarian managers displayed significantly lower mental health knowledge than other veterinary professionals.
- ▶ Engaging with activities and having strong social support were the main methods reported by veterinary professionals for looking after their mental health.

Suggestions made by the participants and recommendations in the literature to support the mental wellbeing of veterinary professionals include increased access to managerial, peer and professional support from therapists or counsellors, decreased on-call hours, increased time off when needed, mental health awareness promotion, psychoeducation and suicide prevention training.

Irish Veterinary Nursing Association Survey 2023 ⁽¹⁸⁾

The Irish Veterinary Nursing Association conducted a national survey in May 2023 to assess changes in the veterinary nursing profession since previous surveys in 2016 and 2018.

Key findings of the survey include:

- 1. Demographics:** The profession remains predominantly female (97.90%), with a shift in age demographics showing more nurses over 35 years old.
- 2. Employment:** Most respondents work in companion animal practices, with an average of 4 years in their current job. Many work 32-39 hours per week, but only 27.27% always take full meal breaks.
- 3. Pay and Conditions:** The average hourly rate is €16.90, with 52.91% receiving annual pay reviews. However, 80.65% report no defined pay scale, and 88.24% lack performance-related pay schemes.
- 4. Career Plans:** 16% plan to leave the profession within a year, and 24.60% within five years, mainly due to pay dissatisfaction.
- 5. Training and Development:** Many nurses are pursuing or planning further qualifications, with 80.35% having their Continuing Veterinary Education (CVE) funded by employers.
- 6. Attitudes:** High stress levels (99.43%) and a lack of respect from veterinary practitioners and clients are significant issues. Better pay, work-life balance, and recognition are top concerns.
- 7. Health and Safety:** Only 54.33% feel their practice has adequate health and safety procedures.

The survey results indicate minimal improvements in work and pay conditions for veterinary nurses since the 2018 survey:

- 1. Retention Issues:** Although the percentage of nurses planning to stay in the profession has slightly increased from 53% in 2018 to 57.22% in 2023, a significant 40.65% still plan to leave within the next five years, primarily due to pay dissatisfaction and poor work conditions.
- 2. Main Concerns:** The main reasons for leaving the profession remain consistent with 2018 findings, including low pay, stressful work conditions, and lack of recognition.
- 3. Pay and Work Conditions:** Issues such as the need for established pay scales, job descriptions, and transparency in employment conditions persist. The economic climate and cost of living have exacerbated these concerns.
- 4. Unionisation:** There is a continued desire for unionisation among veterinary nurses, despite a previous vote against it.
- 5. Second Jobs:** A similar percentage of nurses (15.25% in 2023 vs. 18% in 2018) hold second jobs, indicating ongoing financial strain.
- 6. Pay Reviews:** Only 53% receive annual pay reviews, with varying increases. Some have never had a pay increase.
- 7. Employer Support:** Positively, many employers cover annual fees for VCI Registration, CVE, and professional indemnity insurance.
- 8. Career Progression:** Limited advancement opportunities remain a concern, with only a small percentage working as practice managers or head nurses.

Overall, the survey highlights the need for industry-recognised pay scales, better working conditions, and more respect for veterinary nurses to improve retention and job satisfaction.

VCI Survey of Veterinary Practitioners & Veterinary Nurses Leaving the Registers

To assist its review, the Workforce Review Working Group identified the need for more information on those removing their name from the Register of Veterinary Practitioners and Register of Veterinary Nurses and whether they intend to return. To gather this information the Workforce Review Working Group determined to commission a survey of those who have voluntarily removed themselves from the Registers over the last five years.

Veterinary Practitioner Responses

The survey issued to 629 veterinary practitioners and had a 16% response rate. At 58%, the main reason for veterinary practitioners leaving the Register is to practise in another country. It was further noted that of those who completed the survey, 55% graduated outside of Ireland so it is possible that those leaving were moving back to their country of origin to live and work. While there were some comments noting pay as an issue in practice, the main concerns highlighted by veterinary practitioners were around difficult working environments and negative practice experiences.

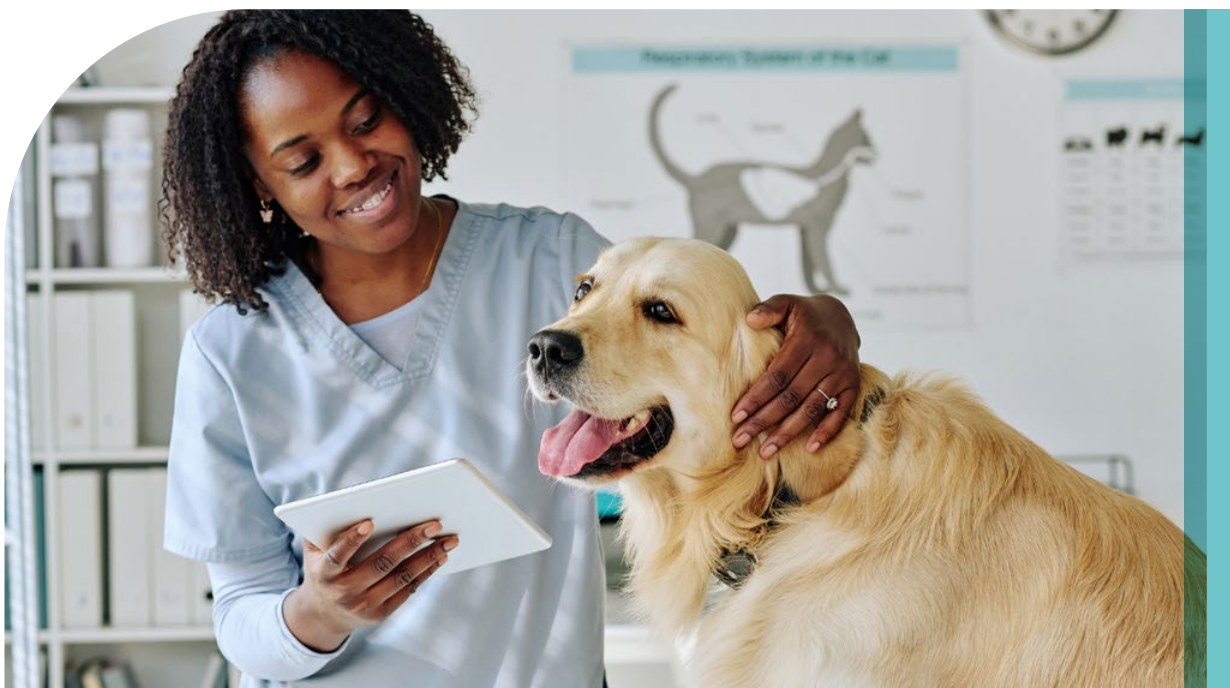
Veterinary Nurse Responses

The survey issued to 380 veterinary nurses and had a 25% response rate. The veterinary nurse respondents confirmed a higher express wish to leave the veterinary profession at 49.47%, compared to the veterinary practitioner respondents at 8%. This is a concerning figure as a high percentage of a workforce wanting to leave can lead to the loss of valuable expertise, increased burnout among remaining staff, and can negatively impact service quality.

From the responses received, it was noted that low pay is the most common reason causing veterinary nurses to leave the profession. Another common reason noted in the responses received is that veterinary nurses feel underappreciated and underutilised in terms of their clinical skills.

The VCI will continue to survey those leaving the Register, to monitor trends in this regard.

The full results of the survey are included in Appendix 3 of this report.



VCI Accredited Programmes of Education

12

Veterinary Medicine

University College Dublin School of Veterinary Medicine

- ▶ Only VCI accredited veterinary medicine course in Ireland at time of publishing.
- ▶ Qualifications delivered: Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (MVB) and Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine Graduate Entry (MVB). Both are Level 8 Honours degrees.
- ▶ Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (MVB) – 5 years. Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine Graduate Entry (MVB) – 4 years.
- ▶ The School has the following CAO allocations:
 - Veterinary Medicine 5 year programme - 82
 - EU Graduate Entry programme - 5/6

Additionally, the School allocates approximately 50 places on the Graduate Entry Veterinary Medicine 4 year programme for international students and 6 places on the 5 year program for international students.

In September 2024, the Irish government announced that two new veterinary medicine schools would be established and located at South East Technological University in Kilkenny, and Atlantic Technological University in its Donegal and Galway campuses.

Atlantic Technological University aims to commence its veterinary medicine programme in September 2025 with an initial intake of 30 students.

South East Technological University also aims to commence its veterinary medicine programme in September 2025 with an intake of 40 students.

One of the main responsibilities of the Veterinary Council of Ireland is the maintenance of standards in the practice of veterinary medicine and nursing through the accreditation and supervision of veterinary education. Any new veterinary medicine or veterinary nursing course in Ireland must apply to the Veterinary Council of Ireland for accreditation.

Veterinary Nursing

Atlantic Technological University

- ▶ Qualification delivered: Level 7 Bachelor of Science in Veterinary Nursing
- ▶ Duration: 3 years
- ▶ Number of places: 32
- ▶ Qualification delivered: Level 8 Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Veterinary Nursing
- ▶ Duration: 1 year
- ▶ Number of places: 32

Cork College of Further Education & Training

- ▶ Qualification delivered: Level 6 Veterinary Nursing (Animal Science)
- ▶ Duration: 2 years
- ▶ Number of places: 45

Dundalk Institute of Technology

- ▶ Qualification delivered: Level 7 Bachelor of Science in Veterinary Nursing
- ▶ Duration: 3 years
- ▶ Number of places: 30
- ▶ Qualification delivered: Level 8 Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Advanced Veterinary Nursing
- ▶ Duration: 1-2 years
- ▶ Number of places: 18

Technological University of the Shannon

- ▶ Qualification delivered: Level 7 Bachelor of Science in Veterinary Nursing
- ▶ Duration: 3 years
- ▶ Number of places: 48

University College Dublin

- ▶ Qualification delivered: Level 8 Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Veterinary Nursing
- ▶ Duration: 4 years
- ▶ Number of places: 44

Munster Technological University has also commenced a veterinary nursing course, and a VCI accreditation visit is pending once the first cohort of students has graduated from the programme.

International Landscape & Initiatives


 13

European Veterinary Landscape

The FVE 2023 Survey of the Veterinary Profession in Europe was conducted between October 2022 and April 2023 across FVE members in 37 European countries. It drew 12,397 responses, including 253 responses from Ireland. ⁽¹⁵⁾

Included below is data from the 2023 FVE Survey:

- ▶ The veterinary profession continues to grow – there are now an estimated 328,494 veterinary practitioners across Europe (FVE member countries) – a rate of 0.42 per 1000 people.
- ▶ It is a young profession in Europe – most veterinary practitioners are under the age of 45. The median age is 44 years old.
- ▶ The veterinary profession is already predominantly female – this has been established in previous surveys – but this trend continues: 65% of vets are female. This represents a 7% increase in female veterinary practitioners since 2018.
- ▶ Female veterinary practitioners dominate all sectors of work. They also make up 65% of full-time veterinary practitioners and 56% of veterinary business owners/partners.
- ▶ Male veterinary practitioners are more likely to be owners or partners than their female counterparts (29% vs 20%).
- ▶ Two-thirds of European veterinary practitioners (66%) work full-time in practice, with almost a quarter (27%) being owners or partners.
- ▶ 91% of males and 77% of females work full time.
- ▶ 49% have 15 years+ experience. The most experienced veterinary practitioners work in independent practices.
- ▶ 49% of veterinary practitioners working part-time hours are aged 39 or less.
- ▶ 31% of veterinary practitioners have a second job, this is most likely within a clinical practice.
- ▶ Most European veterinary practitioners (67%) work in the private sector, with more than half (51%) working in independent veterinary practice.
- ▶ Increasingly, most veterinary practitioners work in companion animal practice (71%), the breakdown of other species is as follows: cattle (23%), equine (21%) and pigs (13%).
- ▶ 16% work in corporates or for a chain of practices.
- ▶ The most common employment sector is clinical practice (63%) – predominantly small animal clinical practice. The second most common sector is public service (14%), education and research (6%) and industry (4%).
- ▶ 36% of veterinary practitioners are directly employed – a 9% rise since 2015.
- ▶ The fast move to corporatisation of the veterinary market in the UK, where some 44% of the veterinary workforce veterinary practitioners are employed, is not matched in mainland Europe. Only six out of 28 countries (21%) surveyed have corporate employment rates that exceed 20% of the total employment share. Nevertheless, in Sweden and Norway the numbers working with the corporate sector are significant (34% and 27%, respectively).
- ▶ European veterinary practitioners earn on average € 48,000 per year.
- ▶ Pay differences are apparent between genders – the full time equivalent median salary for a male veterinary practitioner is €55,360 and €46,400 for a female. Up to 35% of male veterinary practitioners earn €70,000+ compared to 22% of female veterinary practitioners. Similarly, more females earn €40,000 or less than male veterinary practitioners: 41% v 34%.
- ▶ The working week for European veterinary practitioners has shrunk since 2015. They are typically contracted to work 36.9 hours per week and typically work 42.4 hours. Eight years ago, they were typically contracted to work 40.2 hours per week but typically worked 46.8 hours.

- ▶ Vets however typically work about 4 to 6 hours more per week than contracted and can also not take all holidays they are entitled to due to too high workload.
- ▶ A third of veterinary practitioners do not work out-of-hours.
- ▶ European veterinary practitioners have work contracts that typically provide 24.4 days holiday per year, however, on average, they take just 21.4.
- ▶ It takes almost two years for veterinary practitioners to achieve economic independence after they join the job market following graduation.
- ▶ Veterinary practitioners rate their choice of profession highly – they give it an average score of 7/10 (with 10 being highest).
- ▶ They are less satisfied with their work-personal life balance (5/10) and income (5.5/10).
- ▶ Veterinary practitioners in Switzerland, Denmark and Finland are the most satisfied with their choice of profession.
- ▶ Most veterinary practitioners (more than 90%) say they are stressed. Almost a quarter (23%) had to take more than two weeks off work due to depression, burn-out, exhaustion or compassion fatigue in past three years.
- ▶ High workloads and staff shortages are the top challenges facing the veterinary profession. Up to 59% of European veterinary practitioners surveyed in 2023 viewed ‘too much work’ as a key challenge and 49% cited recruitment difficulties or staff shortages.
- ▶ When asked their likelihood of leaving the veterinary sector for another profession, an overall 25% of veterinary practitioners say they are likely to leave the veterinary profession and a further 18% believe such a move is ‘somewhat likely’.

European Initiatives

Almost all FVE members report workforce shortages in their countries, especially in certain critical areas such as rural and remote areas, livestock veterinary practices, state and official veterinary practitioners. Some countries have started to take steps to try and address these issues. Included below are examples of some of the initiatives already in place. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Finland

The country has a system of official veterinary practitioners organised at the municipal level that spreads across the entire country. Official veterinary practitioners treat both companion and large animals and provide a wide range of services: preventive care, on-call service, disease control, herd health planning, animal welfare and meat inspection. They are organised in working groups, allowing for the share of different duties. ⁽¹⁴⁾

France

Several countries offer internships in veterinary practices that focus on rural veterinary practice to address differences in service distribution. For example, the veterinary schools in France offer tutored internships, financed by the government, with an 80% success rate of students staying in rural practice upon completion of the programme. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Several countries, including France, provide mentorship programs to support students through their education and early career stages. Mentorship programmes provide guidance and support for recent graduates who can benefit from experienced veterinary practitioners and nurses sharing their knowledge and offering career advice. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Sweden

In Sweden, the District Veterinarian Organisation (DVO) is a nationwide veterinary organisation managed by the government. The government provides all necessary equipment including the clinic building and car. The DVO offers 24/7 emergency service, and it prioritises farm animals and the control of certain diseases. The private veterinary practitioners work mainly during the day, but in a few areas, there are successful cooperations between the DVO and the private practitioners where the 24/7 emergency service is solved. ⁽¹⁴⁾

UK

Scottish Ministers operate the Highlands and Islands Veterinary Services Scheme (HIVSS)19 to ensure the provision of adequate veterinary services, to prevent and eradicate animal diseases, for agricultural animals on crofts and small farms. The payments are set out in a formal contract that defines the ‘Eligible Persons’ (that is, a crofter or small farmer) and ‘Eligible Animals’ (livestock, working dogs and horse and ponies used in farming).

There are different elements of the grant including extra support for practices in areas where large animal work would not be viable due to mileage, and travel and waiting time. This latter element recognises that visits may involve ferries and overnight accommodation across the Islands. The veterinary practice may charge the farmer a 'client visit fee' up to an agreed maximum, which covers the supply of medicines and other items. Veterinary practices submit a monthly record providing details of visits and mileage. ⁽¹⁴⁾

The RCVS has recently introduced a mandatory Veterinary Graduate Development Program (VETGDP) for new graduates, overseas vets, or those returning to practice after a break of five or more years. The programme provides a period of workplace-based support for all veterinary graduates as they begin their first role in practice. ⁽¹⁹⁾

Canada

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association – Society of British Columbia Veterinarians Chapter conducted a labour market study in 2019 in British Columbia. The purpose of the study was to collect and analyse labour market information in order to gain a deeper understanding of the veterinary workforce and key labour market issues and outlook. The most common recommendations emerging from the study were to increase the number of British Columbian students at Western College of Veterinary Medicine and facilitate the hiring of experienced foreign-trained veterinary practitioners. Other suggestions included providing incentives for veterinary practitioners to practice in rural areas, increasing awareness and interest among new graduates for a wider range of veterinary practice, providing more hands-on practical training, and improving linkages between the industry and training institutions. ⁽³⁾

America

The American Animal Hospital Association conducted a retention study in 2019. The study reveals that a significant percentage of veterinary practice team members, including veterinary practitioners are considering leaving their current role in clinical practice. The study emphasises the need to address the root causes of attrition and improve the work environment for veterinary professionals. It highlights the financial and human costs of high turnover rates and the impact on the quality of care provided to animals.

The study proposes two strategies for improving retention: a holistic approach that addresses the fundamental needs of team members and a role-based perspective that tailors retention efforts to each role in the practice. The key factors for retention include teamwork, modern medicine, meaningful work, fair compensation, appreciation for work, career development, flexibility in scheduling/job duties, and caring or inspiring leadership. The study concludes by urging leaders and decision-makers in the veterinary profession to prioritise retention and implement strategies to fulfil the needs and desires of veterinary professionals. ⁽¹⁾

Australia & New Zealand

A comprehensive review of veterinary education in Australia and New Zealand was carried out in 2023. It addresses key challenges and opportunities in veterinary education, including:

- ▶ veterinary salaries
- ▶ the regulatory framework for veterinary practitioners and their education
- ▶ competency frameworks for new veterinary graduates
- ▶ accreditation of Australasian veterinary schools
- ▶ changing needs for veterinary practitioners
- ▶ admissions processes
- ▶ gender diversity
- ▶ equity and diversity
- ▶ curriculum structure
- ▶ student well-being
- ▶ tracking in the curriculum
- ▶ outsourcing clinical teaching
- ▶ the research-teaching nexus
- ▶ government support for veterinary education
- ▶ financial sustainability
- ▶ the future of veterinary research and postgraduate education

The review mentions several recommendations for improving veterinary education and the veterinary profession. These include:

1. Veterinary schools should widen their admissions processes to select students based on a broader range of excellence, equity, and diversity.
2. Consider supplementing the mainstream admission process with an additional entry pathway targeting applicants committed to rural or government veterinary practice.
3. Establish a universal veterinary registration database and conduct an annual workforce survey.
4. Collaborate on educational research and curriculum development.
5. Increase the proportion of the curriculum devoted to specialised tracks.
6. Explore veterinary apprenticeship models and cost-sharing options.
7. Create space in the curriculum for professional skills development and well-being conversations.
8. Increase funding for veterinary education and adjust grant funding rates.
9. Provide clinical training loadings and facilitate international student access.
10. Assist employers in addressing workplace issues and developing business and management experience.
11. Harmonise graduate mentoring programs and consider making them mandatory.
12. Collaborate with Animal Health Australia and governments to upskill veterinary practitioners for biosecurity and emergency disease preparedness.
13. Contract rural veterinary practices to provide teaching and government services.
14. Extend student debt relief to veterinary practitioners through a rural veterinary bonding scheme.
15. Develop a leadership role in continuing professional development.
16. Increase the focus on practical clinical skills and farm animal veterinary work.
17. Enhance the practical skills of new graduates in basic procedures and clinical problem-solving.
18. Strengthen veterinary involvement in biosecurity, wildlife, and aquatic animal health.
19. Address workforce challenges and attract and retain veterinary talent.
20. Prepare for future changes in the veterinary profession, such as remote working and increased specialisation.
21. Improve work-life balance and professional support for veterinary practitioners.
22. Strengthen governance and management structures in veterinary schools.
23. Comply with health, safety, and best management practices in veterinary schools.
24. Continuously monitor and update the veterinary curriculum.
25. Foster collaboration and inclusivity in veterinary education.

These recommendations aim to address various aspects of veterinary education, workforce needs, research, and professional development to ensure a sustainable and thriving veterinary profession. ⁽²⁰⁾

Acknowledgements

14

The Veterinary Council of Ireland would like to extend its gratitude to all those who have contributed to the successful completion of this workforce report.

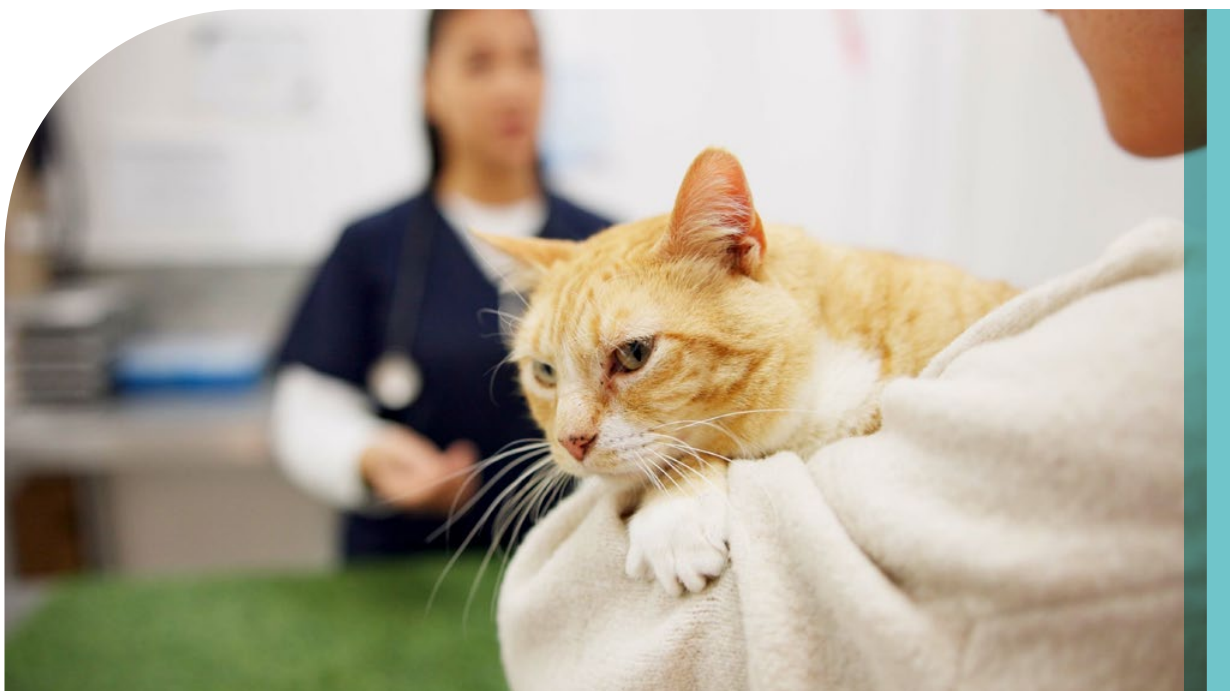
The Veterinary Council of Ireland wish to acknowledge the work of Emma Conlon in the compilation and delivery of the report and Register data analysis.

The Veterinary Council of Ireland sincerely thank and acknowledge the members of the Workforce Review Working Group. Their expertise, commitment, and valuable insights were instrumental in the preparation of this report.

The Veterinary Council of Ireland wishes to acknowledge its gratitude to Niall Devitt for his invaluable support with the data analysis work he carried out.

The Veterinary Council of Ireland are thankful for all stakeholders who attended the focus group session in October 2024 for their constructive feedback and input regarding the recommendations prepared by the Workforce Review Working Group.

The Veterinary Council of Ireland would like to express it thanks to all veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses who took the time to complete the survey which issued to those who have recently left the VCI Registers. The Veterinary Council greatly appreciates your contribution and reflective responses, which helped to inform a number of findings and recommendations contained in this report.



Glossary

15

Term	Definition
Agricultural Price Index	The agricultural price indices are intended to measure trends in the price of agricultural produce sold by farmers
Central Applications Office (CAO)	The Central Applications Office processes applications for undergraduate courses in Irish Higher Education Institutions
Certificate of Suitability (COS)	A Certificate of Suitability is the official certificate which confirms that the premises is registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland under its mandatory Premises Accreditation Scheme in accordance with section 109 of the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended. The COS identifies the classification of premises to which the Certificate applies, period of its validity and the name of the Certificate Holder.
Certificate of Suitability Holder	The Certificate of Suitability Holder is the registered person to whom the COS is granted by the Council. The COS Holder is the Council's point of contact in relation to the practice premises and in respect of the PAS. The COS Holder is responsible for ensuring that the practice premises is compliant with the PAS Regulations and PAS Standards in the registered practice premises classification. If more than one COS is held by a COS Holder, they must have direct knowledge and influence over the clinical services being offered at each registered veterinary premises. The COS Holder must ensure that only Registrants with the Council are practising veterinary medicine/veterinary nursing at and/or from the premises and that it is carried out in compliance with the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended. The COS Holder is a person who holds a suitable/significant position of authority within the veterinary practice, which empowers them to discharge all COS Holder responsibilities.
Code of Professional Conduct	All registered persons must comply with the Veterinary Council of Ireland's Code of Professional Conduct. The Code of Professional Conduct sets out Registrants professional responsibilities and provides advice on the proper standards of professional practice. The Code sets out the principles that may be applied to all areas of veterinary practice and identifies the key responsibilities of veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses to their patients, clients, the public and professional colleagues, and obligations under the law; and also provides guidance on aspects of practice.
Consumer Price Index (CPI)	The Consumer Price Index measures the overall change in the prices of goods and services that people typically buy over time.
Continuing Veterinary Education (CVE)	CVE helps veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses stay current with developments in their fields, ensuring they provide the best possible service to the public, in the interest of animal health and welfare, and public health. CVE is a mandatory requirement to remain registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland.
Practice Premises Committee (PPC)	The Practice Premises Committee considers and reports to the Council on all practice premises matters.
Premises Accreditation Scheme (PAS)	The Council's Premises Accreditation Scheme is a mandatory scheme introduced to regulate veterinary premises in the State in accordance with Part 9 of the Veterinary Practice Amendment Act 2005, as amended.

Term	Definition
Registered Mobile Veterinary Unit (RMVU)	A Registered Mobile Veterinary Unit is a mobile unit, usually associated with a registered charity, appropriately equipped and registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland at which one or more registered veterinary practitioners practise veterinary medicine
Registered Veterinary Clinic (RVC)	A Registered Veterinary Clinic is a permanent premises, at a fixed location, registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland at, and from which, one or more registered veterinary practitioners practise veterinary medicine. A RVC provides facilities for veterinary examination of animals and the carrying out of routine diagnostic, prophylactic and medical and surgical procedures. If animals are housed overnight appropriate arrangements shall be made for patient monitoring. At least one Registered Veterinary Nurse should be employed as part of the veterinary team at the RVC.
Registered Veterinary Facility (RVF)	A Registered Veterinary Facility is a permanent premises, at a fixed location registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland, at, and from which, one or more registered veterinary practitioners practise veterinary medicine, but not to or for the general public. It is a premises which, in the opinion of the Veterinary Council, having considered the type and scope of practice to be carried out at or from the premises, is more properly classed as a RVF, in circumstances where many of the requirements for other classes of veterinary premises would not be relevant.
Registered Veterinary Hospital (RVH)	A Registered Veterinary Hospital is a permanent premises, at a fixed location, registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland at, and from which, one or more registered veterinary practitioners practise veterinary medicine. A RVH provides facilities for the hospitalisation of animals with 24-hour care at the premises, provided by a registered person as necessary, and offers a range of surgical, medical and diagnostic techniques. The RVH should have a multidisciplinary team of registered veterinary practitioners and, if appropriate, registered veterinary specialists to deliver the service required as dictated by the hospital's case load. The category of animals treated at the Hospital is indicated by the appropriate suffix (Companion Animals – CA, Equine – EQ or Food Animal – FA). All RVHs must employ at least one Registered Veterinary Nurse as part of the veterinary team.
Registered Veterinary Nurse	A person registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland under Part 8 of the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended.
Registered Veterinary Office (RVO)	A Registered Veterinary Office is a premises registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland from which one or more registered veterinary practitioners practise veterinary medicine on animals at a farm or other location removed from the RVO. Animals MUST NOT be seen at the premises. This does not exclude emergency treatment in an exceptional case.
Registered Veterinary Practitioner	A person registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland under Part 4 of the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended.
Veterinary Specialist	A Veterinary Specialist is a veterinary practitioner registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland who has completed advanced training and examinations in a particular area of veterinary practice.

References

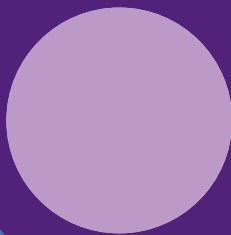
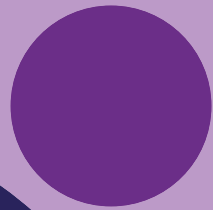
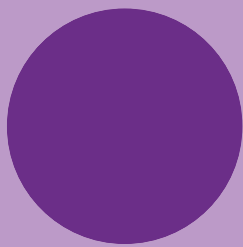


16

1. American Animal Hospital Association. Stay, Please – A Challenge to the Veterinary Profession to Improve Employee Retention (2024). Available [here](#).
2. Arlo Guthrie. VetSurgeon.org. Survey of Out of Hours Calls (2021). Available [here](#).
3. Canadian Veterinary Medical Association – Society of British Columbia Veterinarians Chapter. Labour Market Study (2019). Available [here](#).
4. Central Statistics Office. Population and Labour Force Projections 2023-2057 (2024). Available [here](#).
5. Central Statistics Office. Statbank Series RAA02 – Estimates of Household Income (2024). Available [here](#).
6. Central Statistics Office. Livestock Survey December (2023). Available [here](#).
7. Central Statistics Office. Consumer Price Index (2024). Available [here](#).
8. Central Statistics Office. Agricultural Price Index (2024). Available [here](#).
9. Clíodhna O’Brien, Doireann Ní Dhálaigh, Paul Corcoran and Philip Dodd in partnership with the Veterinary Council of Ireland, National Office for Suicide Prevention and the National Suicide Research Foundation. Mental Health of Veterinary Professionals in Ireland (2021). Available [here](#).
10. Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine. Annual Review and Outlook for Agriculture, Food and the Marine 2024. Available [here](#).
11. Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Statement of Strategy 2023 – 2026. Available [here](#).
12. Department of Rural and Community Development. Local Authority Control of Dogs Statistics Report (2022). Available [here](#).
13. Eoin G. Ryan, Stephen H. Beatty, Elizabeth Gray, Niamh Field, Rory Liston, Victoria Rhodes and John Donlon. Factors Affecting Retention of Veterinary Practitioners in Ireland: A Cross-Sectional Study with a Focus on Clinical Practice (2022). Available [here](#).
14. Federation of Veterinarians of Europe. Workforce Shortage of Veterinarians Summary Report (2024). Available [here](#).
15. Federation of Veterinarians of Europe. Survey of the Veterinary Profession in Europe (2023). Available [here](#).
16. Fiona Reardon. Investigation into the Prevalence of Burnout in Irish Veterinary Surgeons and Associated Stress Factors (2023).
17. Irish Equine Veterinary Association. Retention Survey of Veterinary Practices in Equine Practice (2023).
18. Irish Veterinary Nursing Association. Irish Veterinary Nurse Survey (2023). Available [here](#).
19. Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. Workforce Action Plan (2022). Available [here](#).
20. Veterinary Schools of Australia and New Zealand. Independent Expert Review of the Veterinary Science Education Capability of Australia and New Zealand (2023). Available [here](#).

Appendix 1

VCI Data Analysis



Section 1 - VCI Register Numbers Overview

Veterinary Practitioner Register Data 2004 - 2024

The Veterinary Practitioner Register has seen significant growth over recent years, from 2,322 veterinary practitioners registered in December 2004 growing to 3,689 veterinary practitioners registered in Q4 2024. These trends offer growing numbers registered with the Veterinary Council however the areas of practise, nature of work undertaken and full time/part time nature of these registered persons is not immediately evident.

Year	Total No New Registrants	Total No Restored After Voluntary Removal	Total No Voluntary Removal	Total at End of Year
2024	298 (298 still registered - 100%)	57	223	3,689
2023	321 (302 still registered – 94%)	54	258	3,534
2022	301 (246 still registered – 81.7%)	49	192	3,398
2021	294 (207 still registered – 70.4%)	57	159	3,222
2020	229 (140 still registered – 61%)	46	160	3,044
2019	219 (140 still registered – 63.9%)	50	118	2,907
2018	196 (116 still registered – 59.1%)	43	140	2,818
2017	191 (109 still registered – 57%)	34	133	2,605
2016	172 (96 still registered – 55.8%)	51	128	2,539
2015	147 (77 still registered – 52.3%)	39	104	2,473
2014	145 (80 still registered – 55.1%)	37	103	2,408
2013	142 (62 still registered – 43.6%)	44	129	2,357
2012	122 (57 still registered – 46.7%)	29	113	2,337
2011	102 (56 still registered – 54.9%)	37	201	2,372
2010	105 (59 still registered – 56.1%)	28	137	2,457
2009	120 (64 still registered – 53.3%)	19	124	2,506
2008	150 (61 still registered – 40.6%)	22	79	2,427
2007	150 (71 still registered – 47.3%)	18	101	2,410
2006	128 (61 still registered – 47.6%)	7	82	2,365
2005	122 (47 still registered – 38.5%)	2	48	2,370
2004	127 (59 still registered – 46.4%)	3	30	2,322

A small number of Registrants are removed from the Registers by Council each year for reasons other than voluntary removal, with some being restored.

Veterinary Nurse Register Data 2008 - 2024

The Veterinary Nurse Register has also seen significant growth since the Register was established in 2008, from 324 veterinary nurses registered in December 2008, growing to 1,290 veterinary nurses registered in Q4 2024.

Year	Total No New Registrants	Total No Restored After Voluntary Removal	Total No Voluntary Removal	Total at End of Year
2024	129 (129 still registered - 100%)	34	124	1,290
2023	127 (123 still registered – 96.8%)	23	144	1,256
2022	139 (121 still registered – 87%)	22	126	1,244
2021	174 (141 still registered – 81%)	30	74	1,190
2020	107 (73 still registered – 68.2%)	23	83	1,097
2019	147 (108 still registered – 73.4%)	20	60	1,038
2018	152 (80 still registered – 52.6%)	15	105	935
2017	120 (70 still registered – 58.3%)	17	71	890
2016	134 (67 still registered – 50%)	12	66	828
2015	135 (67 still registered – 49.6%)	12	54	755
2014	128 (60 still registered – 46.9%)	12	37	667
2013	108 (56 still registered – 51.8%)	7	38	562
2012	63 (22 still registered – 34.9%)	6	35	497
2011	71 (31 still registered – 43.7%)	37	15	478
2010	102 (51 still registered – 50%)	1	21	458
2009	66 (30 still registered – 45.4%)	0	15	396
2008 (Register Established)	324 (133 still registered – 41%)	/	/	324

A small number of Registrants are removed from the Registers by Council each year for reasons other than voluntary removal, with some being restored.

Certificate of Suitability Register Data 2007 – 2024

The Council’s Premises Accreditation Scheme (PAS) has been in place for over 20 years. It initially commenced as a voluntary scheme in 2002 and progressed to a mandatory scheme in January 2007. Through the PAS, the Council regulates and maintains standards of veterinary premises in the State in the public interest. When a veterinary premises has been registered by the Council, a Certificate of Suitability (COS) with a unique registration number for the premises is issued to the Registrant who made the application.

To reflect the different types of veterinary services offered at registered veterinary premises in the State, the Council has established five different classifications of registered veterinary premises as follows:

- ▶ Registered Veterinary Office (RVO)
- ▶ Registered Veterinary Clinic (RVC)
- ▶ Registered Veterinary Hospital (RVH)
- ▶ Registered Veterinary Facility (RVF)
- ▶ Registered Mobile Veterinary Unit (RMVU)

While the number of registered veterinary premises has increased since 2007, it is not as significant as the increases noted in the Register of Veterinary Practitioners and Register of Veterinary Nurses. One notable change is the number of Registered Veterinary Clinics, increasing from 332 in 2007 to 426 in 2024.

Year	RVOs	RVCs	RVHs	RVFs	RMVUs	Total
2024	193	426	138	9	4	770
2023	184	414	148	9	4	759
2022	189	400	151	3	4	747
2021	212	393	149	/	4	758
2020	214	403	151	/	4	772
2019	205	399	157	/	4	765
2018	209	385	152	/	2	748
2017	237	409	135	/	3	784
2016	222	381	135	/	/	738
2015	218	375	134	/	/	727
2014	218	369	130	/	/	717
2013	210	358	129	/	/	697
2012	215	360	121	/	/	696
2011	215	360	121	/	/	696
2010	201	345	115	/	/	661
2009	201	314	116	/	/	631
2008	193	306	117	/	/	616
2007	198	332	127	/	/	657

The Premises Accreditation Scheme was established in 2007.

Registered Mobile Veterinary Unit (RMVU) Classification was established in 2017.

Registered Veterinary Facility (RVF) Classification was established in 2022.

Registered Veterinary Office - Practice Profile				
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Companion Animal	3	6	5	5
Farm Animal	98	81	104	109
Equine	40	43	44	46
Mixed Practice	56	48	26	31
Other	15	11	5	2

Registered Veterinary Clinic - Practice Profile				
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Companion Animal	118	131	150	154
Farm Animal	21	30	28	34
Equine	13	15	17	17
Mixed Practice	239	223	218	217
Other	2	1	1	4

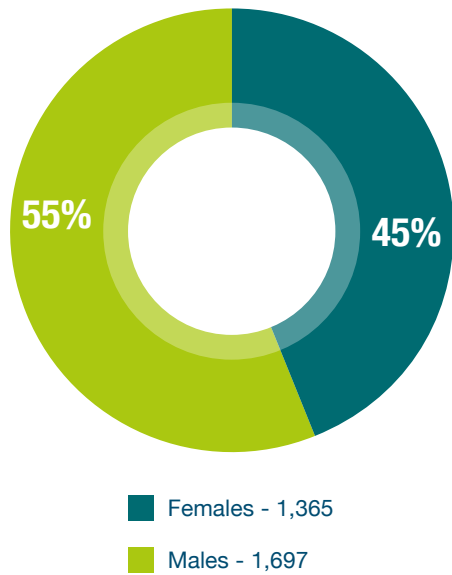
Registered Veterinary Hospital - Practice Profile				
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Companion Animal	89	85	83	80
Farm Animal	0	0	0	0
Equine	8	8	10	7
Mixed Practice	52	58	55	51
Other	0	0	0	0



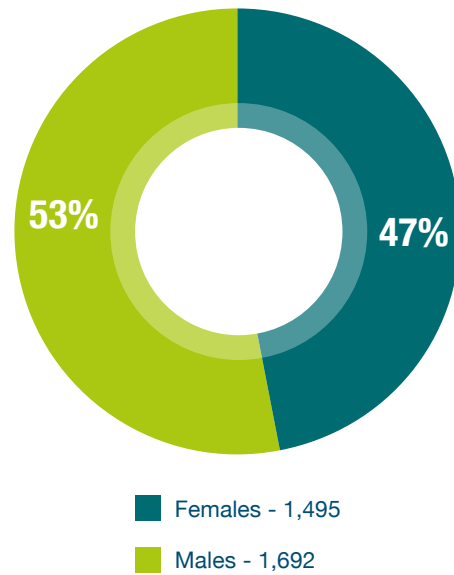
Section 2

Veterinary Practitioner Register Data March 2021-2024

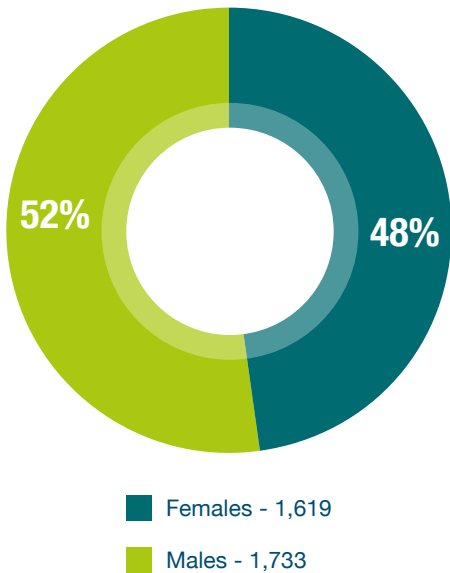
March 2021 No. of Veterinary Practitioners - 3,062



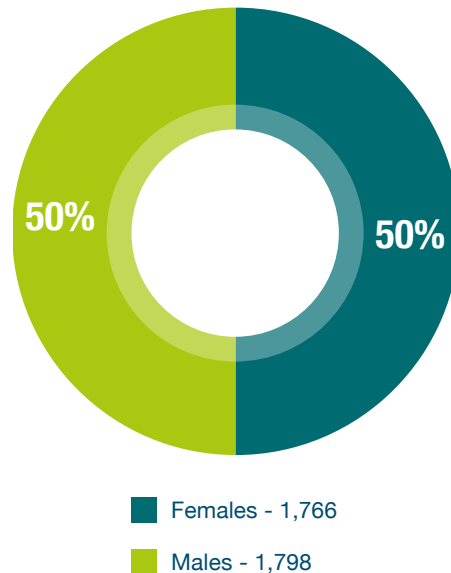
March 2022 No. of Veterinary Practitioners - 3,187



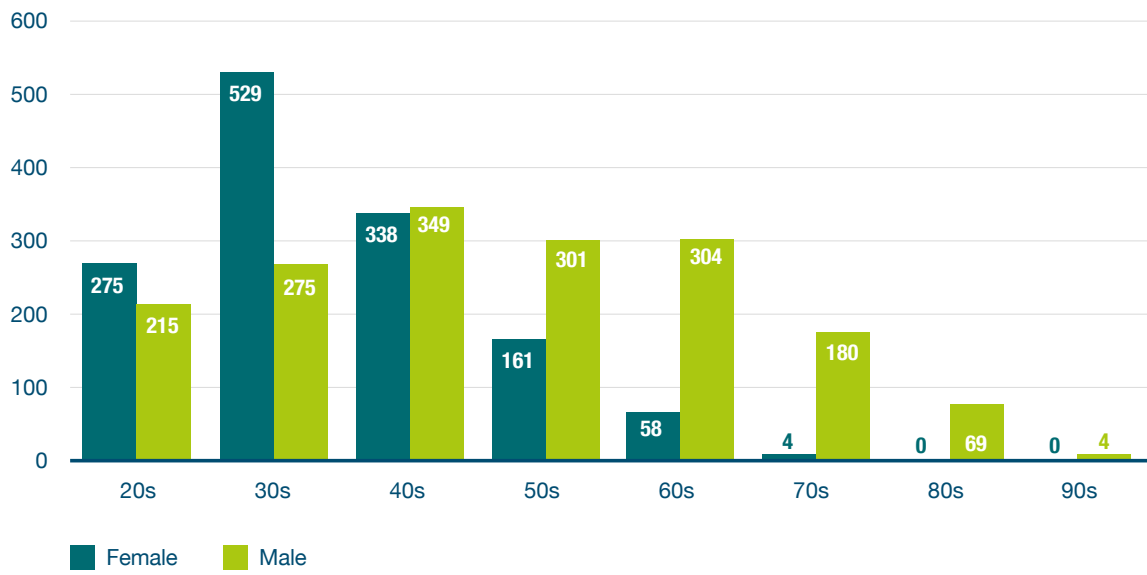
March 2023 No. of Veterinary Practitioners - 3,352



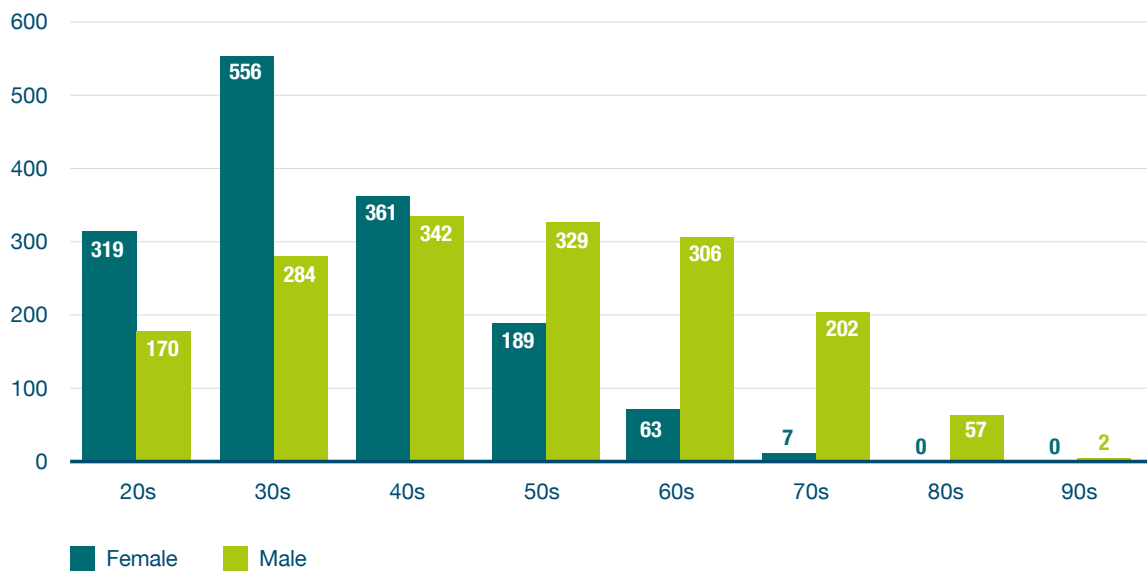
March 2024 No. of Veterinary Practitioners - 3,564



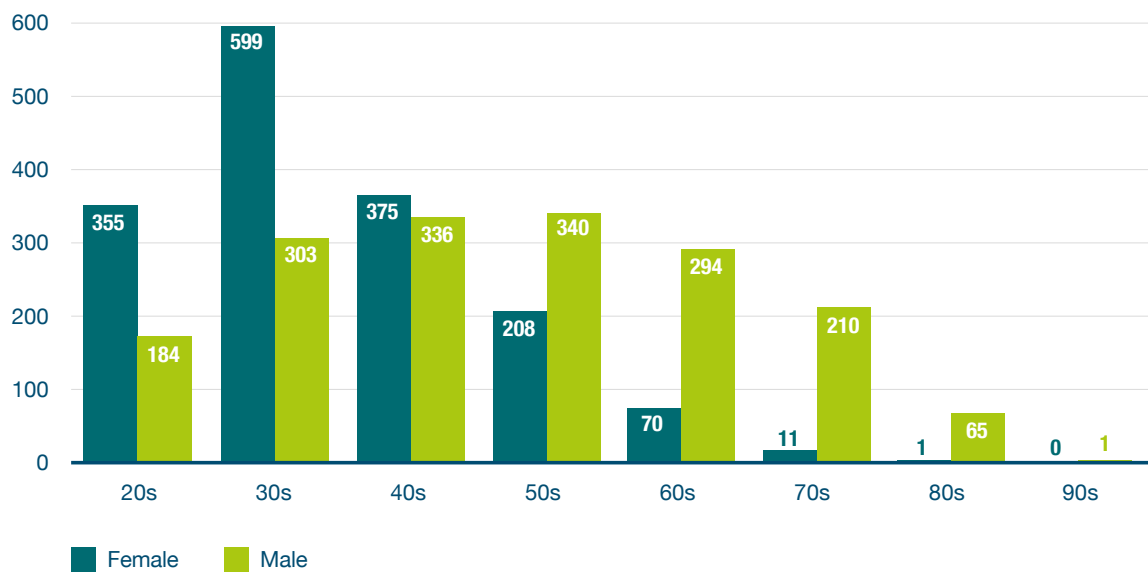
March 2021 Age Range



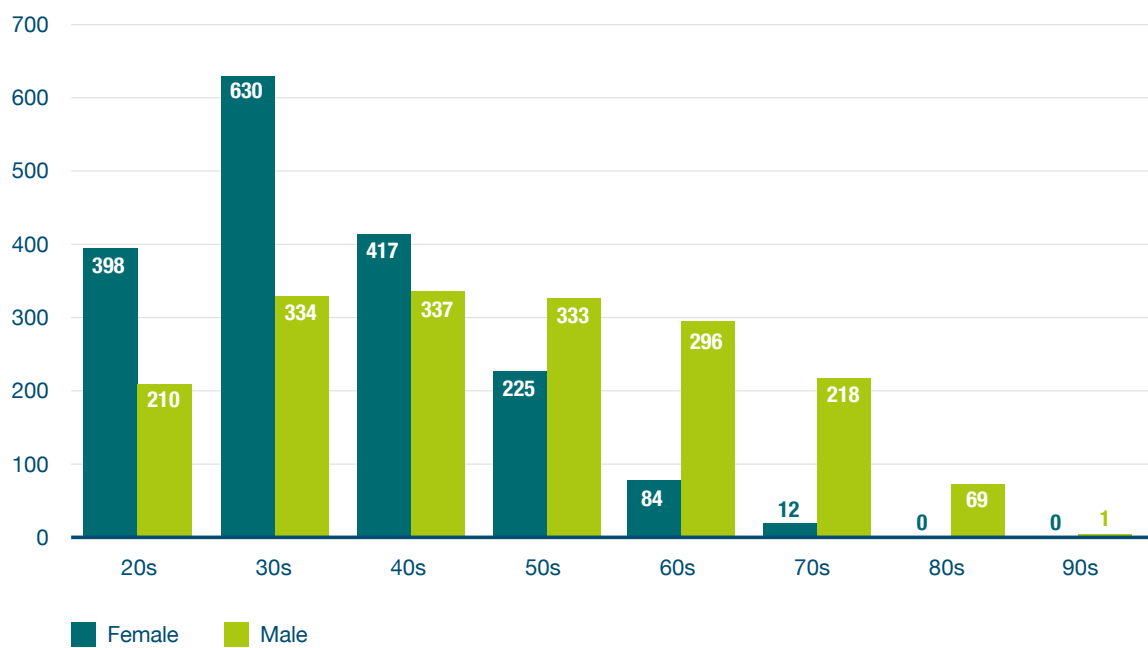
March 2022 Age Range



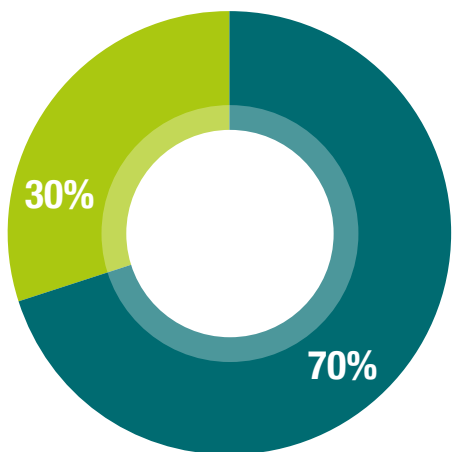
March 2023 Age Range



March 2024 Age Range

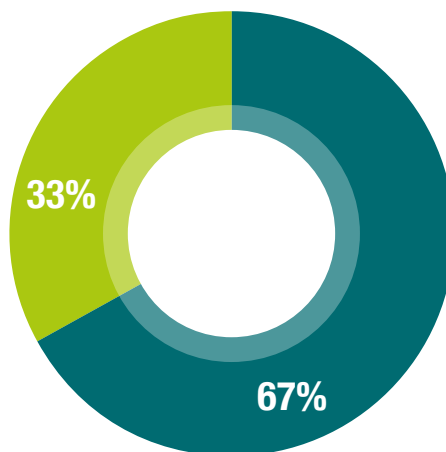


March 2021 Place of Graduation



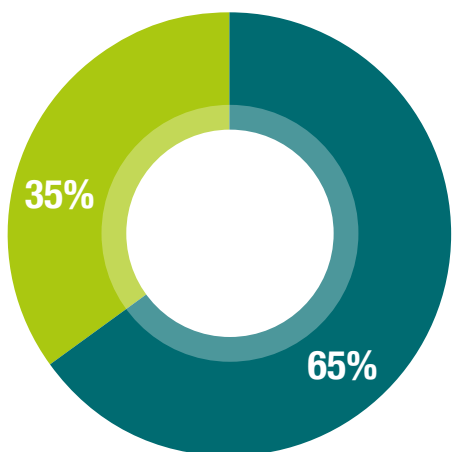
■ Ireland - 2,152
■ Abroad - 910

March 2022 Place of Graduation



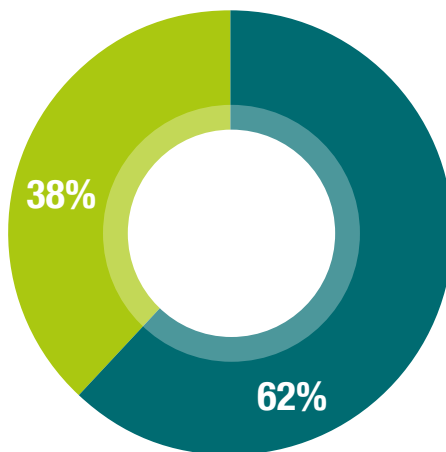
■ Ireland - 2,150
■ Abroad - 1,037

March 2023 Place of Graduation



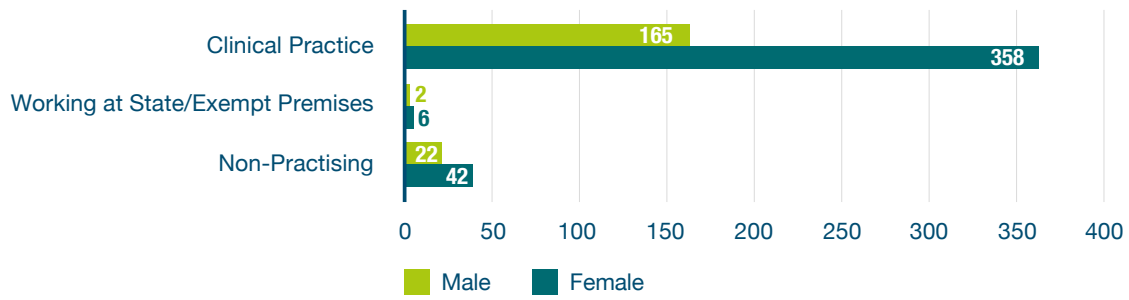
■ Ireland - 2,184
■ Abroad - 1,168

March 2024 Place of Graduation

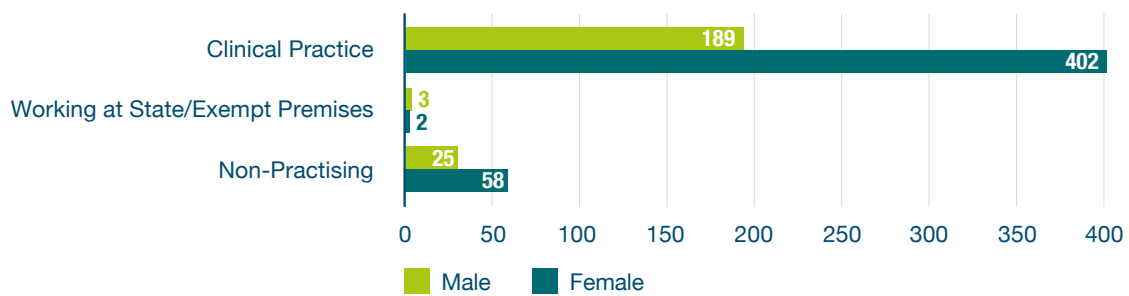


■ Ireland - 2,213
■ Abroad - 1,351

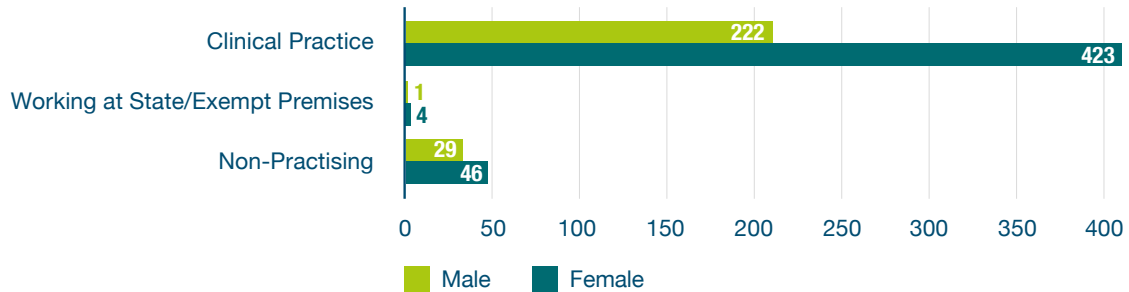
March 2021 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 1-5 Years Post Qualification Experience



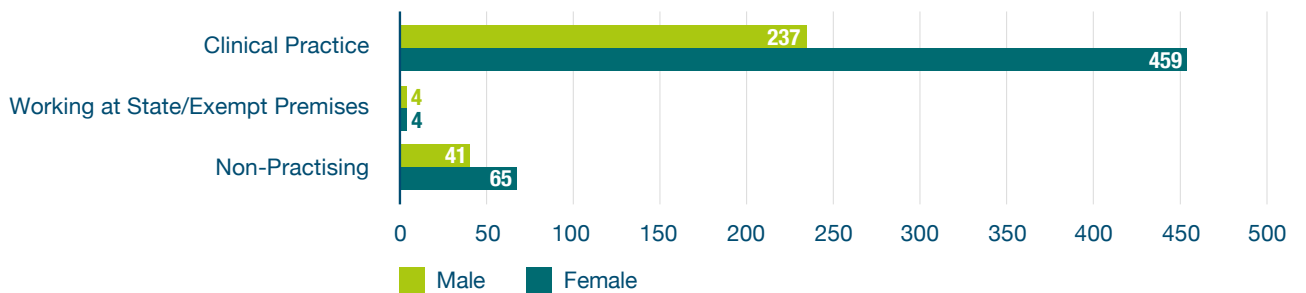
March 2022 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 1-5 Years Post Qualification Experience



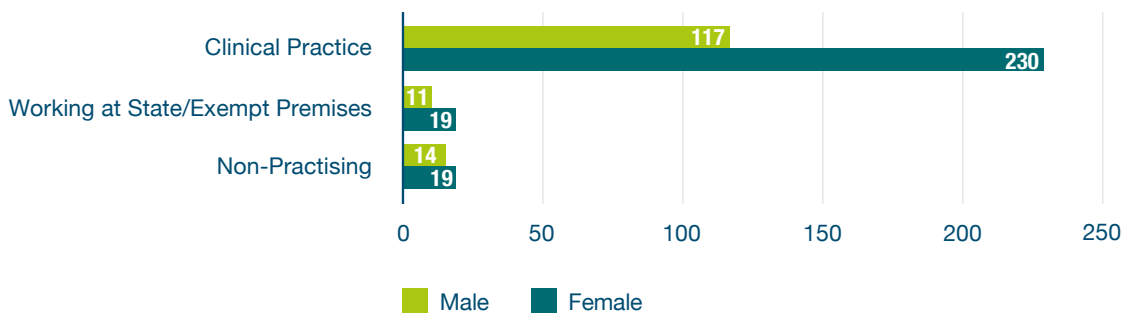
March 2023 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 1-5 Years Post Qualification Experience



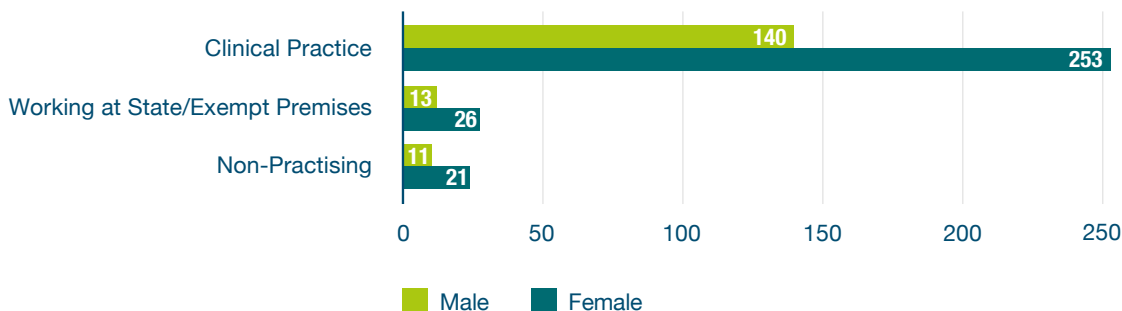
March 2024 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 1-5 Years Post Qualification Experience



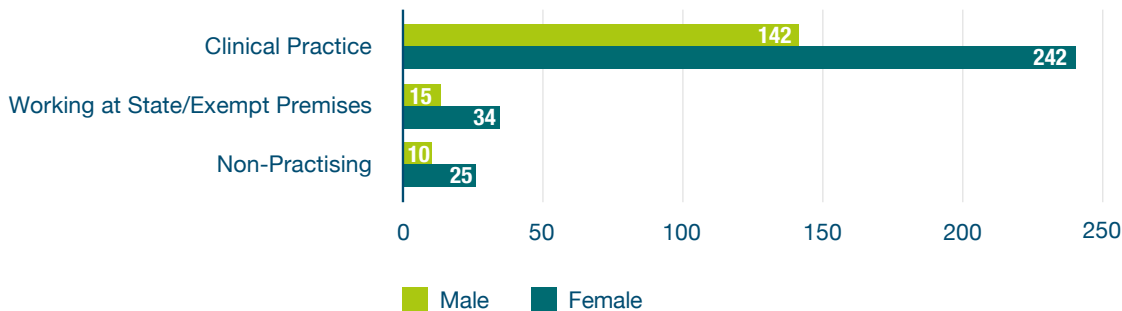
March 2021 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 6-10 Years Post Qualification Experience



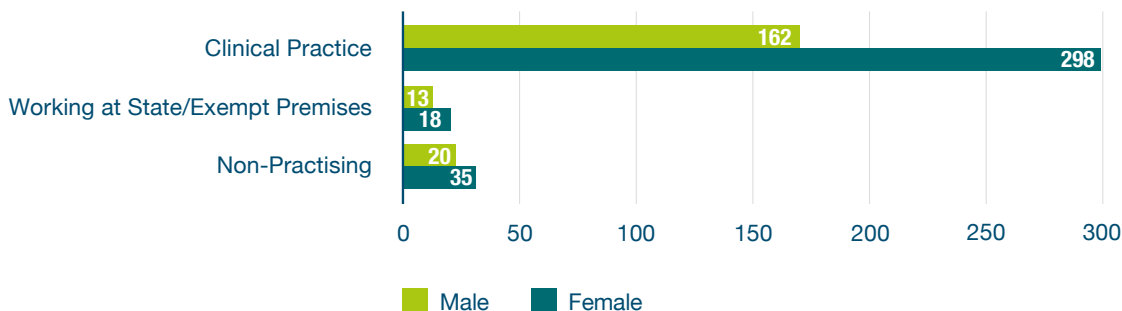
March 2022 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 6-10 Years Post Qualification Experience



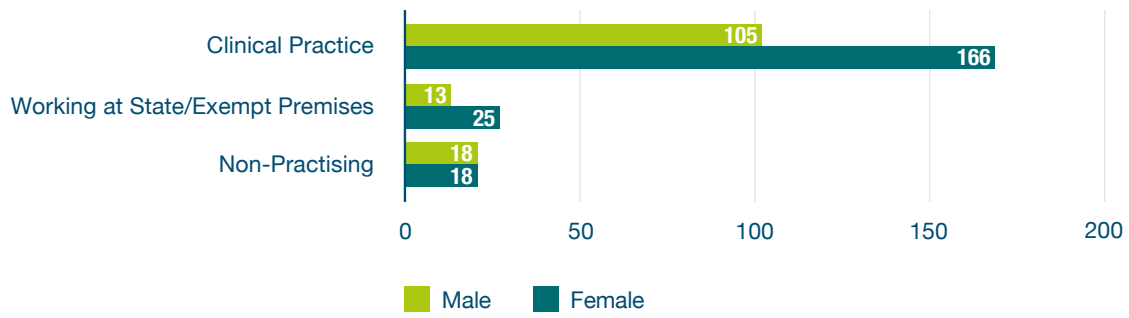
March 2023 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 6-10 Years Post Qualification Experience



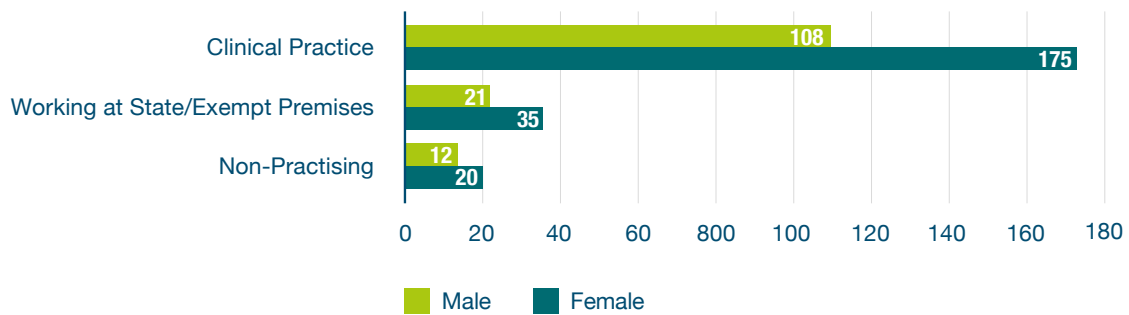
March 2024 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 6-10 Years Post Qualification Experience



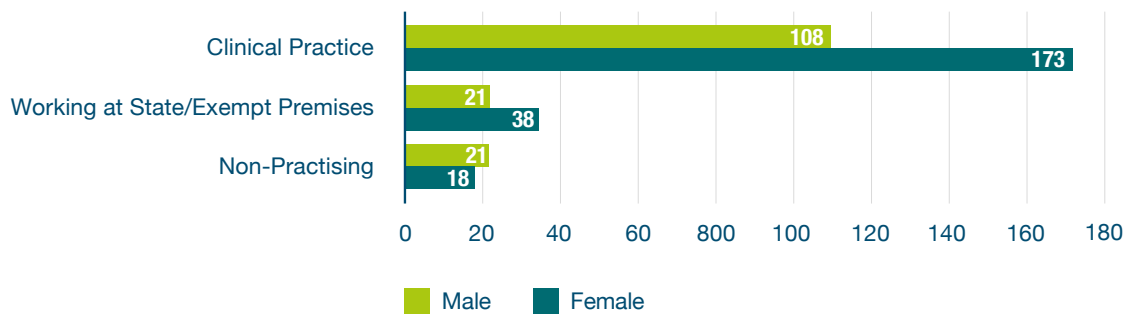
March 2021 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 11-15 Years Post Qualification Experience



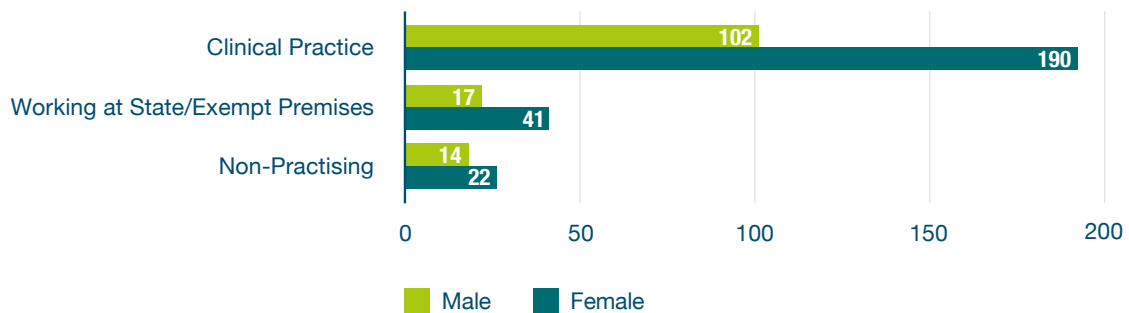
March 2022 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 11-15 Years Post Qualification Experience



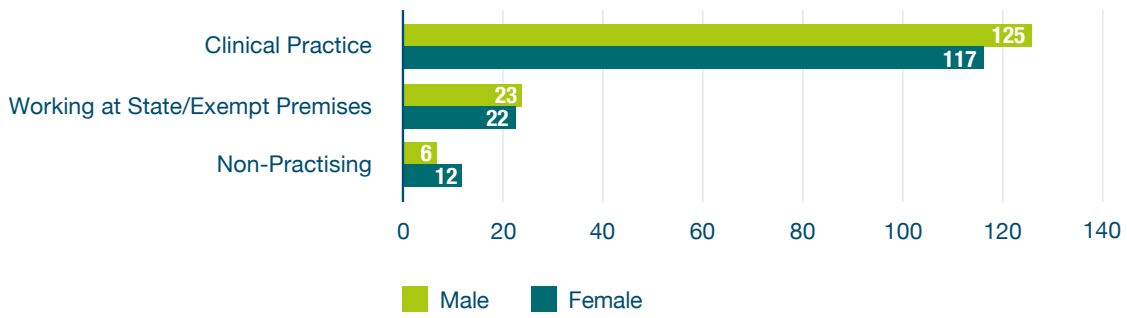
March 2023 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 11-15 Years Post Qualification Experience



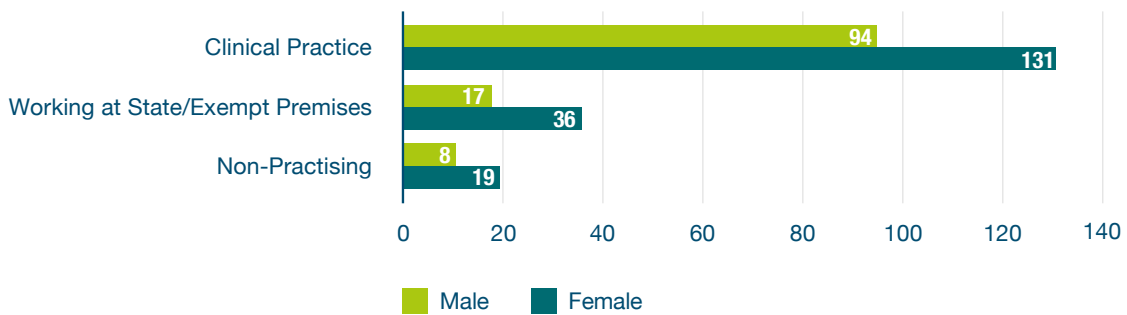
March 2024 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 11-15 Years Post Qualification Experience



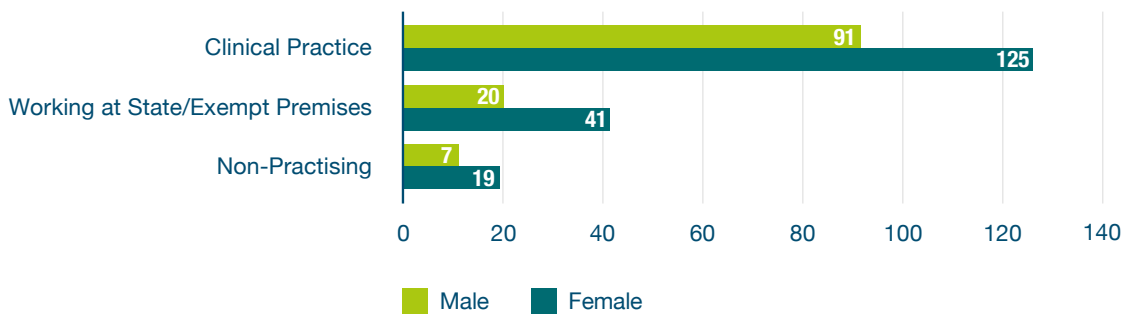
March 2021 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 16-20 Years Post Qualification Experience



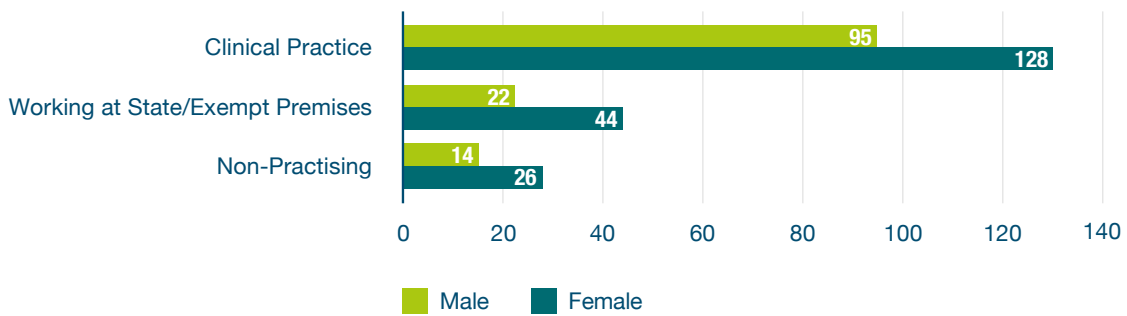
March 2022 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 16-20 Years Post Qualification Experience



March 2023 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 16-20 Years Post Qualification Experience



March 2024 Comparison of Male & Female Vets with 16-20 Years Post Qualification Experience



Veterinary Practitioner Primary Practice Field March 2021 – 2024

Primary Practice Field 2021	% Overall
Clinical Practice	70.0%
Government Agency/Local Authority	19.0%
Industry and/or Commerce	2.8%
Research	0.5%
Other	3.7%
Universities and/or Colleges	4.0%

Primary Practice Field 2022	% Overall
Clinical Practice	68.00%
Government Agency/Local Authority	21.00%
Industry and/or Commerce	2.50%
Research	0.50%
Other	3.50%
Universities and/or Colleges	4.50%

Primary Practice Field 2023	% Overall
Clinical Practice	70.33%
Government Agency/Local Authority	19.57%
Industry and/or Commerce	2.65%
Research	0.42%
Other	2.49%
Universities and/or Colleges	3.84%
Retired	0.70%

Primary Practice Field 2024	% Overall
Clinical Practice	68.2%
Government Agency/Local Authority	19.1%
Industry and/or Commerce	3.1%
Research	0.5%
Other	2.5%
Universities and/or Colleges	3.9%
Retired or Non-Practising	2.7%

Veterinary Practitioner Clinical Practice Type March 2021 – 2024

The below figures show the primary animal type treated by those working in private clinical practice.

Clinical Practice Type 2021	% Overall
Companion Animal Practice	31.7%
Equine Practice	10.0%
Farm Animal Practice	11.0%
Not in Clinical Practice	16.0%
Mixed Practice	31.3%

Clinical Practice Type 2022	% Overall
Companion Animal Practice	28.00%
Equine Practice	9.00%
Farm Animal Practice	10.00%
Not in Clinical Practice	27.00%
Mixed Practice	26.00%

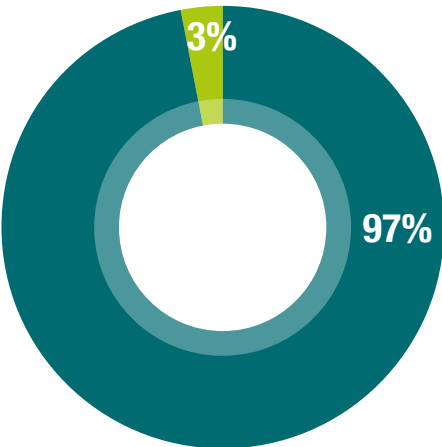
Clinical Practice Type 2023	% Overall	% Full Time	% Part Time
Companion Animal Practice	40.50%	74.13%	25.87%
Equine Practice	11.71%	80.54%	19.46%
Farm Animal Practice	12.80%	87.54%	12.46%
Mixed Practice	34.99%	89.12%	10.88%

Clinical Practice Type 2024	% Overall	% Full Time	% Part Time
Companion Animal Practice	40.6%	74.4%	25.6%
Equine Practice	11.4%	83%	17%
Farm Animal Practice	12.5%	86.6%	13.4%
Mixed Practice	35.5%	89.9%	10.1%

Section 3

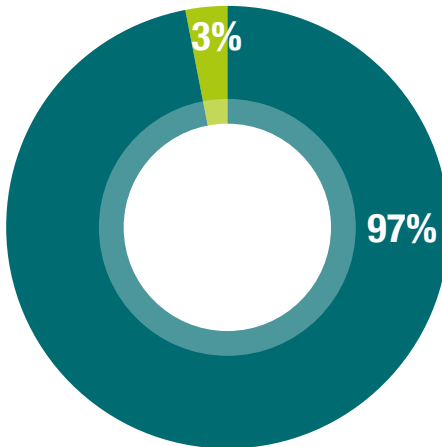
Veterinary Nurse Register Data March 2021-2024

March 2021 No. of Veterinary Nurses - 1,121



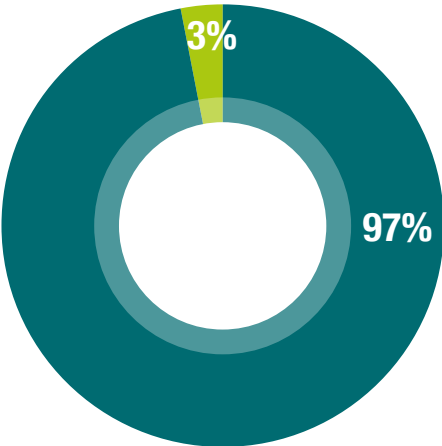
■ Females - 1,091
■ Males - 30

March 2022 No. of Veterinary Nurses - 1,143



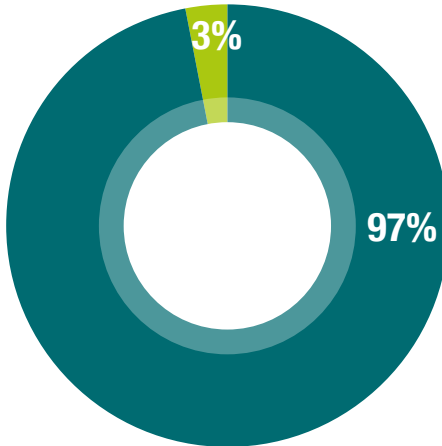
■ Females - 1,107
■ Males - 36

March 2023 No. of Veterinary Nurses - 1,211



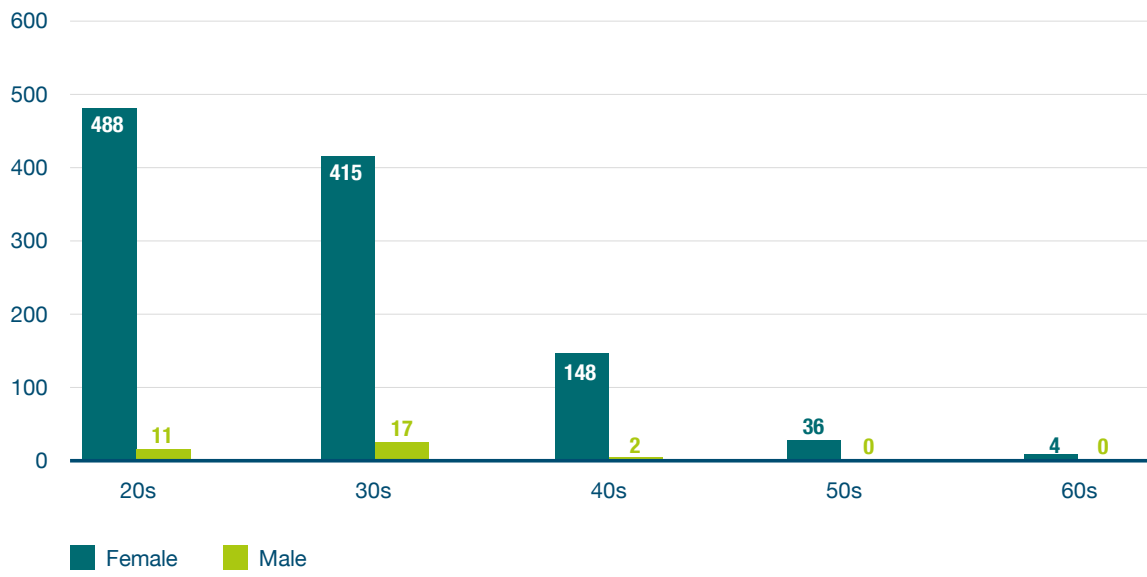
■ Females - 1,172
■ Males - 39

March 2024 No. of Veterinary Nurses - 1,265

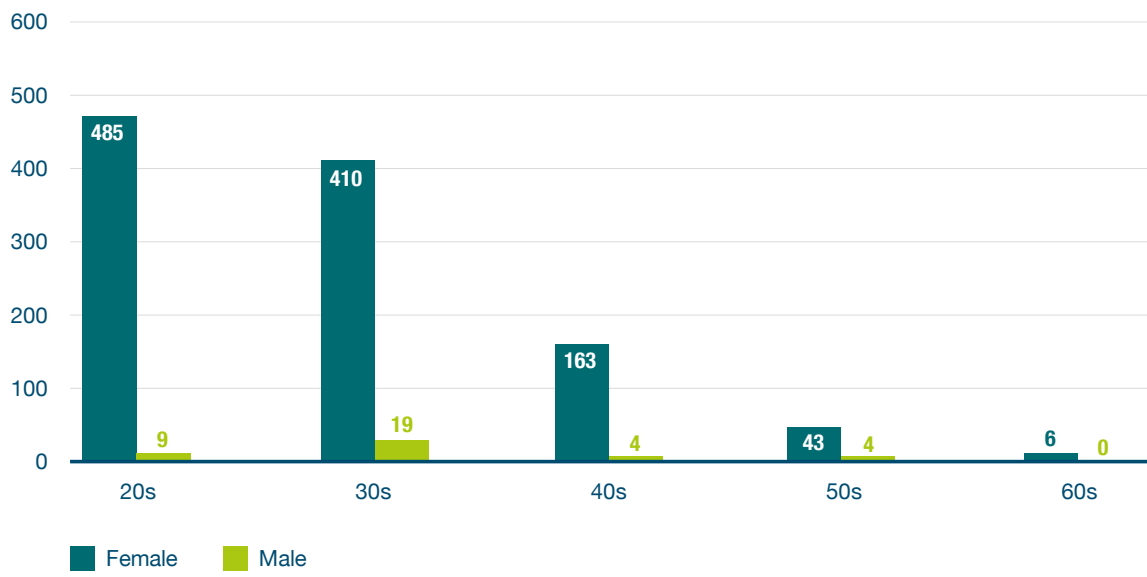


■ Females - 1,225
■ Males - 40

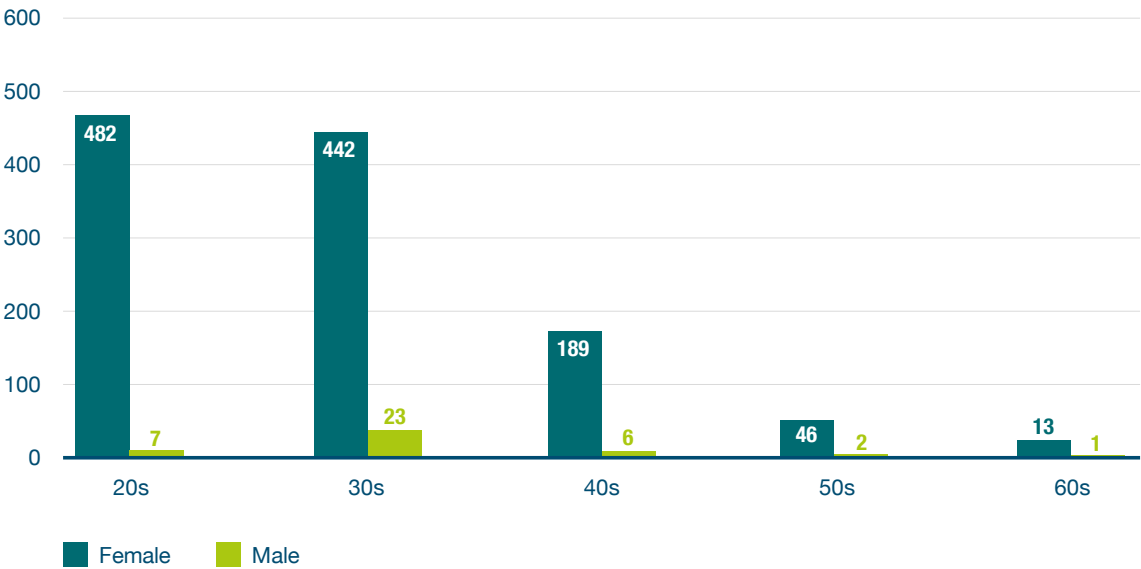
March 2021 Age Range



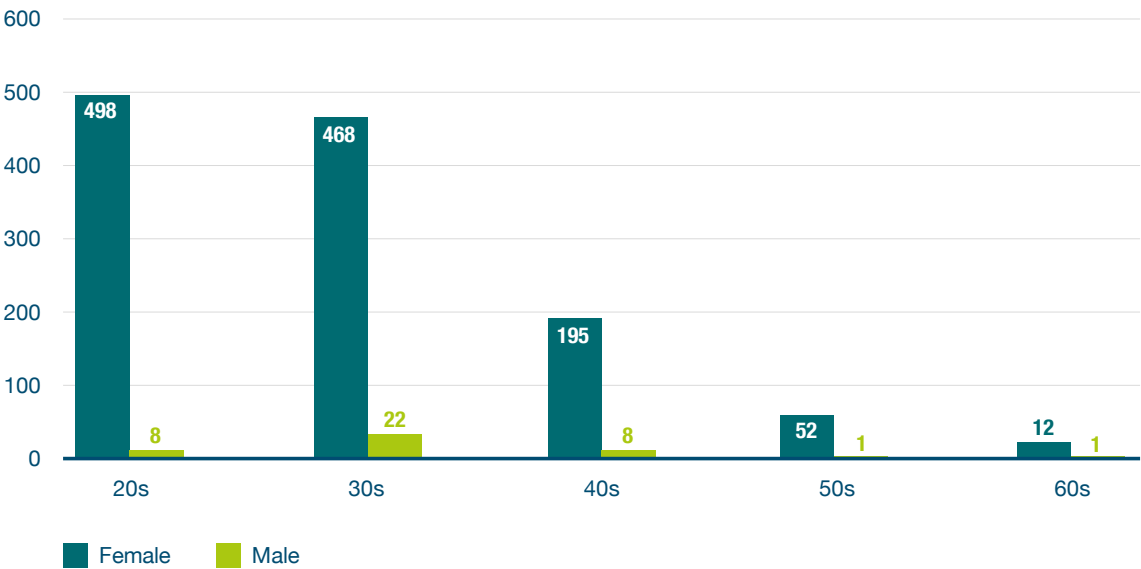
March 2022 Age Range



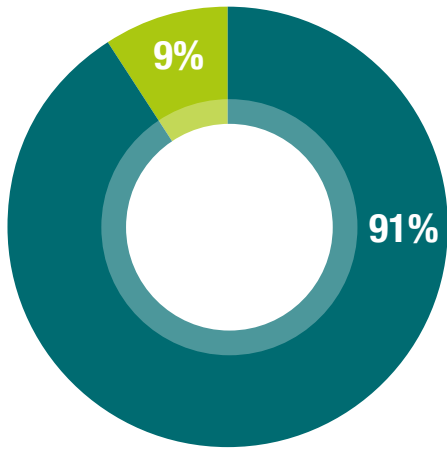
March 2023 Age Range



March 2024 Age Range

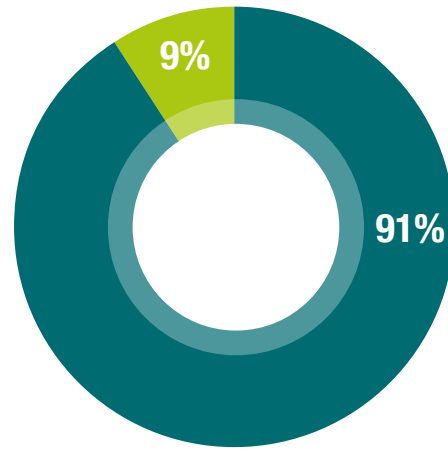


March 2021 Place of Graduation



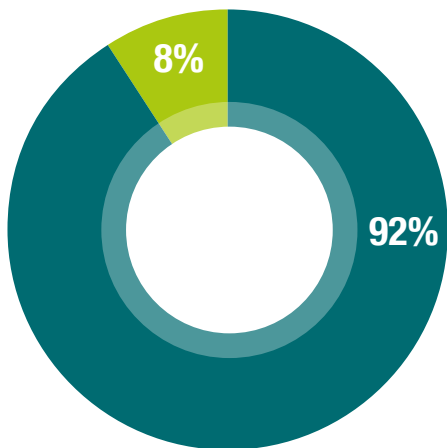
■ Ireland - 1,019
■ Abroad - 102

March 2022 Place of Graduation



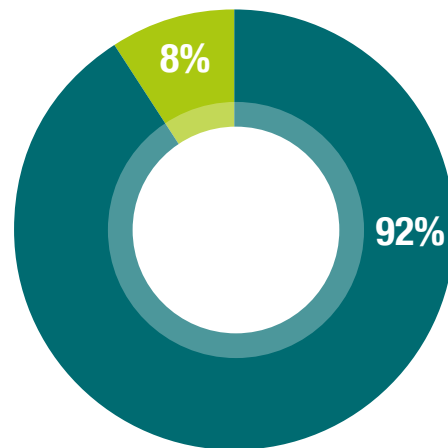
■ Ireland - 1,043
■ Abroad - 100

March 2023 Place of Graduation



■ Ireland - 1,109
■ Abroad - 102

March 2024 Place of Graduation



■ Ireland - 1,167
■ Abroad - 98

Veterinary Nurse Primary Practice Field March 2021 – 2024

Primary Practice Field 2021	% Overall
Clinical Practice	91.0%
Government Agency/Local Authority	0.5%
Industry and/or Commerce	1.5%
Research	0.2%
Other	3.3%
Universities and/or Colleges	3.5%

Primary Practice Field 2022	% Overall
Clinical Practice	88%
Government Agency/Local Authority	0.50%
Industry and/or Commerce	2%
Research	0%
Other	4.50%
Universities and/or Colleges	5.00%

Primary Practice Field 2023	% Overall
Clinical Practice	88.70%
Government Agency/Local Authority	0.54%
Industry and/or Commerce	2.06%
Research	0%
Retired	0.09%
Other	4.48%
Universities and/or Colleges	4.13%

Primary Practice Field 2024	% Overall
Clinical Practice	87%
Government Agency/Local Authority	0.5%
Industry and/or Commerce	1.9%
Research	0.3%
Other	5.3%
Universities and/or Colleges	4.8%
Retired or Non-Practising	0.2%

Veterinary Nurse Clinical Practice Type March 2021 – 2024

The below figures show the primary animal type treated by those working in private clinical practice:

Clinical Practice Type 2021	% Overall
Companion Animal Practice	63.0%
Equine Practice	2.6%
Farm Animal Practice	0.3%
Not in Clinical Practice	6.4%
Mixed Practice	27.7%

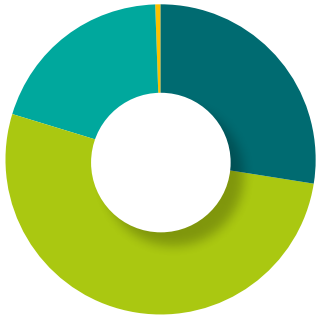
Clinical Practice Type 2022	% Overall
Companion Animal Practice	65%
Equine Practice	3%
Farm Animal Practice	0.30%
Not in Clinical Practice	9%
Mixed Practice	22.70%

Clinical Practice Type 2023	% Overall	% Full Time	% Part Time
Companion Animal Practice	69.06%	76.83%	23.17%
Equine Practice	2.93%	93.10%	6.90%
Farm Animal Practice	0.71%	71.43%	28.57%
Mixed Practice	27.30%	77.04%	22.96%

Clinical Practice Type 2024	% Overall	% Full Time	% Part Time
Companion Animal Practice	71.2%	79.3%	20.7%
Equine Practice	2.9%	89.3%	10.7%
Farm Animal Practice	0.5%	80%	20%
Mixed Practice	25.4%	76.8%	23.2%

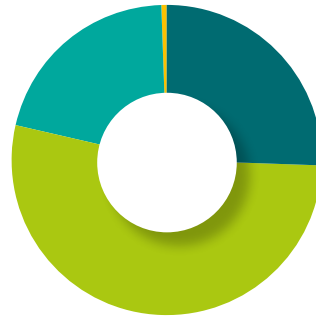
Section 4

Veterinary Practice Premises Register Data March 2021-2024



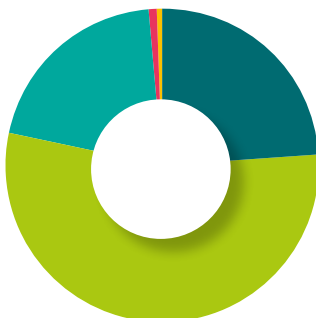
March 2021 - No. of Veterinary Premises - 769

- Registered Veterinary Offices – 213
- Registered Veterinary Clinics – 401
- Registered Veterinary Hospitals – 151
- Registered Mobile Veterinary Units (Charities) – 4



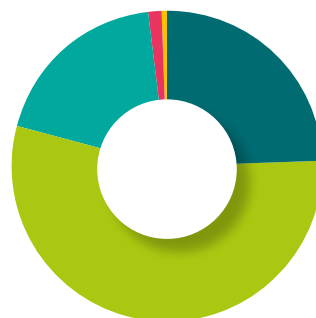
March 2022 - No. of Veterinary Premises - 728

- Registered Veterinary Offices – 188
- Registered Veterinary Clinics – 385
- Registered Veterinary Hospitals – 151
- Registered Mobile Veterinary Units (Charities) – 4



March 2023 - No. of Veterinary Premises - 749

- Registered Veterinary Offices – 181
- Registered Veterinary Clinics – 407
- Registered Veterinary Hospitals – 151
- Registered Veterinary Facilities – 6
- Registered Mobile Veterinary Units (Charities) – 4



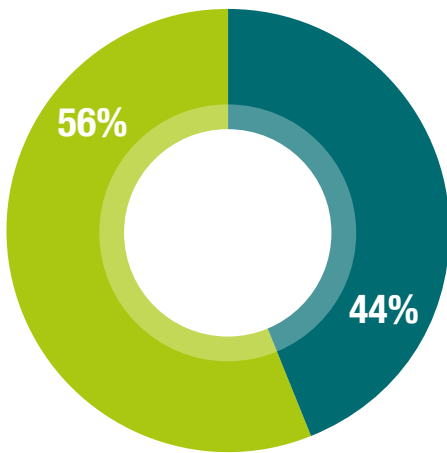
March 2024 - No. of Veterinary Premises - 764

- Registered Veterinary Offices – 188
- Registered Veterinary Clinics – 418
- Registered Veterinary Hospitals – 145
- Registered Veterinary Facilities – 9
- Registered Mobile Veterinary Units (Charities) – 4

Section 5

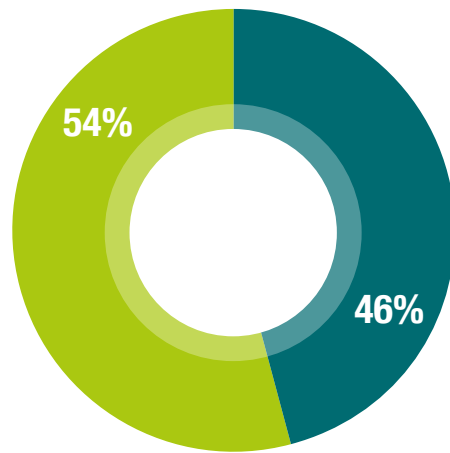
Veterinary Practitioner Register Data October 2020-2023

October 2020 - No. of Veterinary Practitioners - 2,987



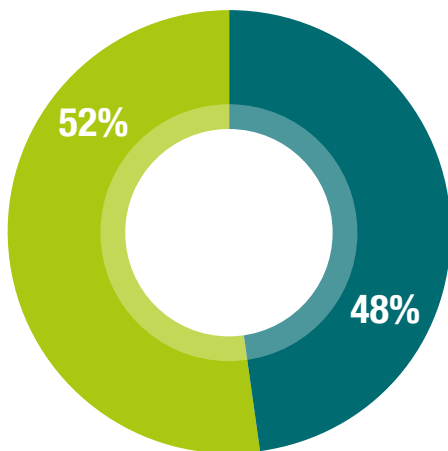
Females - 1,311
Males - 1,676

October 2021 - No. of Veterinary Practitioners - 3,182



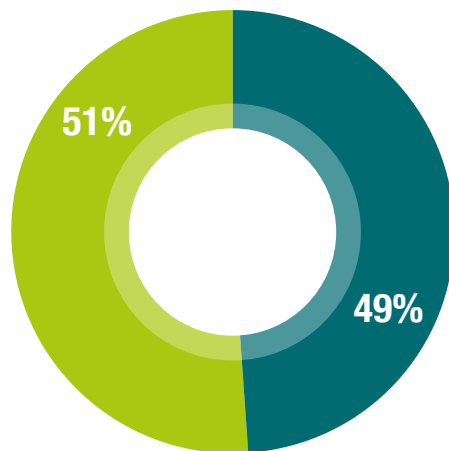
Females - 1,476
Males - 1,706

October 2022 - No. of Veterinary Practitioners - 3,385



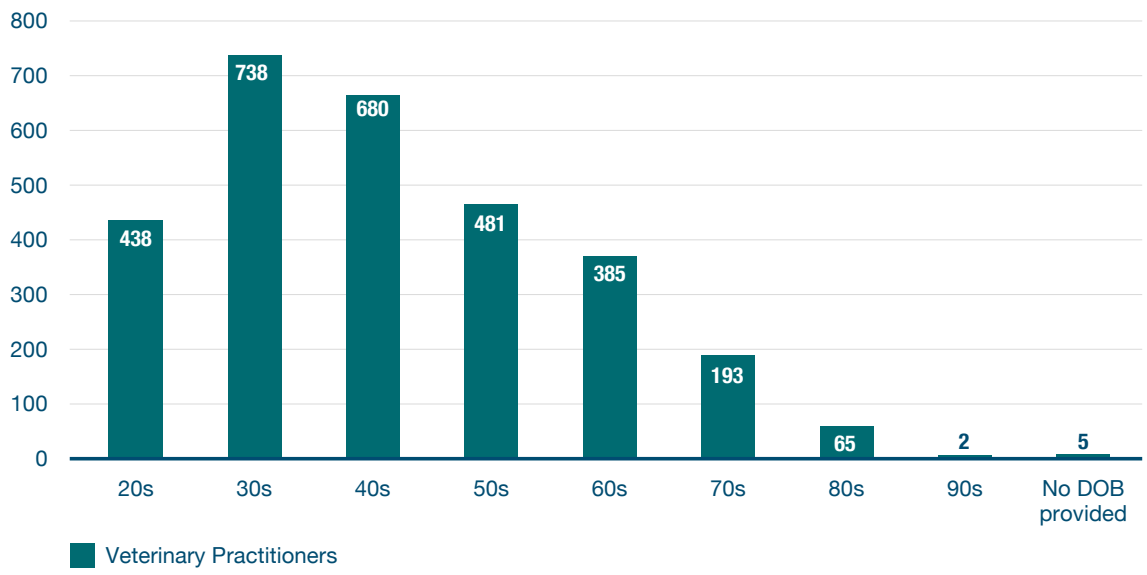
Females - 1,634
Males - 1,751

October 2023 - No. of Veterinary Practitioners - 3,529

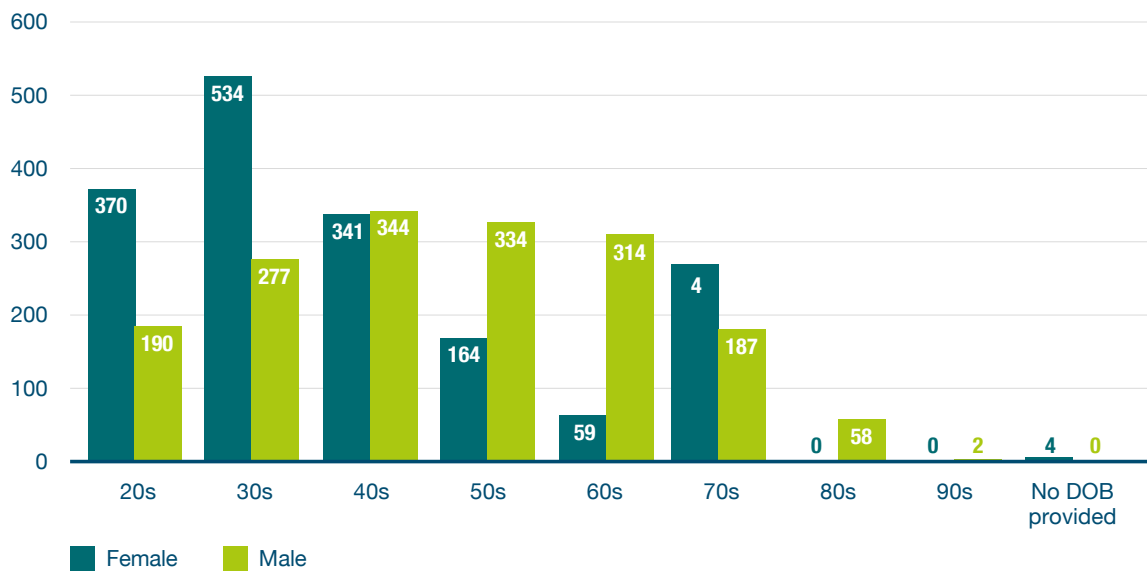


Females - 1,736
Males - 1,793

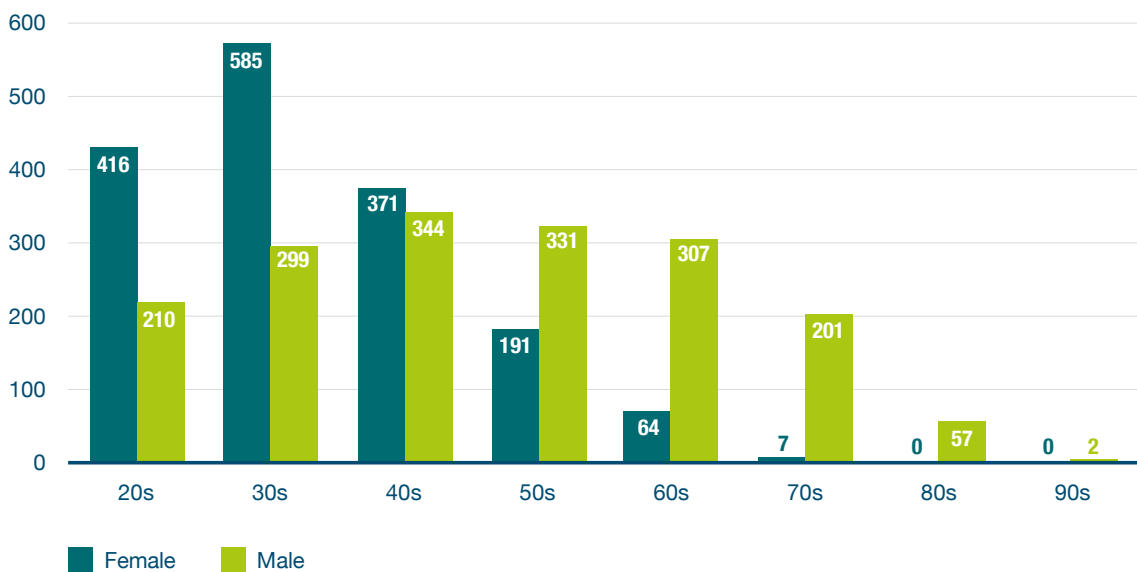
October 2020 Age Range



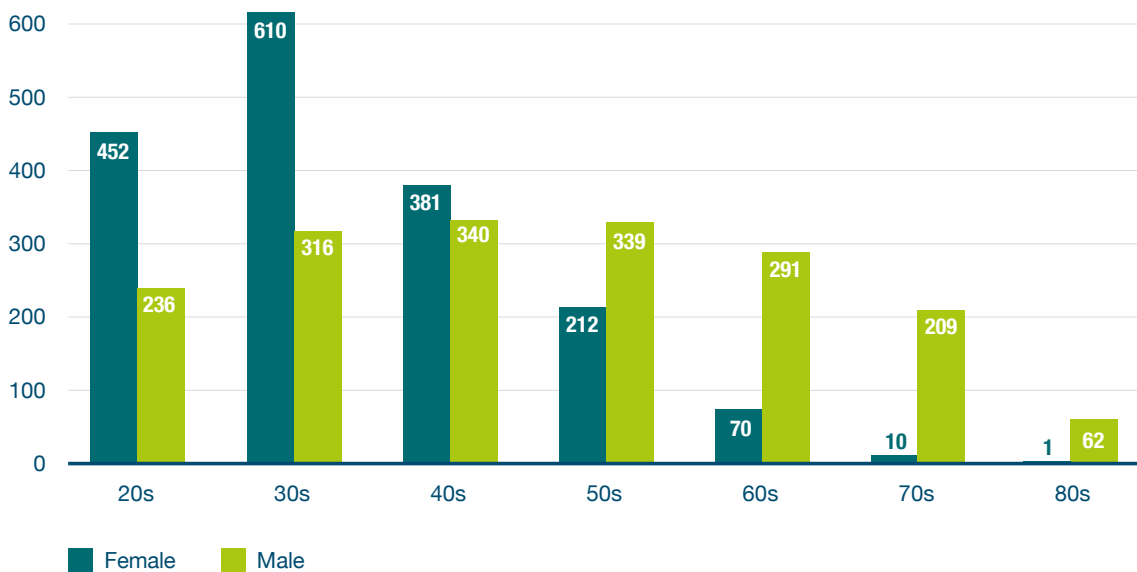
October 2021 Age Range



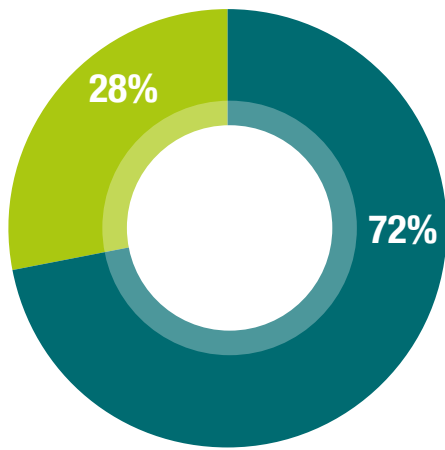
October 2022 Age Range



October 2023 Age Range

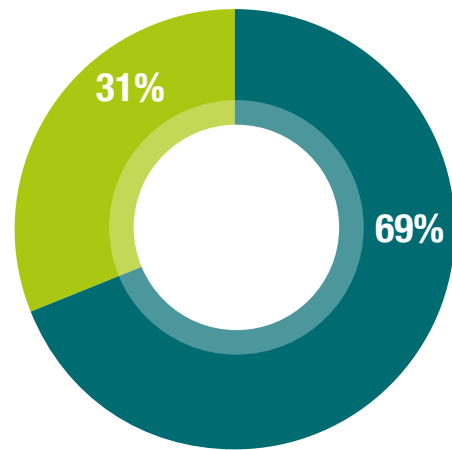


October 2020 Place of Graduation



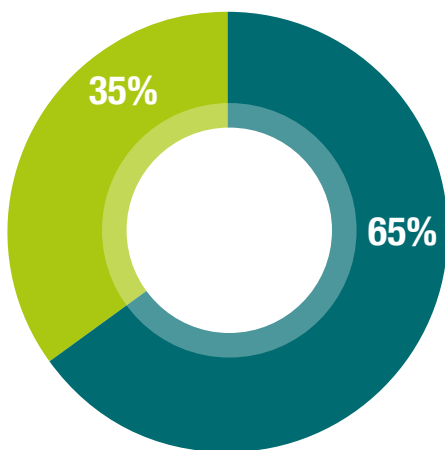
Ireland - 2,144
Abroad - 843

October 2021 Place of Graduation



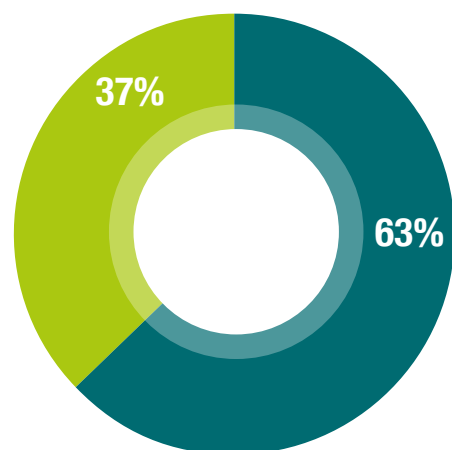
Ireland - 2,181
Abroad - 1,001

October 2022 Place of Graduation



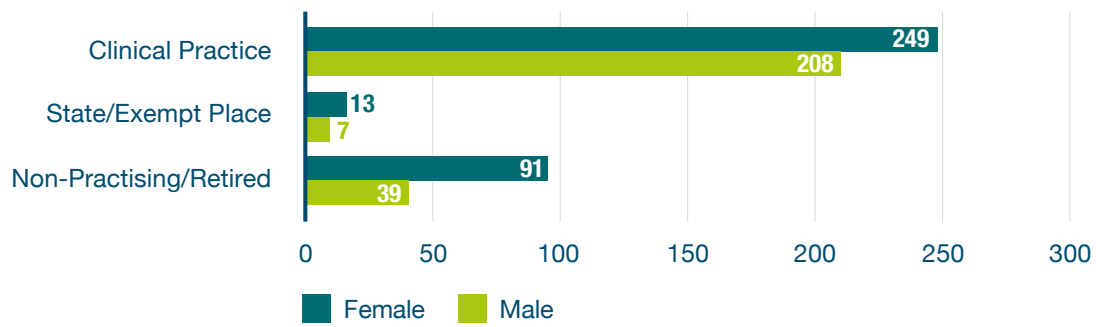
Ireland - 2,217
Abroad - 1,168

October 2023 Place of Graduation

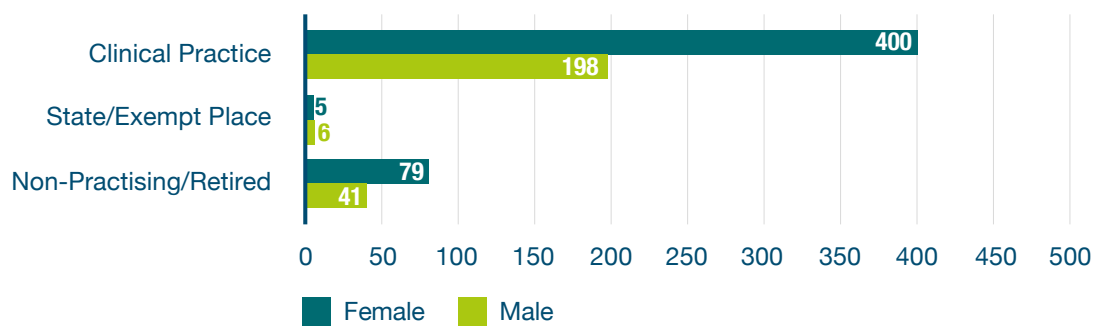


Ireland - 2,236
Abroad - 1,293

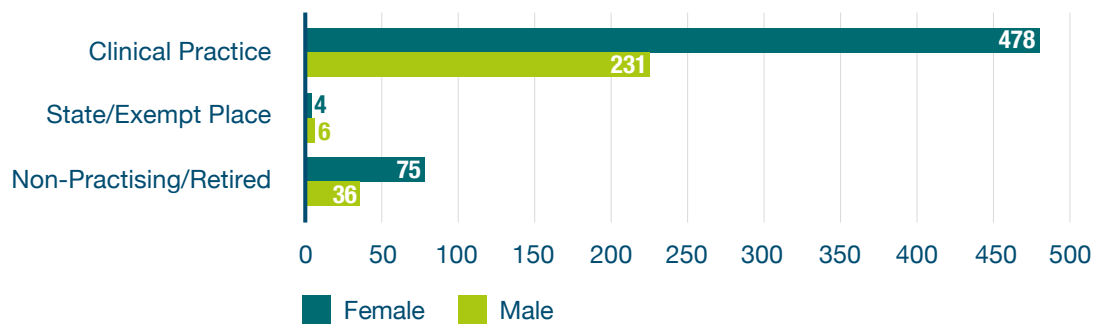
October 2020 - Veterinary Practitioners with 1-5 Years Post Qualification Experience



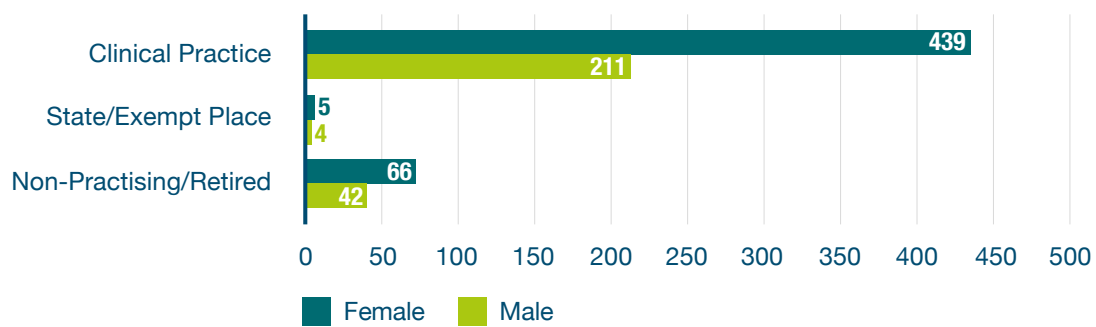
October 2021 - Veterinary Practitioners with 1-5 Years Post Qualification Experience



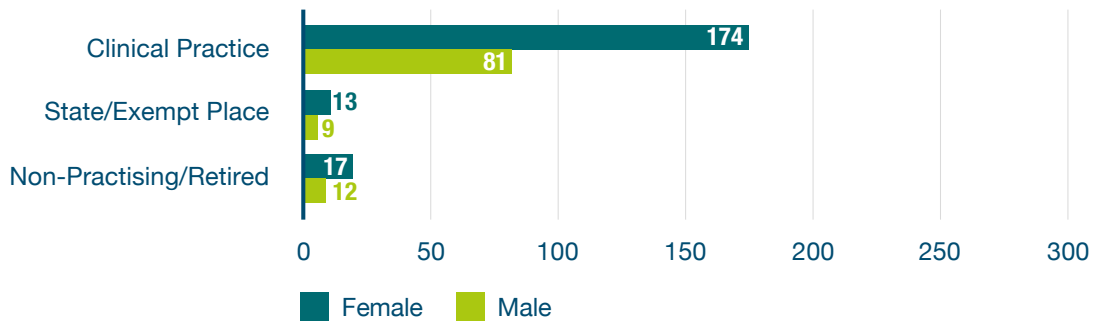
October 2022 - Veterinary Practitioners with 1-5 Years Post Qualification Experience



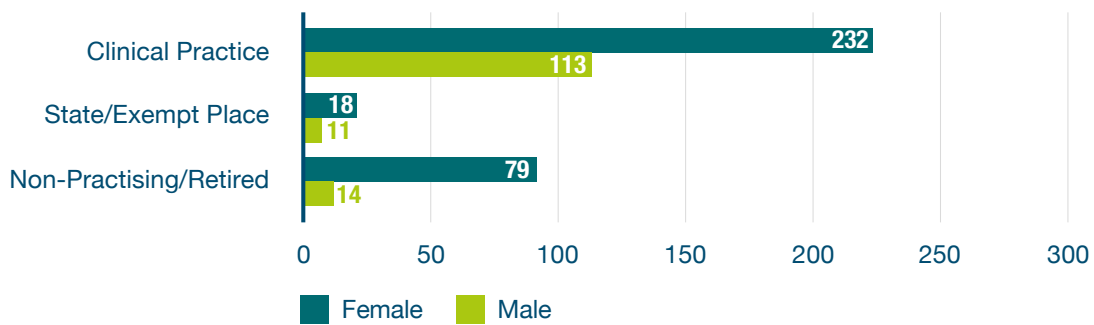
October 2023 - Veterinary Practitioners with 1-5 Years Post Qualification Experience



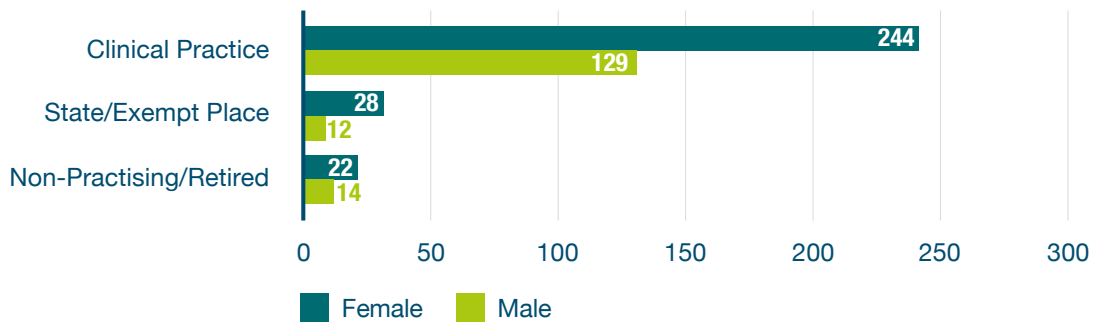
October 2020 - Veterinary Practitioners with 6-10 Years Post Qualification Experience



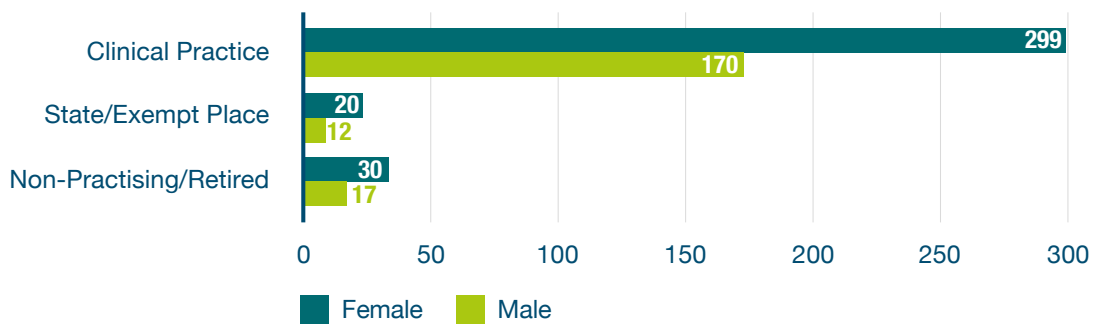
October 2021 - Veterinary Practitioners with 6-10 Years Post Qualification Experience



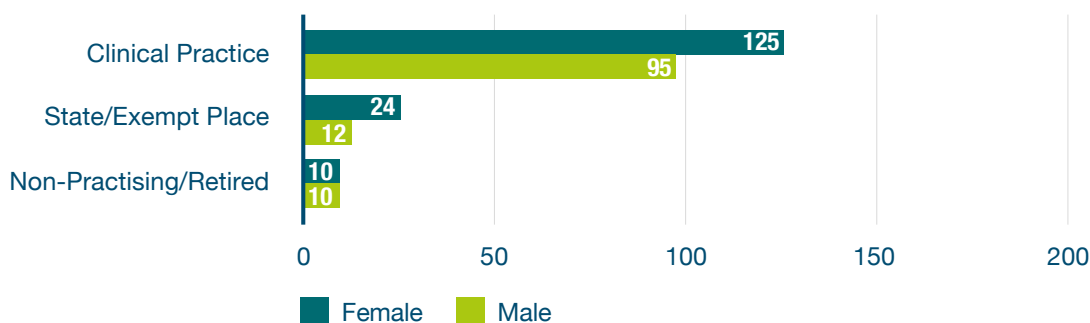
October 2022 - Veterinary Practitioners with 6-10 Years Post Qualification Experience



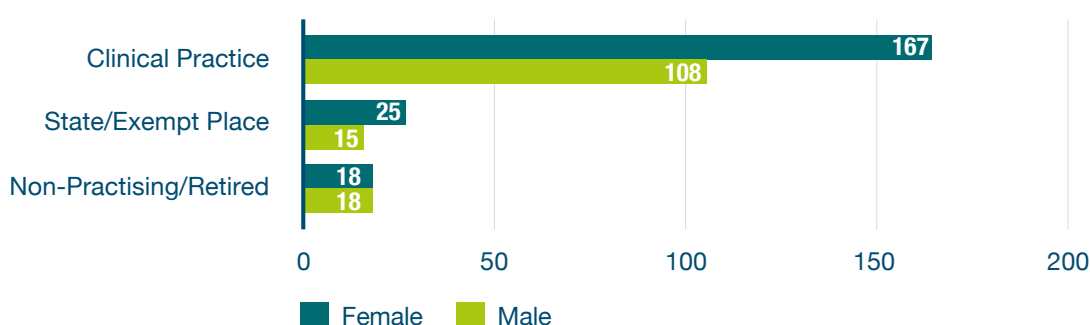
October 2023 - Veterinary Practitioners with 6-10 Years Post Qualification Experience



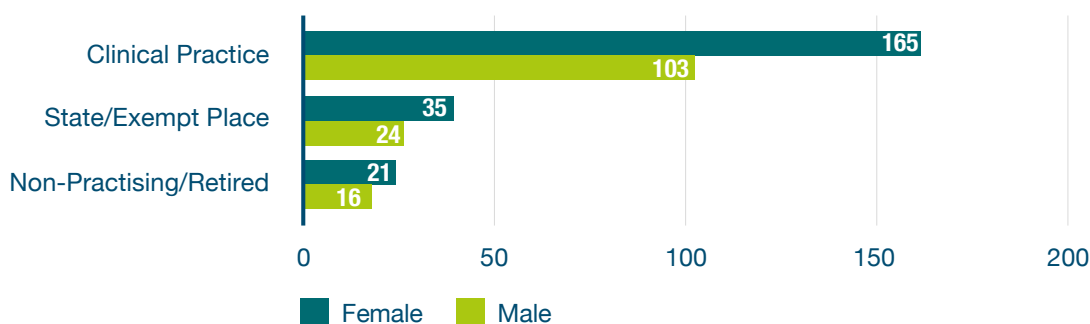
October 2020 - Veterinary Practitioners with 11-15 Years Post Qualification Experience



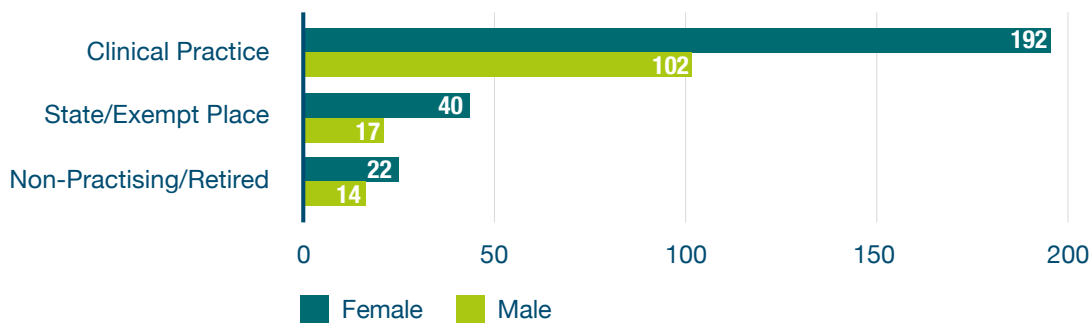
October 2021 - Veterinary Practitioners with 11-15 Years Post Qualification Experience



October 2022 - Veterinary Practitioners with 11-15 Years Post Qualification Experience



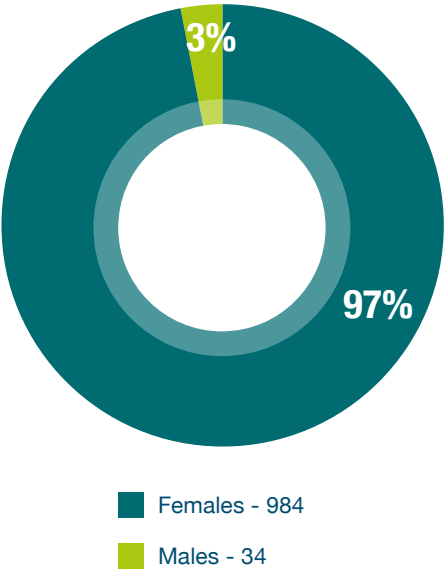
October 2023 - Veterinary Practitioners with 11-15 Years Post Qualification Experience



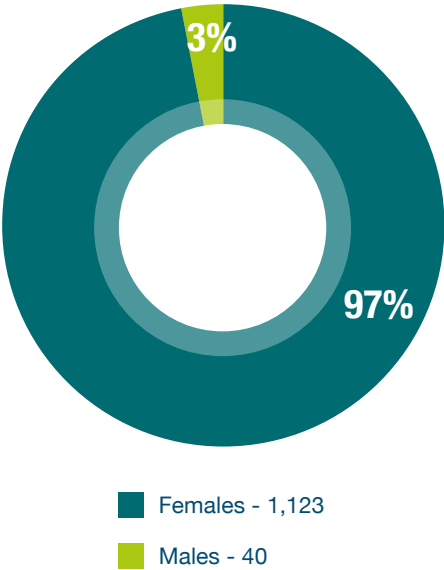
Section 6

Veterinary Nurse Register Data October 2020-2023

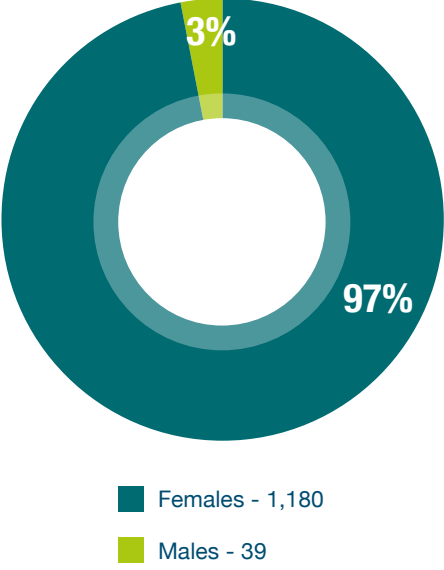
October 2020 - No. of Veterinary Nurses - 1,018



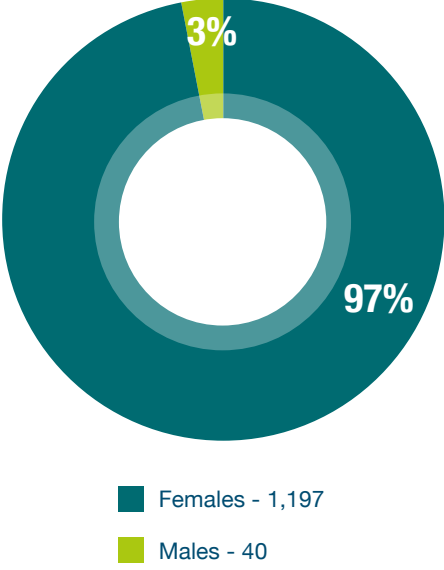
October 2021 - No. of Veterinary Nurses - 1,163



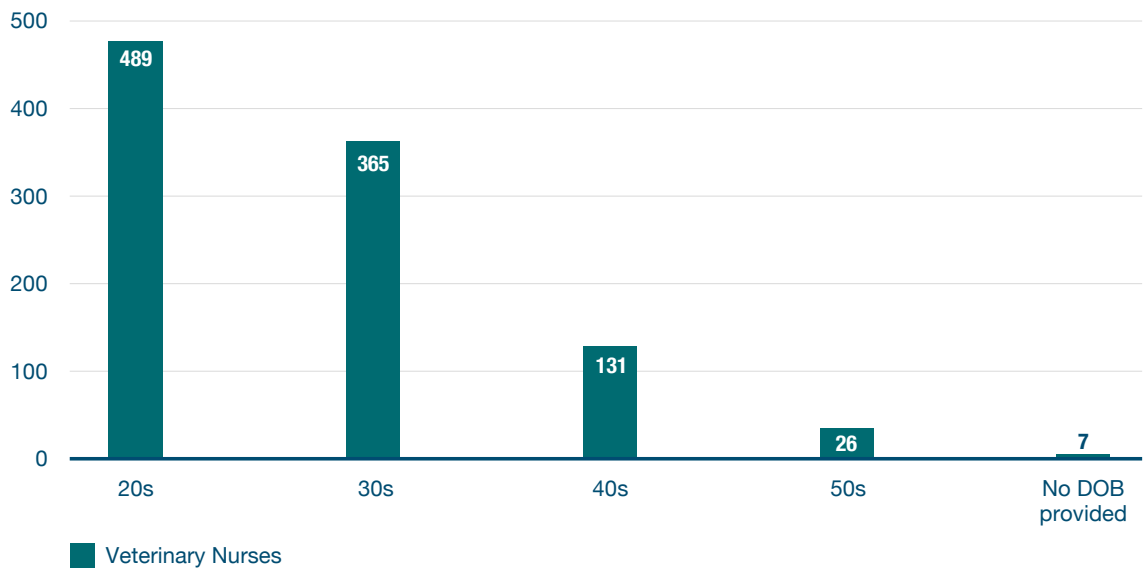
October 2022 - No. of Veterinary Nurses - 1,219



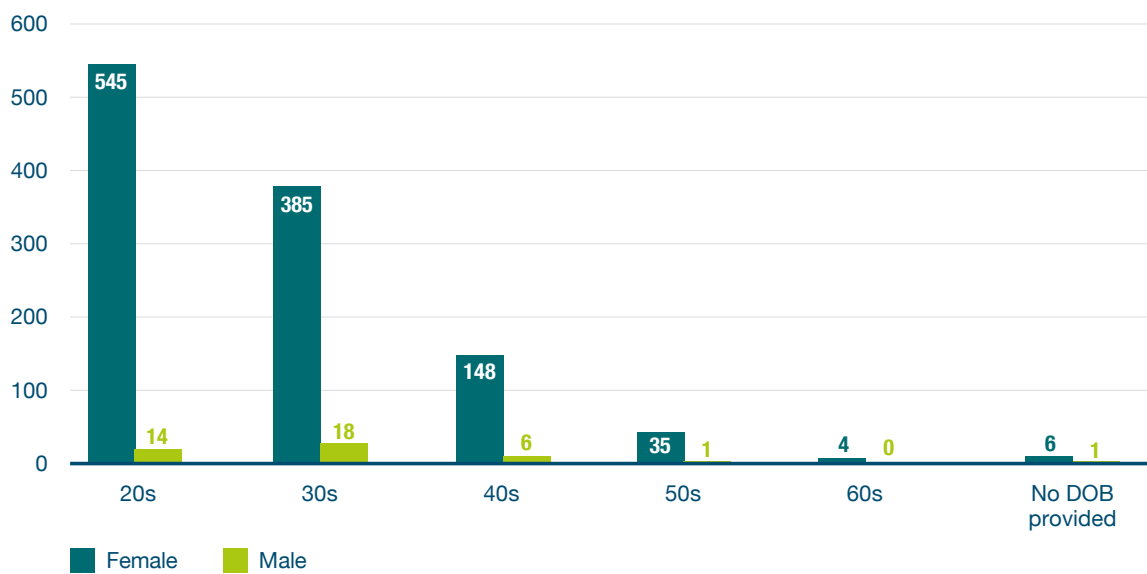
October 2023 - No. of Veterinary Nurses - 1,237



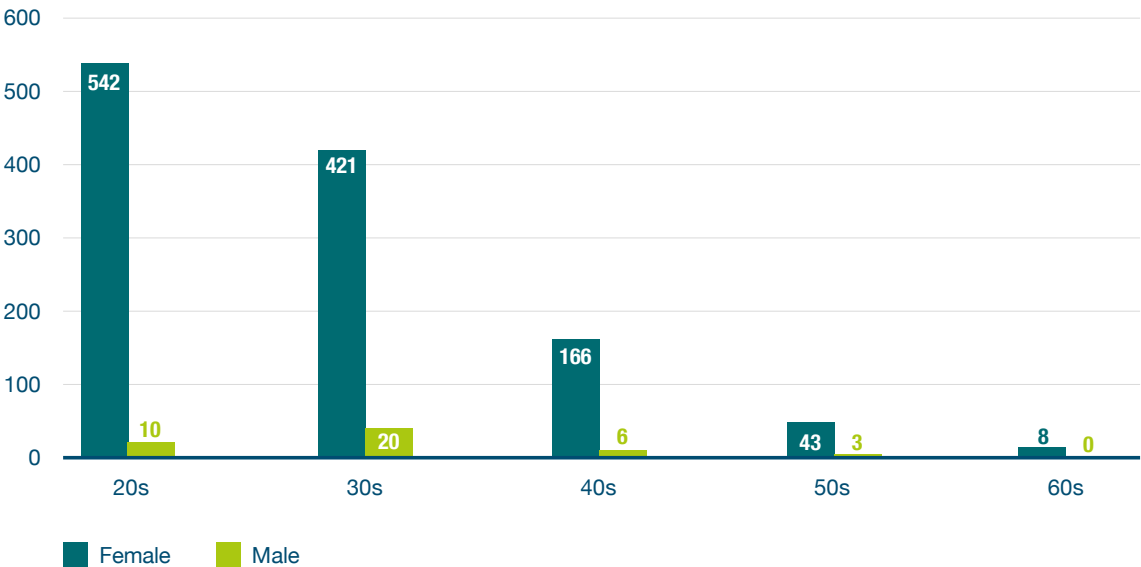
October 2020 Age Range



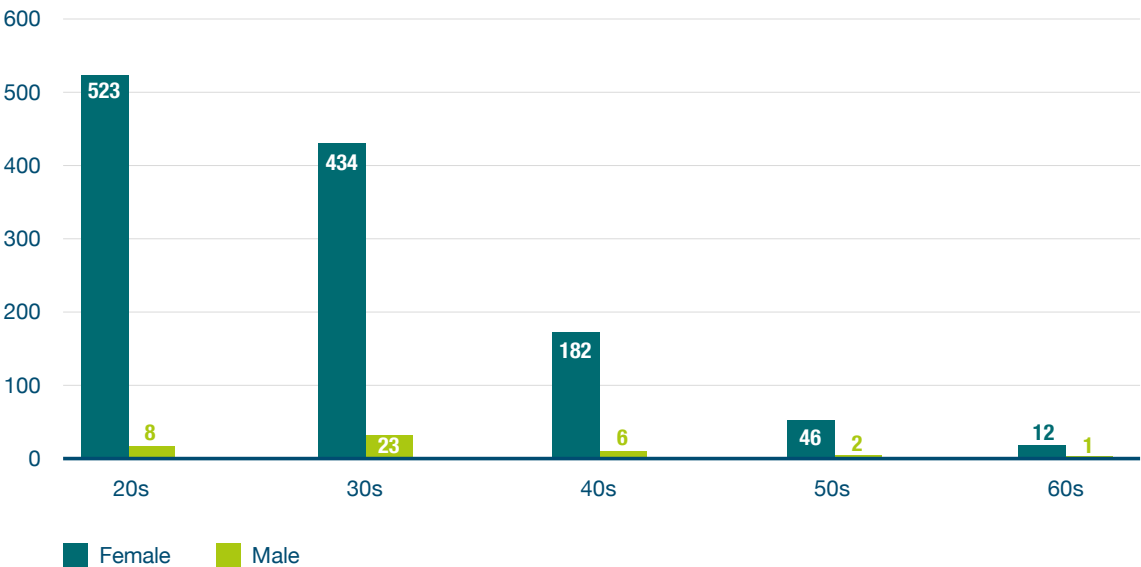
October 2021 Age Range



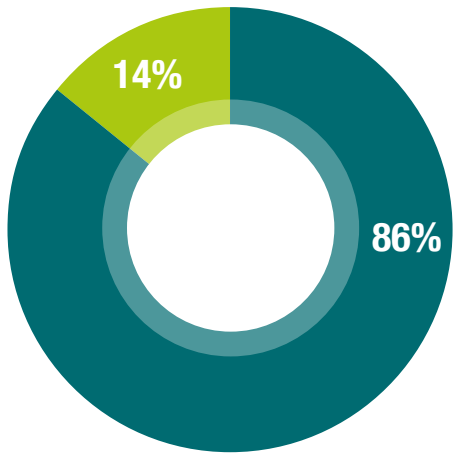
October 2022 Age Range



October 2023 Age Range

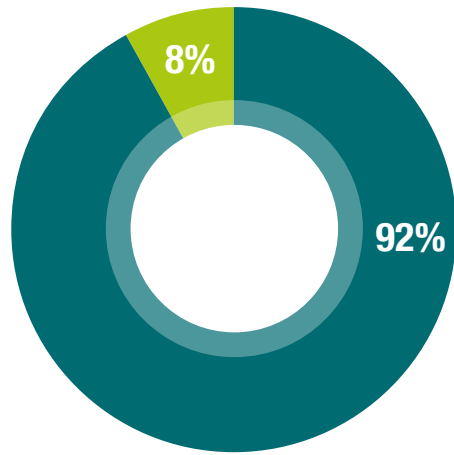


October 2020 Place of Graduation



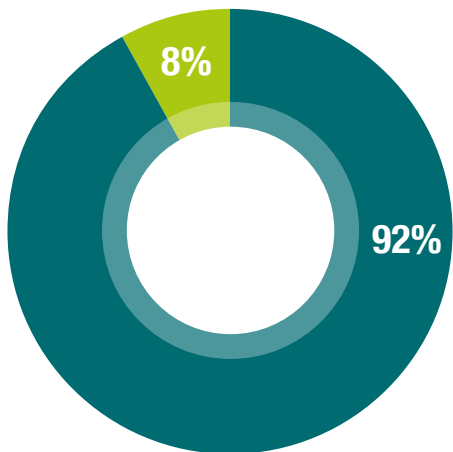
■ Ireland - 872
■ Abroad - 146

October 2021 Place of Graduation



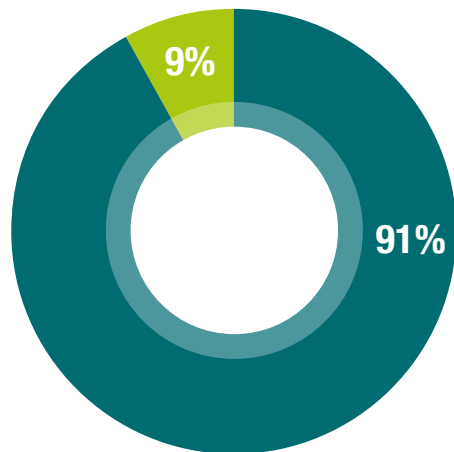
■ Ireland - 1,066
■ Abroad - 97

October 2022 Place of Graduation



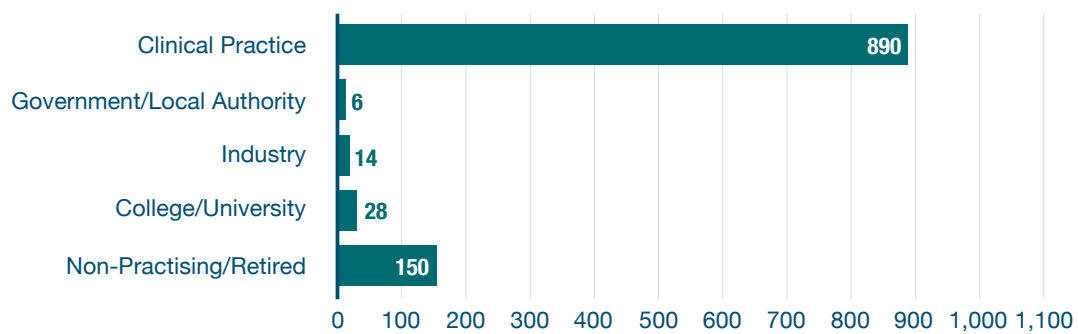
■ Ireland - 1,118
■ Abroad - 101

October 2023 Place of Graduation

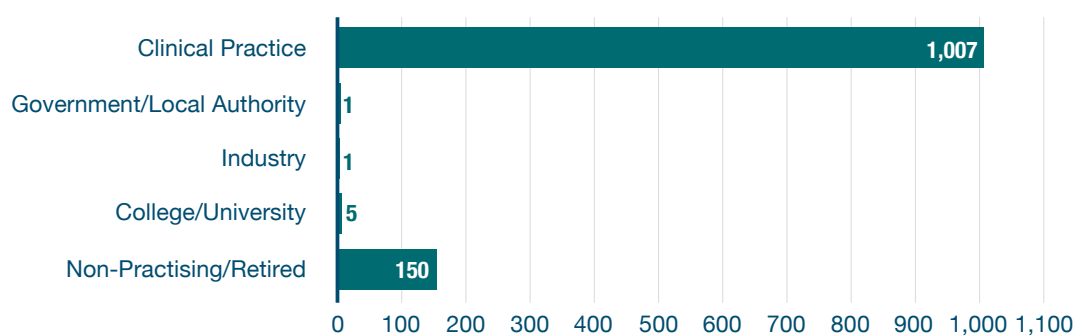


■ Ireland - 1,131
■ Abroad - 106

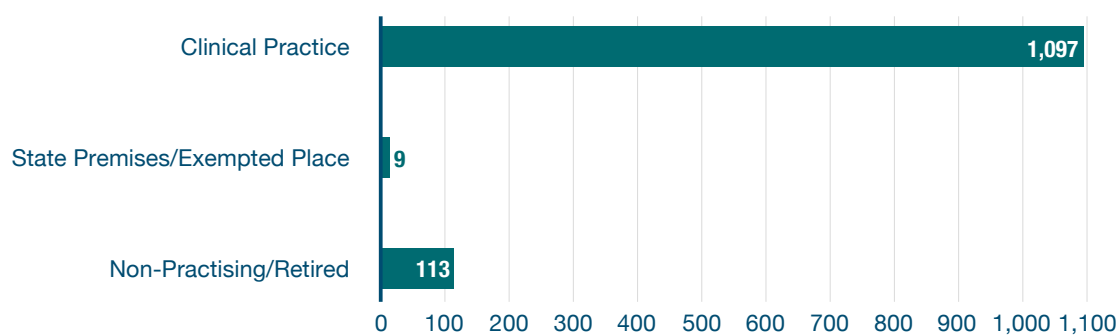
October 2020 PAS Declaration



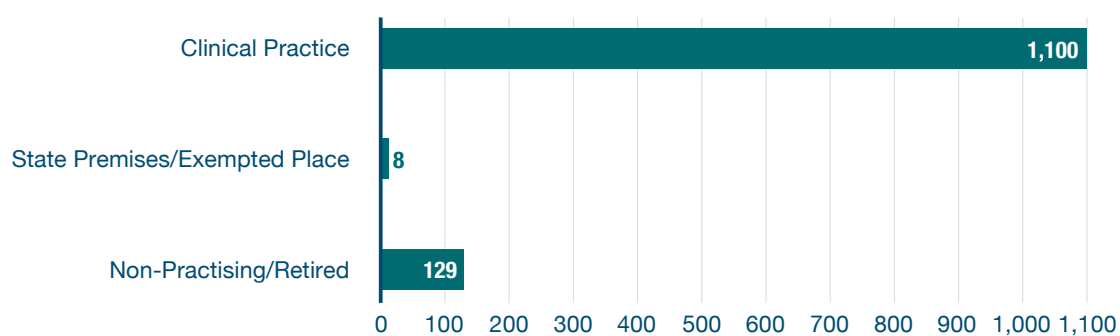
October 2021 PAS Declaration



October 2022 PAS Declaration



October 2023 PAS Declaration



*Some Veterinary Nurses work in more than one sector.

Section 7

Veterinary Practice Premises Register Data October 2020-2023

October 2020 - Registered
Veterinary Premises - 764



- Registered Veterinary Office - 214
- Registered Veterinary Clinic - 399
- Registered Veterinary Hospital - 147
- Registered Mobile Veterinary Unit - 4

October 2021 - Registered
Veterinary Premises - 760



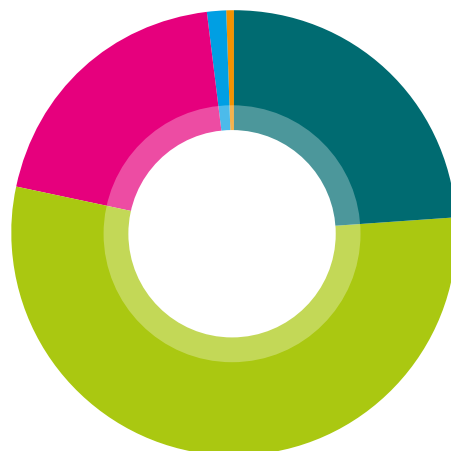
- Registered Veterinary Office - 214
- Registered Veterinary Clinic - 392
- Registered Veterinary Hospital - 150
- Registered Mobile Veterinary Unit - 4

October 2022 - Registered
Veterinary Premises - 741



- Registered Veterinary Office - 190
- Registered Veterinary Clinic - 397
- Registered Veterinary Hospital - 149
- Registered Veterinary Facility - 1
- Registered Mobile Veterinary Unit - 4

October 2023 - Registered
Veterinary Premises - 752



- Registered Veterinary Office - 181
- Registered Veterinary Clinic - 409
- Registered Veterinary Hospital - 149
- Registered Veterinary Facility - 9
- Registered Mobile Veterinary Unit - 4

October 2021 – Practice Breakdown By County									
	CA		FA		EQ		Mixed	Other	Total
	100%	90% ≥	100%	90% ≥	100%	90% ≥			
Carlow	2	0	2	2	2	0	6	0	14
Cavan	2	0	1	3	0	0	8	1	15
Clare	2	1	1	3	0	0	15	0	22
Cork	19	5	9	17	7	0	45	1	103
Donegal	0	2	1	1	0	0	12	1	17
Dublin	68	5	0	0	1	0	3	3	80
Galway	11	1	4	5	3	1	25	2	52
Kerry	3	4	2	9	0	0	18	0	36
Kildare	11	2	5	3	13	0	11	1	46
Kilkenny	1	1	1	4	4	2	11	0	24
Laois	2	1	4	3	1	0	9	0	20
Leitrim	0	0	1	1	0	0	4	0	6
Limerick	11	0	3	5	3	0	17	2	41
Louth	3	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	9
Longford	0	0	1	4	0	0	4	0	9
Mayo	5	1	6	4	1	0	17	2	36
Meath	10	3	2	2	4	0	14	1	36
Monaghan	0	0	4	2	0	0	7	1	14
Offaly	3	0	2	1	2	0	9	0	17
Roscommon	1	0	2	1	0	1	5	0	10
Sligo	1	0	0	1	0	0	11	0	13
Tipperary	6	1	3	14	8	1	22	1	56
Waterford	5	0	2	0	0	1	6	0	14
Westmeath	2	0	2	1	3	1	8	0	17
Wexford	5	0	1	2	4	1	14	0	27
Wicklow	10	0	1	2	4	1	8	0	26

October 2022 - Premises Classification & Practice Profile Breakdown by County																	
County	RVO					RVC					RVH				RVF	RMVU	Total
	CA*	FA*	EQ*	MIX	OTH.*	CA*	FA*	EQ*	MIX	OTH.*	CA*	FA*	EQ*	MIX	OTH.*	CA*	
Carlow	0	2	1	0	0	2	1	1	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	13
Cavan	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	15
Clare	0	1	1	0	0	4	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	20
Cork	0	17	4	2	1	20	4	0	31	0	9	0	2	11	0	0	101
Donegal	0	3	0	0	1	2	1	0	9	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	18
Dublin	2	0	0	1	4	38	0	0	2	0	28	0	0	1	0	4	80
Galway	1	4	3	3	2	10	4	2	21	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	53
Kerry	0	8	0	0	0	2	2	0	16	0	4	0	0	3	0	0	35
Kildare	0	5	9	4	0	8	0	1	5	0	8	0	3	1	0	0	44
Kilkenny	0	5	2	2	0	1	2	3	7	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	24
Laois	1	5	2	2	0	3	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	19
Leitrim	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6
Limerick	0	5	0	1	0	7	2	3	16	0	4	0	1	1	0	0	40
Longford	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	8
Louth	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	9
Mayo	0	6	1	2	2	3	2	0	13	1	3	0	0	3	0	0	36
Meath	0	4	2	1	0	7	2	0	5	0	6	0	1	5	1	0	34
Monaghan	0	5	0	0	1	0	1	1	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	14
Offaly	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	0	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	14
Roscommon	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Sligo	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	13
Tipperary	1	8	7	3	0	4	5	2	14	0	1	0	1	4	0	0	50
Waterford	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	13
Westmeath	1	3	3	2	0	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	19
Wexford	0	3	3	2	0	3	1	1	7	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	27
Wicklow	0	3	3	1	0	6	0	0	6	0	5	0	0	2	0	0	26

*Premises with a 90% and above practice profile

October 2023 - Premises Classification & Practice Profile Breakdown by County																	
County	RVO					RVC					RVH				RVF	RMVU	Total
	CA*	FA*	EQ*	MIX	OTH.*	CA*	FA*	EQ*	MIX	OTH.*	CA*	FA*	EQ*	MIX	OTH.*	CA*	
Carlow	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	1	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	13
Cavan	0	7	0	1	0	0	1	0	8	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	20
Clare	0	2	0	1	0	6	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	22
Cork	0	18	4	1	0	18	1	0	33	0	8	0	2	12	0	0	97
Donegal	0	2	0	0	1	3	1	0	9	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	18
Dublin	2	0	1	1	0	43	0	0	2	0	28	0	0	1	4	4	86
Galway	0	6	2	2	1	11	5	3	20	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	55
Kerry	0	8	0	0	0	2	2	0	16	0	4	0	3	0	0	0	35
Kildare	0	6	10	3	0	11	0	2	3	0	9	0	2	0	0	0	46
Kilkenny	0	5	2	1	0	1	2	3	7	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	23
Laois	0	6	1	2	0	3	0	0	5	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	19
Leitrim	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	7
Limerick	0	5	0	0	1	8	2	3	16	0	3	0	1	1	0	0	40
Longford	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	8
Louth	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	8
Mayo	0	5	1	2	0	4	3	0	14	1	3	0	0	3	3	0	39
Meath	0	4	2	1	0	6	1	0	6	0	8	0	1	5	1	0	35
Monaghan	0	4	0	0	2	1	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	14
Offaly	0	0	1	1	0	2	3	0	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	14
Roscommon	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Sligo	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	11
Tipperary	0	6	7	3	0	4	5	2	15	0	1	0	1	4	0	0	48
Waterford	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	13
Westmeath	1	3	3	2	0	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	19
Wexford	0	3	3	2	0	3	1	1	7	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	27
Wicklow	0	1	4	1	0	7	0	0	6	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	25

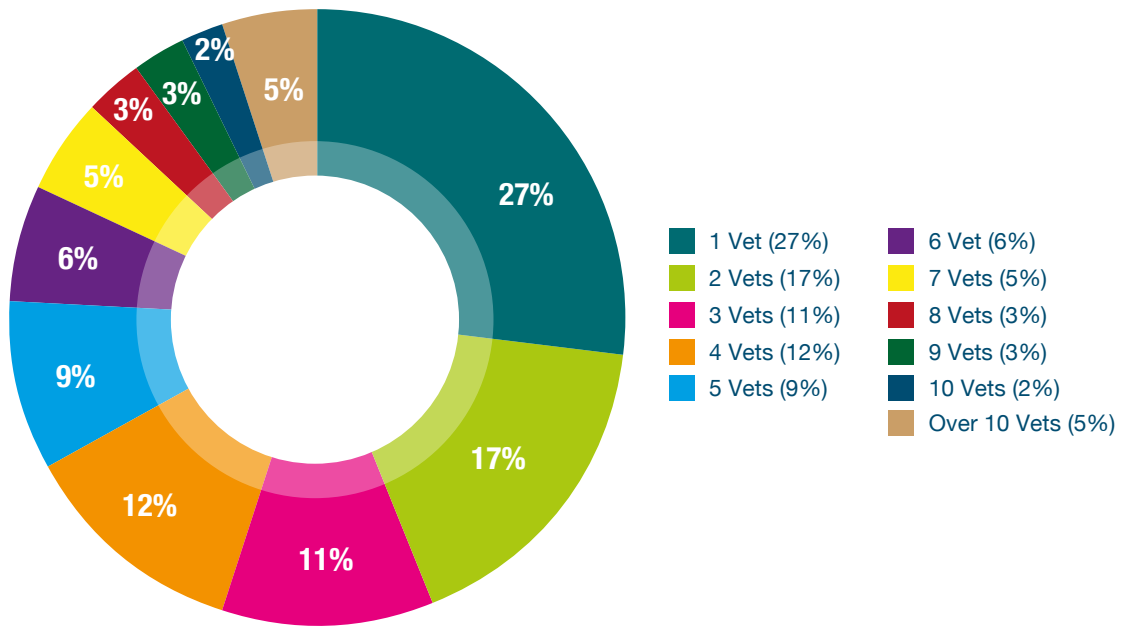
*Premises with a 90% and above practice profile

Section 8

Registered Veterinary Premises Data April 2024

Total No. Registered Veterinary Premises - 756

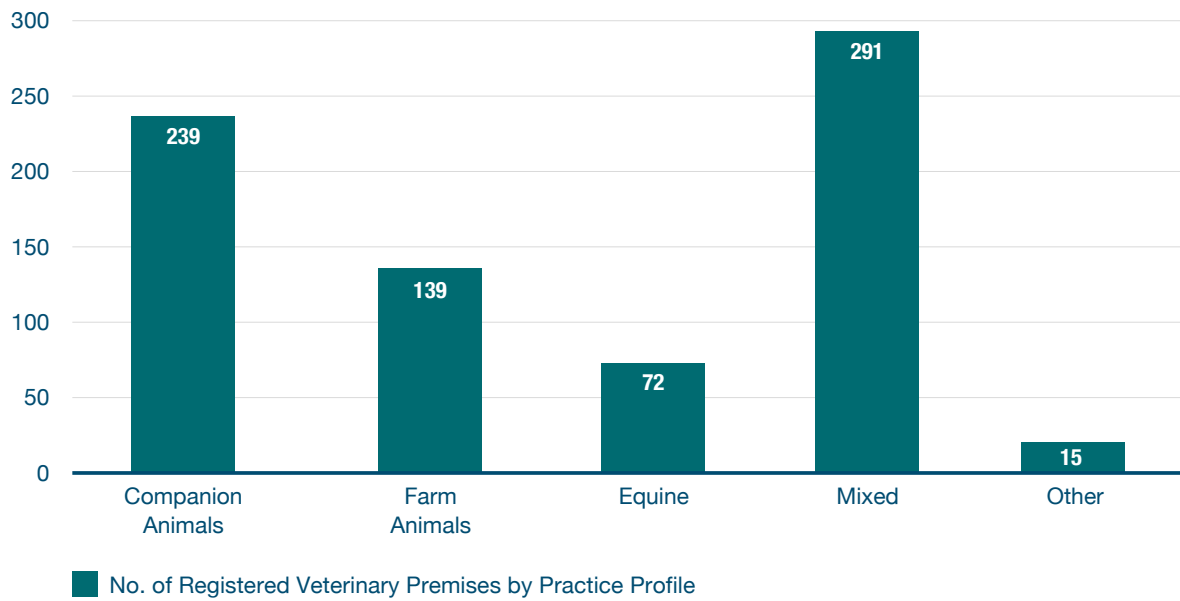
Practice Size by No. of Veterinary Practitioners Associated with a Premises



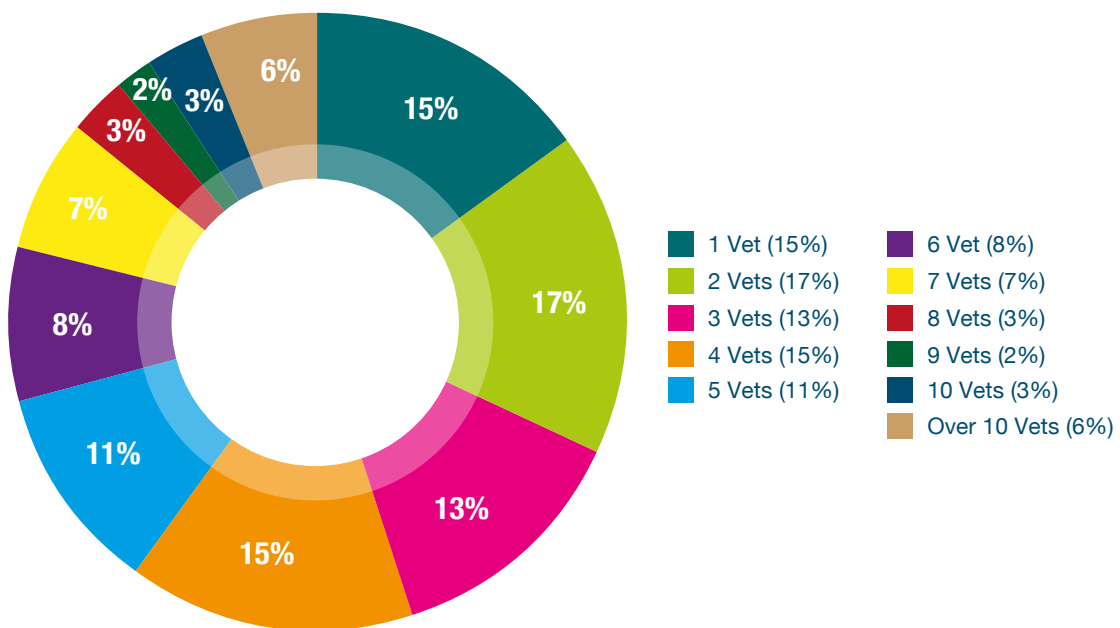
Practice Size Gender Breakdown

Practice Size	% Of Which are Male Vets	% Of Which are Female Vets
1 Vet Practice	75%	25%
2 Vet Practice	54%	46%
3 Vet Practice	56%	44%
4 Vet Practice	54%	46%
5 Vet Practice	45%	55%
6 Vet Practice	49%	51%
7 Vet Practice	47%	53%
8 Vet Practice	36%	64%
9 Vet Practice	48%	52%
10 Vet Practice	40%	60%
Over 10 Vet Practice	42%	58%

No. of Registered Veterinary Premises by Practice Profile



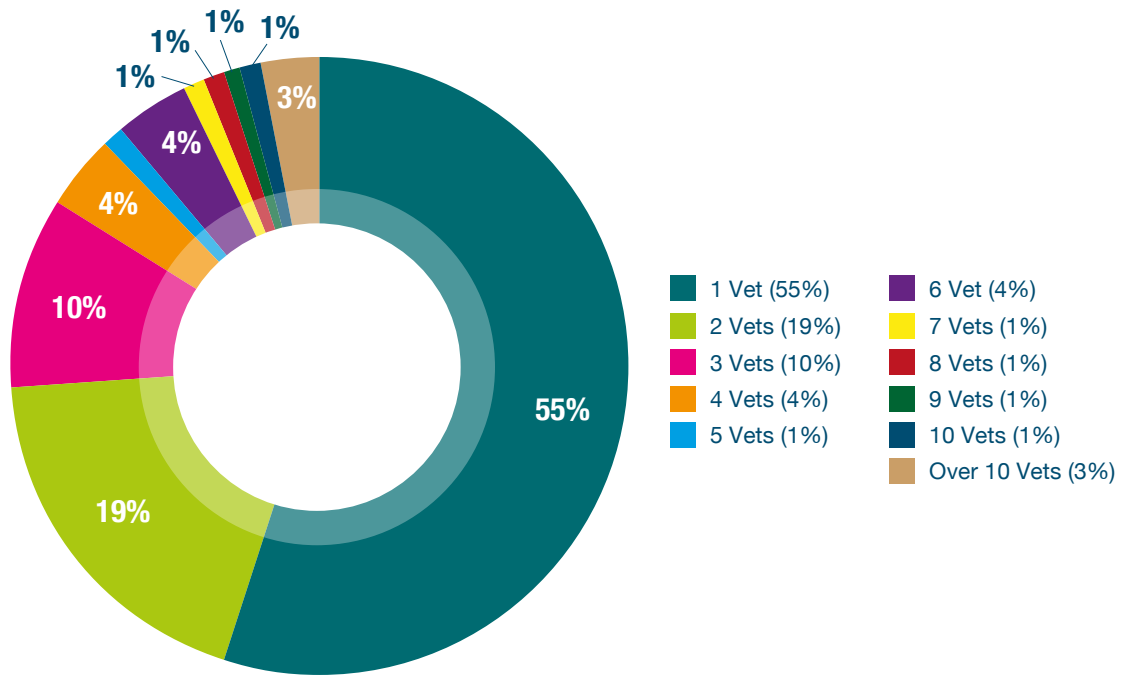
Companion Animal Veterinary Practice Size



Gender Breakdown of Vets in Companion Animal Practices

Male	Female
34%	66%

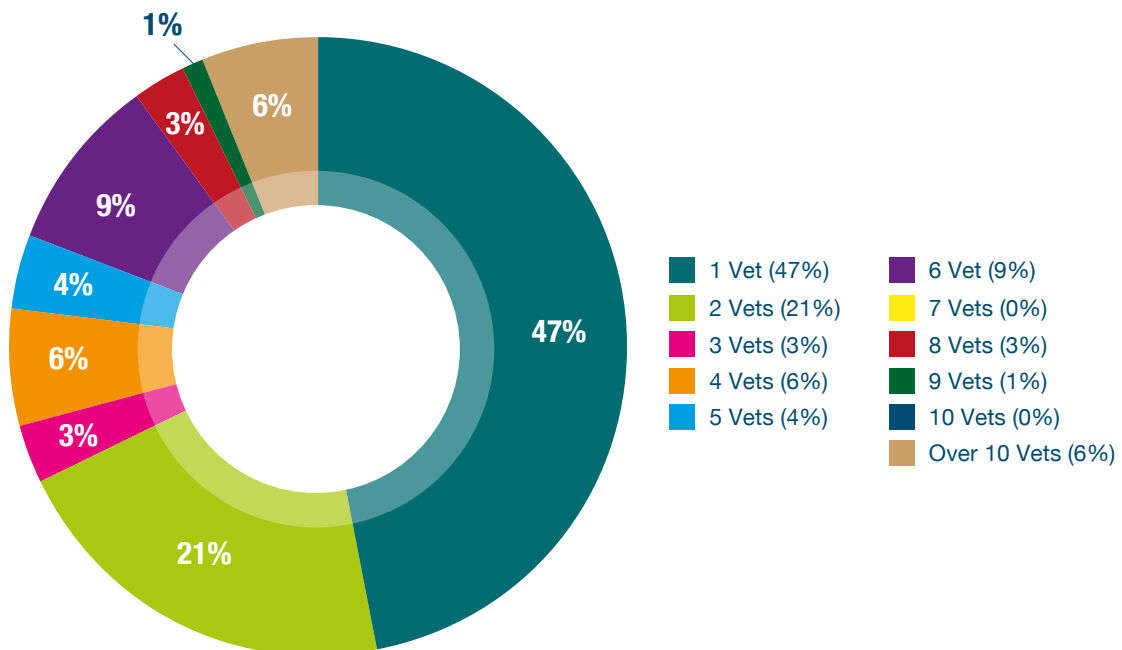
Farm Animal Veterinary Practice Size



Gender Breakdown of Vets in Farm Animal Practices

Male	Female
71%	29%

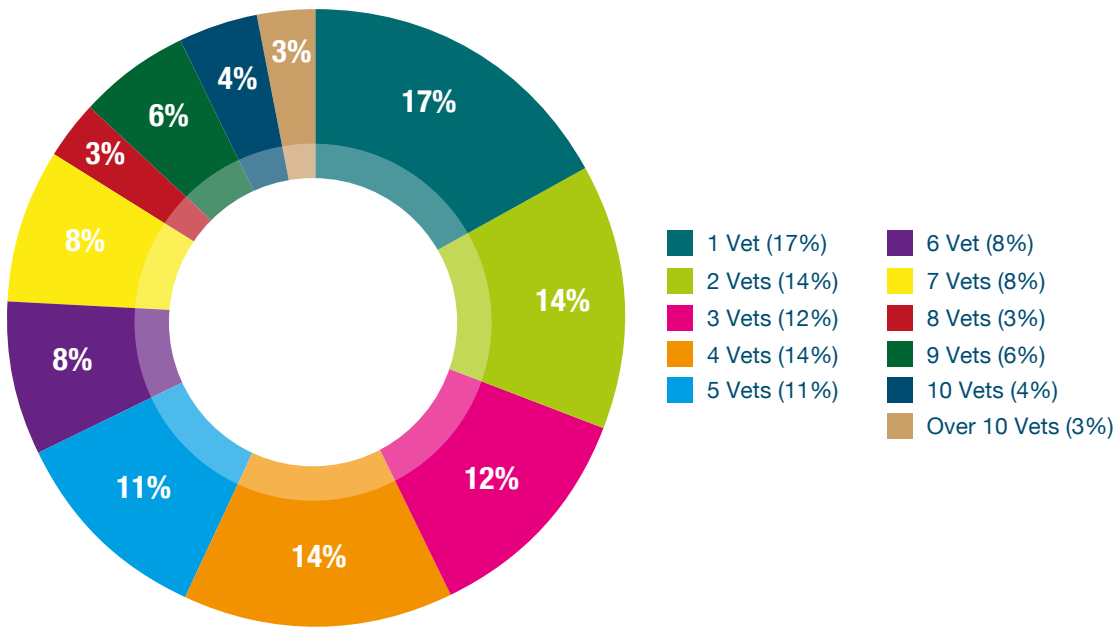
Equine Veterinary Practice Size



Gender Breakdown of Vets in Equine Practices

Male	Female
45%	55%

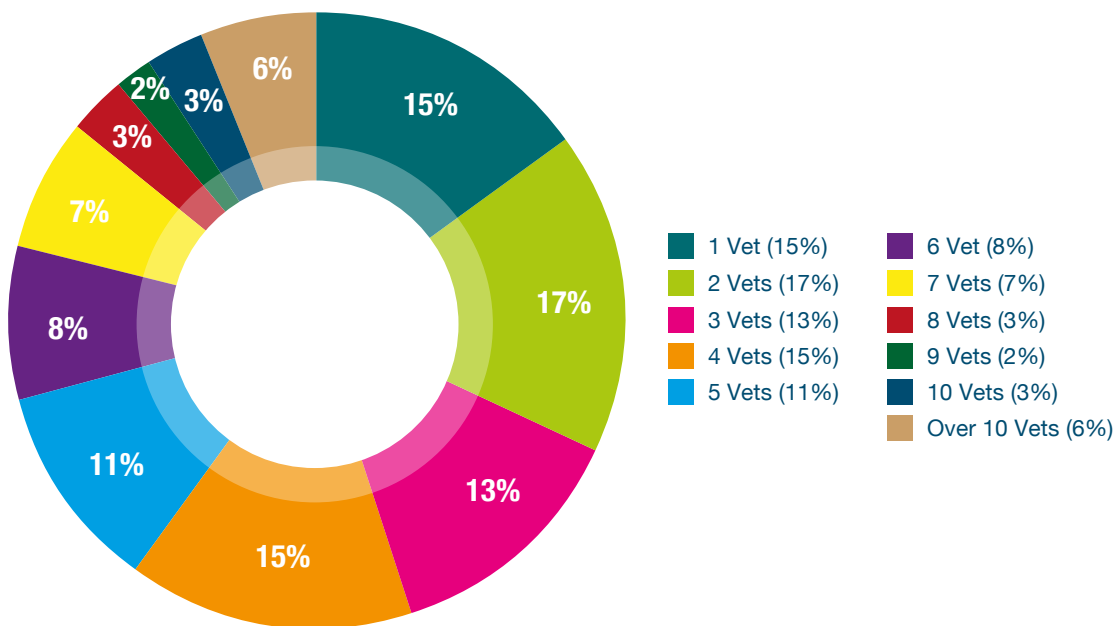
Mixed Animal Veterinary Practice Size



Gender Breakdown of Vets in Mixed Animal Practices

Male	Female
56%	44%

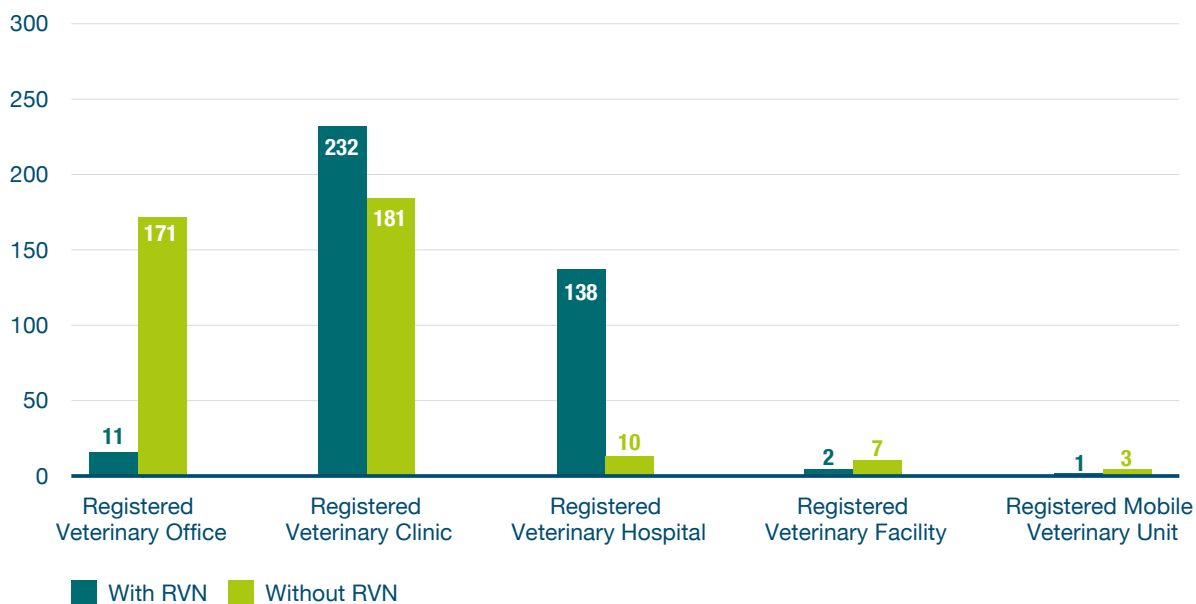
Size of Veterinary Practices with “Other” Practice Profile (labs, pharma, zoo)



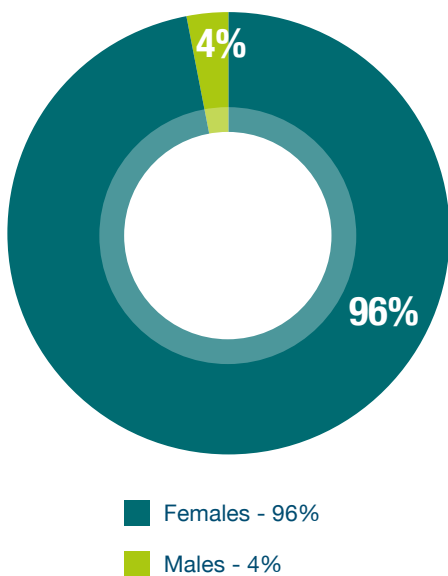
Gender Breakdown of Vets in “Other” Veterinary Practices

Male	Female
48%	52%

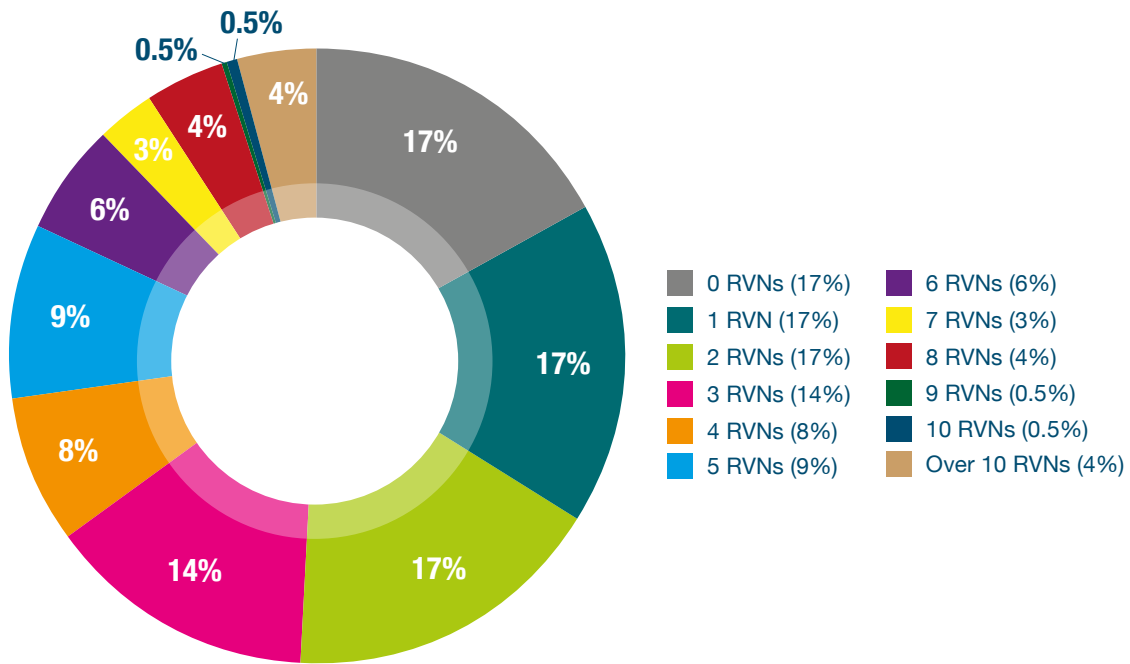
No. of Registered Veterinary Premises with a Registered Veterinary Nurse



Gender Breakdown of Veterinary Nurses in Private Practice



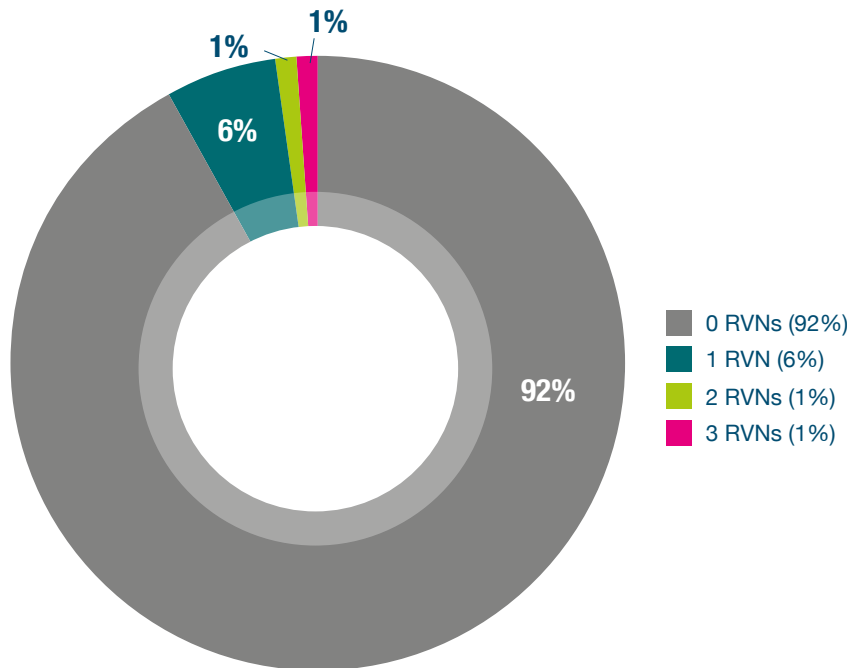
Companion Animal Veterinary Practice Size by RVN



Gender Breakdown of RVNs in Companion Animal Practices

Male	Female
4%	96%

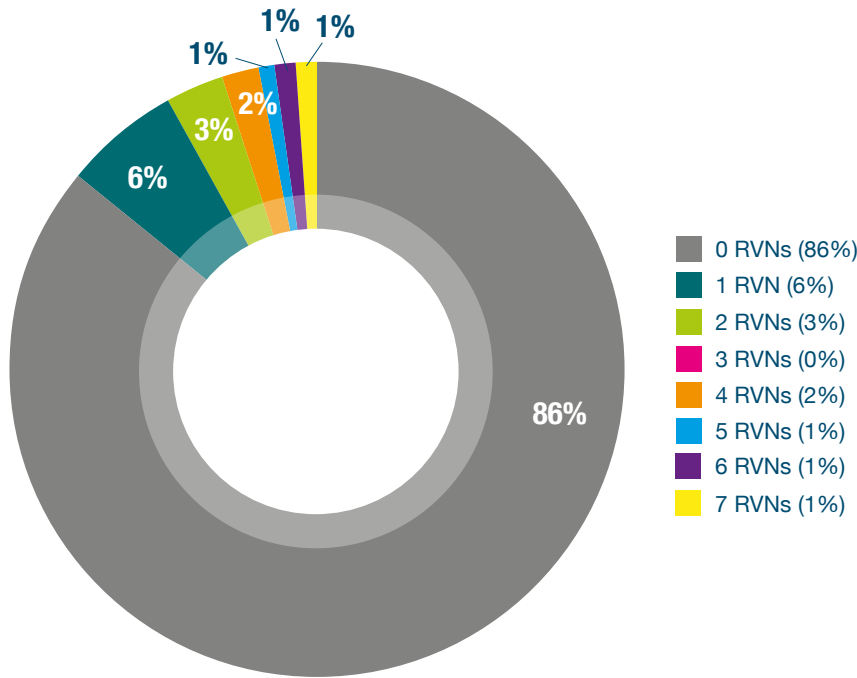
Farm Animal Veterinary Practice Size by RVN



Gender Breakdown of RVNs in Farm Animal Veterinary Practices

Male	Female
0%	100%

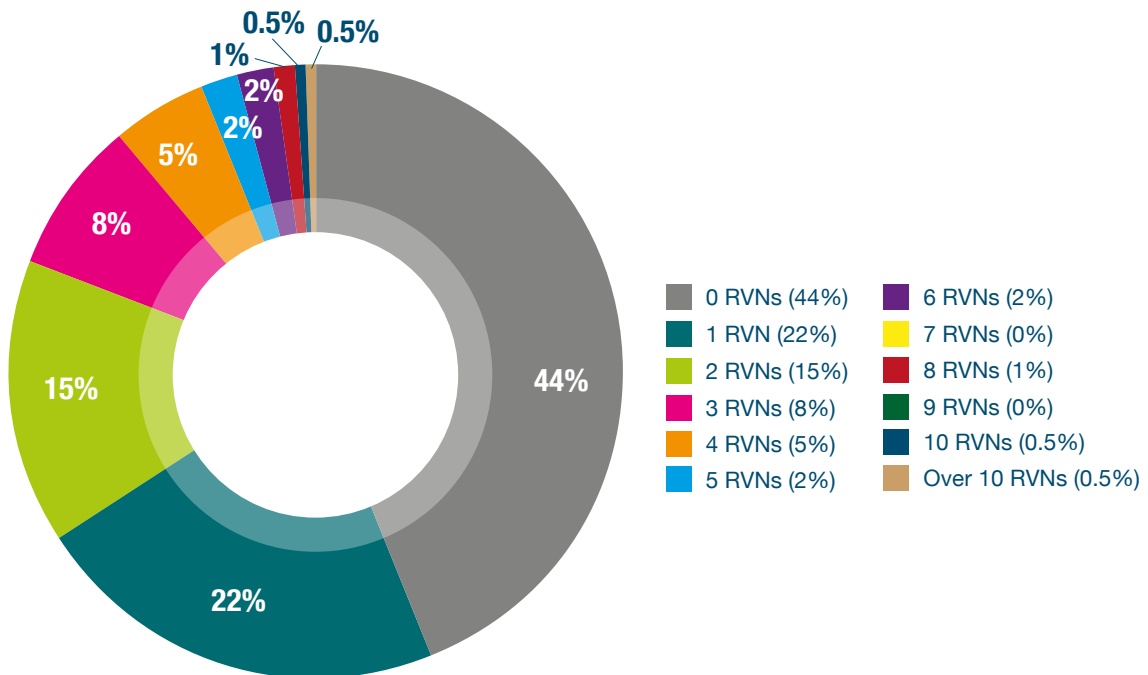
Equine Veterinary Practice Size by RVN



Gender Breakdown of RVNs in Equine Practices

Male	Female
3%	97%

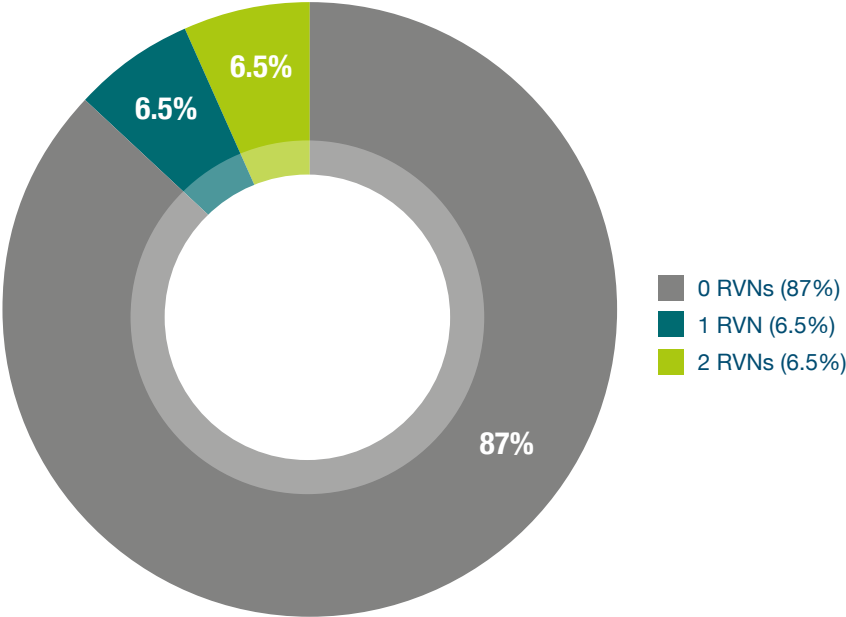
Mixed Veterinary Practice Size by RVN



Gender Breakdown of RVNs in Mixed Veterinary Practices

Male	Female
5%	95%

Size of Veterinary Practices with “Other” Practice Profile (eg. labs, pharma, zoo) by RVN



Gender Breakdown of RVNs in “Other” Veterinary Practices

Male	Female
0%	100%

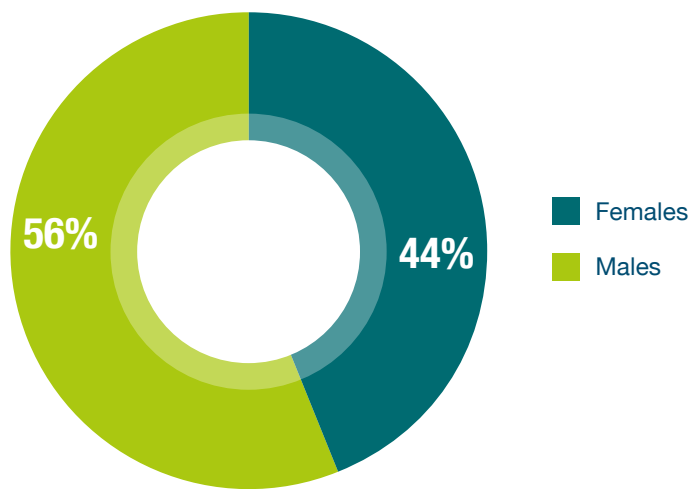


Section 9

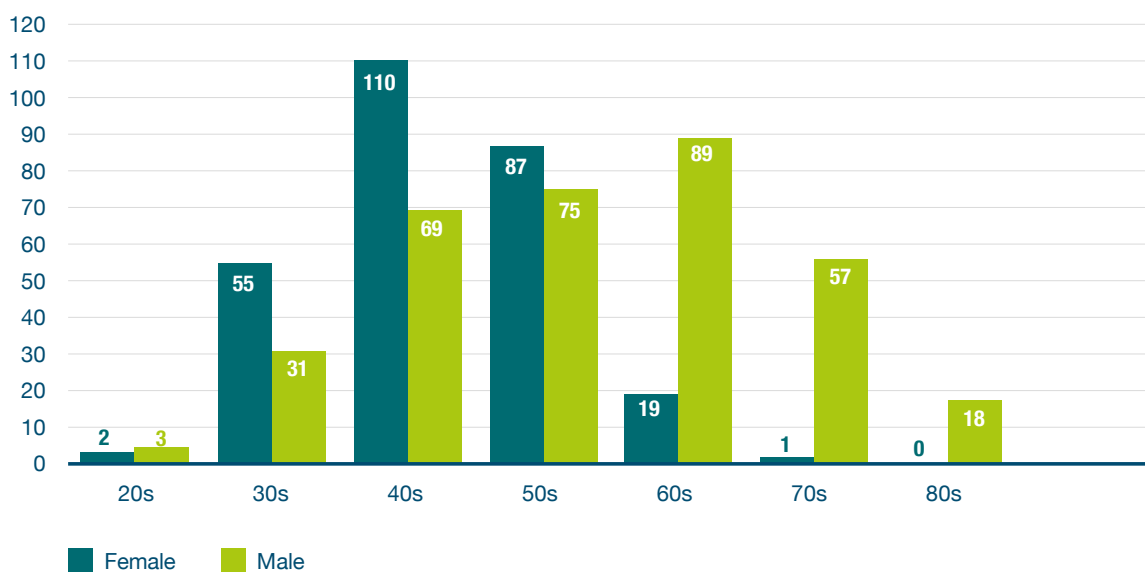
Migration Around the Register Data May 2024

In May 2024, 616 Registered Veterinary Practitioners were listed as solely practising in areas other than private clinical practice. This includes roles in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Local Authorities, universities, and meat inspection. This represented 17.5% of the total number of Registered Veterinary Practitioners.

Overall Gender Breakdown of Vets not in Private Practice



Overall Age Range of Vets not in Private Practice



Years in Private Practice Before Changing Employment Sector

With a Focus on Veterinary Practitioners in their 20s, 30s and 40s

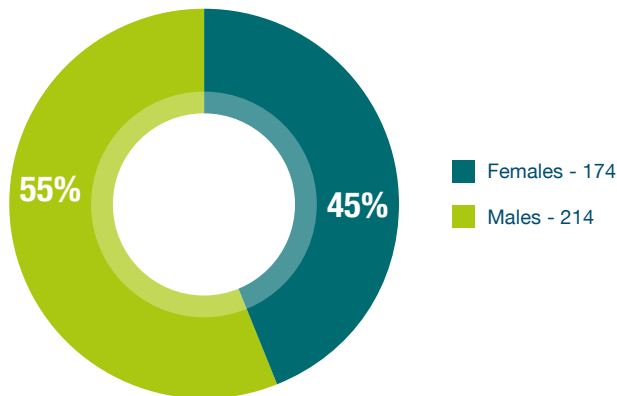
Female Vets		Male Vets	
Age Range	Avg. No. Years in Private Practice	Age Range	Avg. No. Years in Private Practice
20s	0	20s	3.3
30s	5.9	30s	5.5
40s	10.6	40s	13.5
Overall average no. of years - 5.5		Overall average no. of years - 7.4	

The above figures are based on veterinary practitioners in May 2024 who had listed that they were not in private practice.

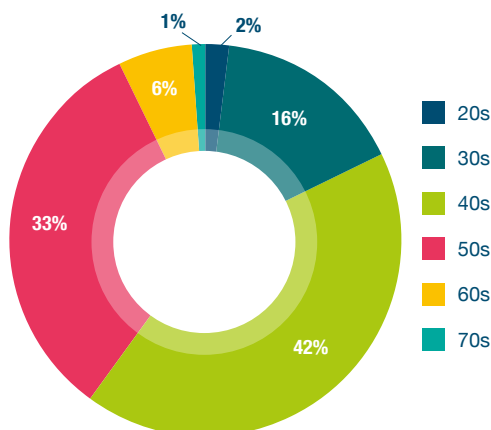
Registered Veterinary Practitioners Practising for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

In May 2024, 388 Registered Veterinary Practitioners were listed as working for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

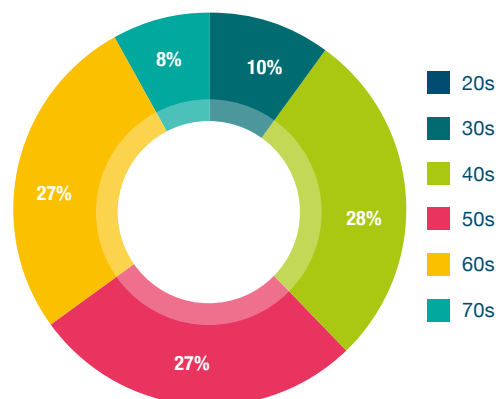
Gender Breakdown of Vets Practising for DAFM



Age Breakdown of Female Vets Practising for DAFM



Age Breakdown of Male Vets Practising for DAFM



Appendix 2

Register Analysis Report
by Niall Devitt



Introduction

As part of the Workforce Review, the Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI) has requested data analysis of its Registers of Veterinary Practitioners (VPs), Veterinary Nurses (VNs) and Certificates of Suitability (COS) to inform future planning and policy. The following document presents a wide and detailed analysis of the different types of register and external data which focuses around three key areas:

1. Historical Analysis

The first section looks at the historical trends in the Registers using the information from the Register itself, and also reworks some of the existing summary statistics that the VCI has produced in recent years. The growth in the Register is notable from 2016 and this section helps to understand this growth. In addition, the census data from 2016 and 2022 is combined with the Register information from those years to show how the density of service provision has changed across the country.

2. Certificate of Suitability Register year-end 2023

There are two main sources of information on the number of veterinary practitioners and nurses: the Certificate of Suitability (COS) Register and the VP and VN Registers. The COS Register contains all registered veterinary practice premises in the country and captures the number of staff working in each practice and can be considered better representative of the provision of services in a specific area. The first section provides detailed information on the COS Register.

3. Market Conditions and Projections 2023-2033

The concluding section gathers the demand conditions of the veterinary market and makes projections of the supply and demand for the market from 2023-2033. Sections one to three provide detailed information on the supply of VPs and VNs. The demand factors that are considered include:

- ▶ Irish population and projections
- ▶ Disposable income
- ▶ Livestock, equine and registered dogs
- ▶ Prices – Consumer Price Index and Agricultural Price Index
- ▶ Demand and Supply Projections 2023-2033

The demand for the different types of veterinary services is dependent on the location: rural areas have greater demand for farm and equine services, while urban areas demand more companion animal services. To generate greater insights on the regional distribution of care, where appropriate the Registers have been aggregated at regional and county level. Moreover, the regional division aligns with the regional assemblies and the strategic planning areas across the country. The main document provides the strategic planning areas, with the counties information in the appendices. These strategic planning areas and their counties are:

- ▶ **Border:** Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo
- ▶ **West:** Mayo, Roscommon, Galway
- ▶ **Mid-West:** Clare, Tipperary, Limerick
- ▶ **South-East:** Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford
- ▶ **South-West:** Kerry, Cork
- ▶ **Dublin:** Dublin
- ▶ **Mid-East:** Kildare, Louth, Meath, Wicklow
- ▶ **Midlands:** Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath

List of Figures

Section One – Historical Analysis

Figure 1: Registered Veterinary Practitioners 2004-2023	107
Figure 2: Annual Percentage Change in VPs 2004-2023	107
Figure 3: VP Attrition Rate 2004-2023	108
Figure 4: Registered VNs 2008-2023	108
Figure 5: Annual Change in Registered Nurses 2009-2023	109
Figure 6: VN Attrition Rate 2009-2023	109
Figure 7: Types of practice by year 2007-2023	110
Figure 8: VP by gender 2020-2023	110
Figure 9: VP age and gender 2023	111
Figure 10: VN age and gender 2023	111
Figure 11: VP age profile 2021-2023	112
Figure 12: COS Holder age and gender	112
Figure 13: COS Holder by type and gender	113
Figure 14: VP by experience and gender	113
Figure 15: COS practice by size	114
Figure 16: Premises with veterinary nurses by type	114
Figure 17: Place of Graduation 2020-2023	115
Figure 18: Map of change in VP density 2016-2022	118
Figure 19: Map of VP density 2022	119

Section Two -COS Register year-end 2023

Figure 20: VP by share of activity	121
Figure 21: VP by type and region	121
Figure 22: VP share of activity by region	122
Figure 23: Regional Map of VP Density	123
Figure 24: Female VPs and COS Holders	124
Figure 25: Age Share of COS Holders	125
Figure 26: COS Holder age share by region	126
Figure 27: COS Holder by age and region	126
Figure 28: Practices by type of activity	127
Figure 29: Share of Activity of Mixed Practices	128

Section Three - Market Conditions and Projections

Figure 30: Irish population 1841-2022	129
Figure 31: Population projections 2023-2033	129
Figure 32: Disposable income 2000-2021	130
Figure 33: Income and VPs 2004-2021	130
Figure 34: Market projection 2023-2033	131
Figure 35: Irish livestock numbers 1991-2023	132
Figure 36: Irish equine numbers 1991-2023	132
Figure 37: Consumer Price Index 2003-2024	133
Figure 38: Agricultural Price Index 1995-2023	133
Figure 39: Registered dogs 2000-2022	134

List of Tables

Section One – Historical Analysis

Table 1: Practice Activity 2016 and 2022	115
Table 2: Change in VP Density 2016 - 2022	117

Section Two - COS Register year-end 2023

Table 3: COS Register December 2023 summary statistics	120
Table 4: VPs by type of activity	120
Table 5: VP Density (per COS register)	122
Table 6: Gender Analysis COS Register	124
Table 7: COS Holder by Age and Region	125
Table 8: Practices by Activity	127
Table 9: Activity of Mixed Practices	128

Section Three - Market Conditions and Projections

Table 10: Projected supply and demand 2023-2033	131
---	-----

Section One – Historical Analysis

Figure 1: Registered Veterinary Practitioners 2004-2023

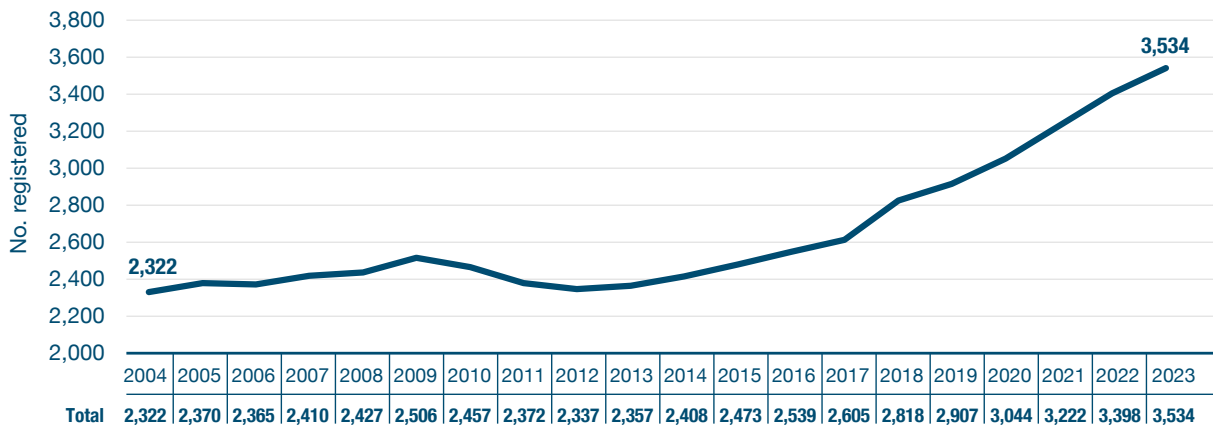


Figure 1 shows the growth in the Register of Veterinary Practitioners from 2004 to 2023 with a 52% increase in the total number of veterinary practitioners (VPs). The growth rate over the period was 2.27%, however, this also included a period of registration decline between 2008 and 2012 where the number of VPs decreased by almost 7%. The growth rate from 2016 onwards has been much higher indicating an accelerated supply of VPs in the Irish market.

Figure 2: Annual Percentage Change in VPs 2004-2023

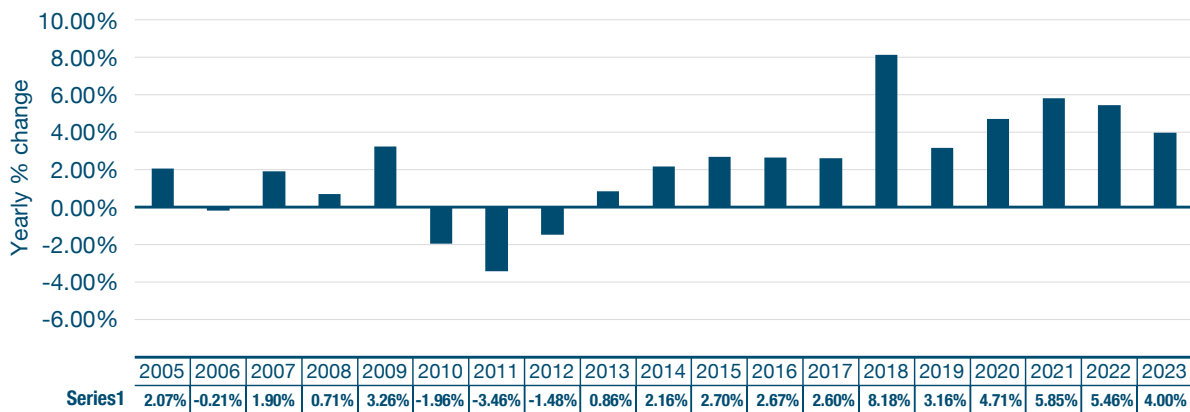
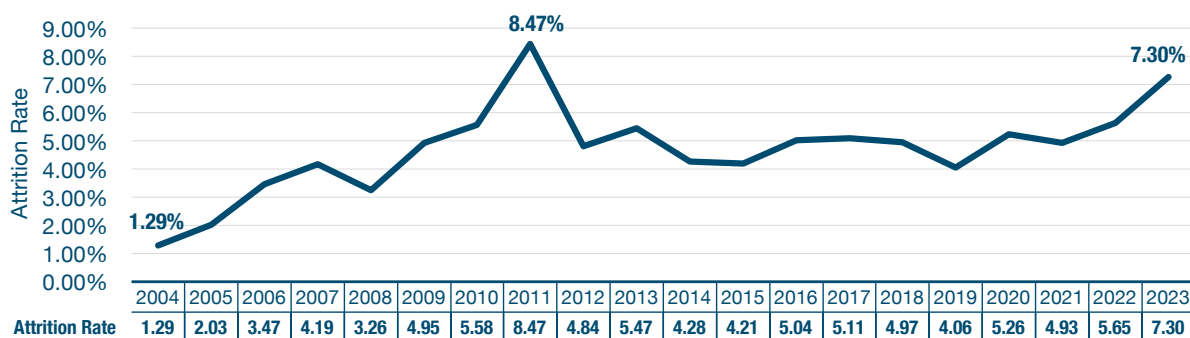


Figure 2 plots the annual change in the Register from year to year. 2018 is notable with a significant increase in the registration numbers by 8.2%. The growth rate has remained elevated since 2020 but is showing signs of cooling down. Due to the cyclical nature of the market, the reallocation effect of Brexit has likely led to an increased supply of VPs in the Irish market.

Figure 3: VP Attrition Rate 2004-2023



The attrition rate is an important indicator of workforce trends. Figure 3 shows the attrition rate from 2004 to 2023, which is calculated as the number of VPs that are removed from the Register in a year as a share of the total Register. This attrition rate peaked during the financial crisis at 8.47% and has shown increases again in the most recent years.

Figure 4: Total Registered Veterinary Nurses 2008-2023

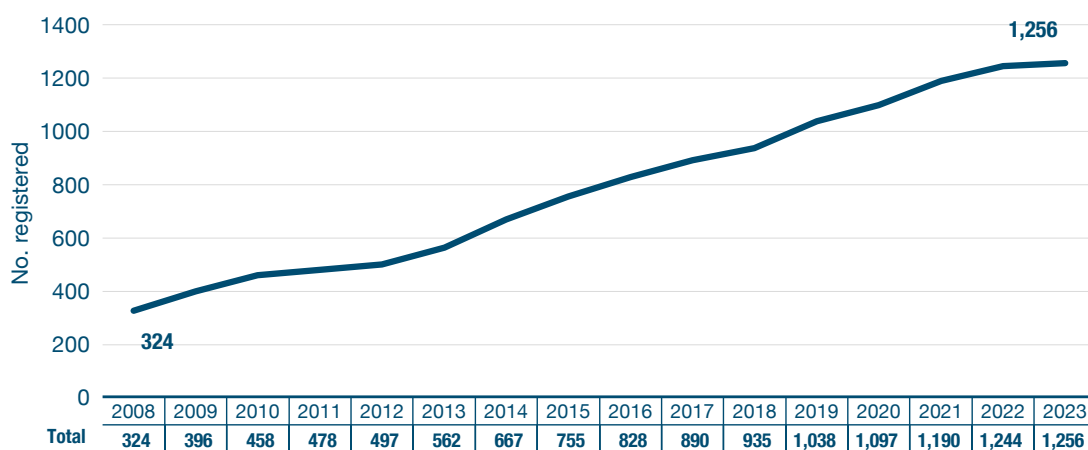


Figure 4 presents the number of veterinary nurses (VNs) who are registered with the VCI from 2008, when the Register of Veterinary Nurses was established, until 2023. The number of registered nurses has been increasing consistently since 2008, even through the financial crisis, and grew a remarkable 287% in the total period.

Figure 5: Annual Percentage Change in Registered Nurses 2009-2023

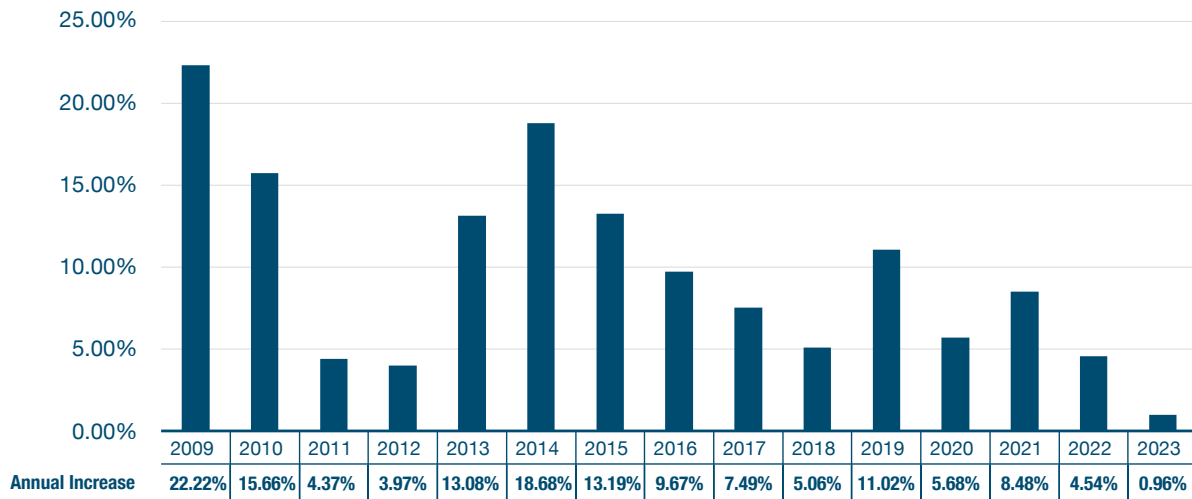


Figure 5 further breaks down the rate of change in the number of VNs. Although consistently increasing, the rate of increase has slowed down in recent years and is in contrast to the higher increases seen in the VP numbers.

Figure 6: VN Attrition Rate 2009-2023

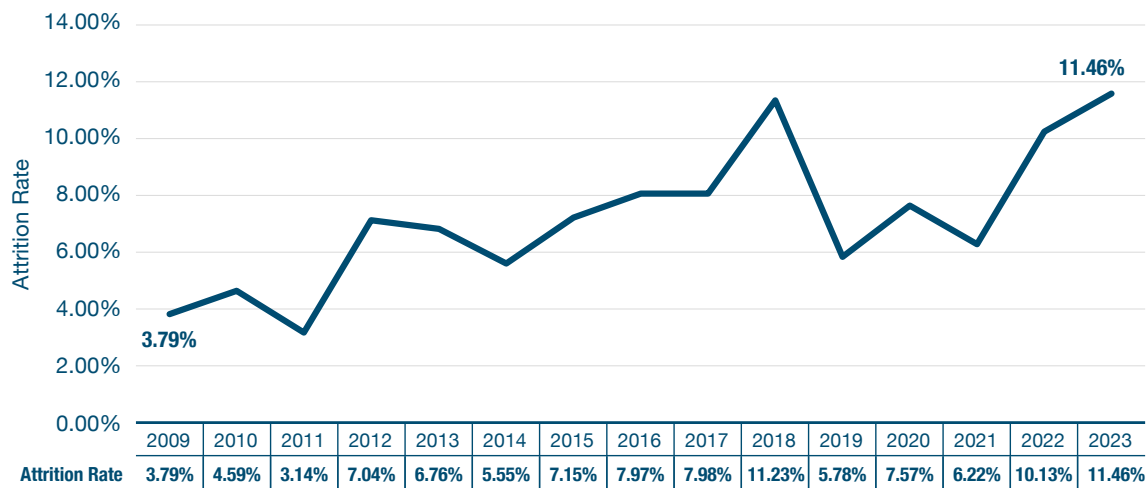
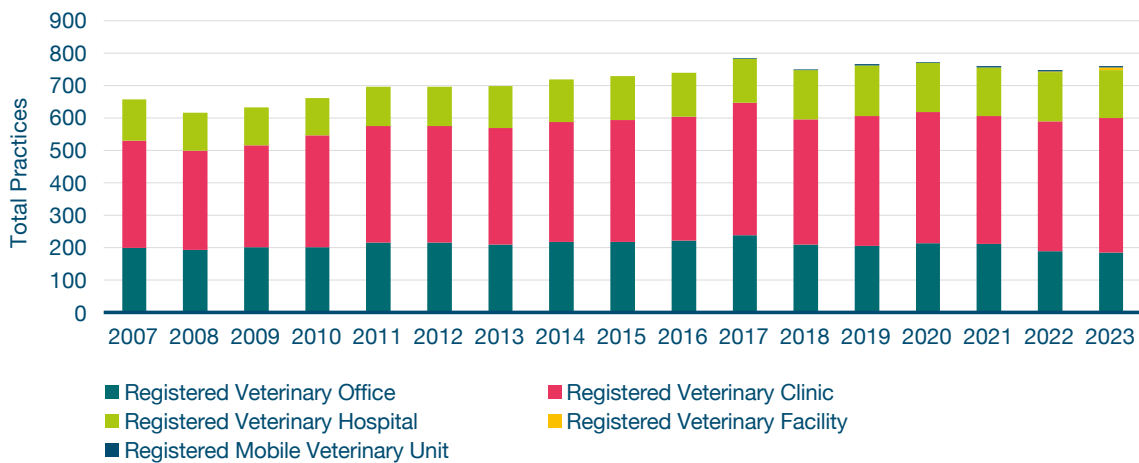


Figure 6 shows the attrition rate for Registered Veterinary Nurses calculated as the number who leave the Register each year as a proportion of the total Registered Veterinary Nurses. Similar to VPs, the attrition rate has increased substantially from 3.79% in 2009 to 11.46% in 2023. Importantly, these higher attrition rates have not led to a decrease in the total registration.

Figure 7: Types of practice by year 2007-2023



Even though there has been substantial growth in the individual number of veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses, this is not reflected in the number of registered veterinary practice premises. From 2007 to 2023, VP numbers increased by 46.6% while the number of registered premises increased by 15.5%. This perhaps indicates that the number of VPs working within each premises is increasing.

Figure 8: VP by gender 2020-2023



Figure 8 shows the gender composition of the Register of Veterinary Practitioners from 2020-2023 with the number of female VPs increasing by 32% and male VPs by 7%. This has resulted in an increase in the share of female VPs from 43.8% to 49.2%.

Figure 9: VP age and gender 2023

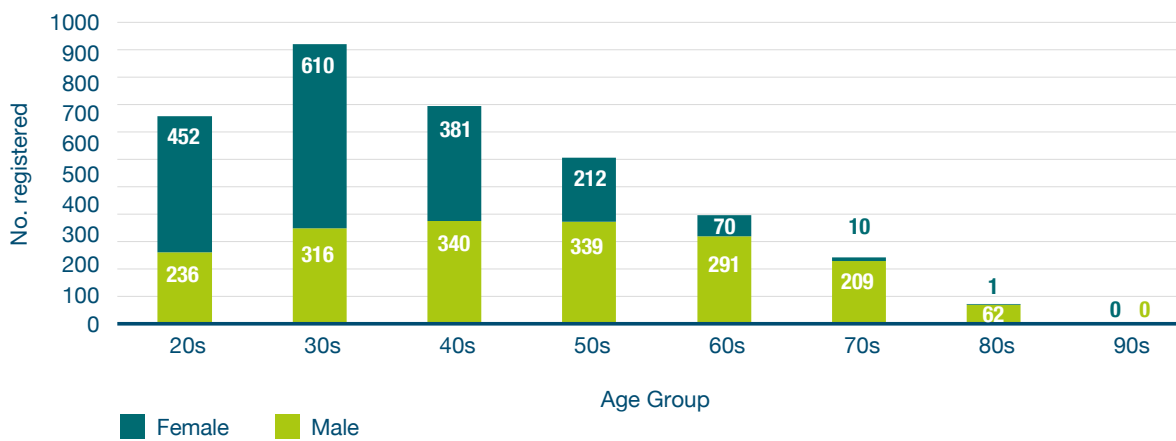
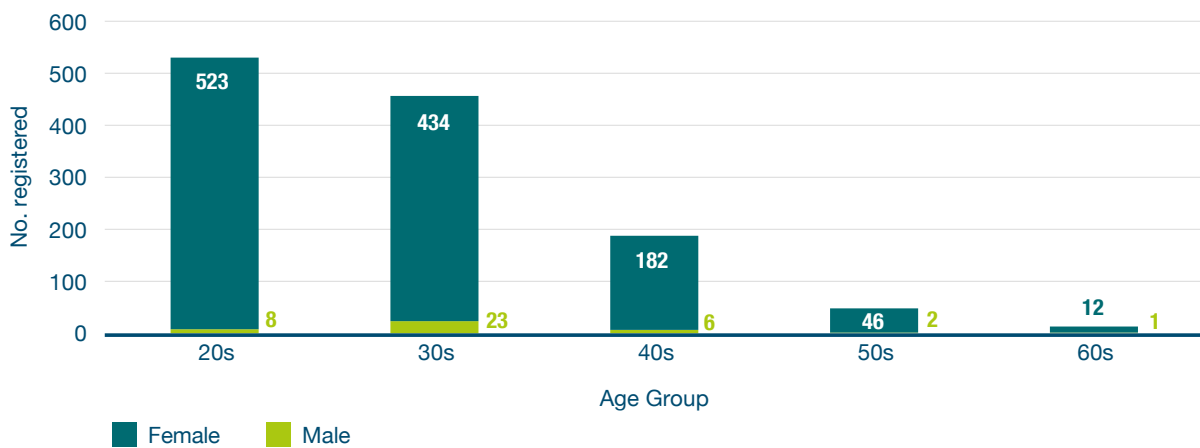


Figure 9 shows the relationship between age and gender in the Register of Veterinary Practitioners in 2023. There is a much larger share of female VPS in their 20s, 30s and 40s but male VPs dominate the older age groups.

Figure 10: VN age and gender 2023



As shown in figure 10, the vast majority of veterinary nurses are female and in their 20’s and 30’s. Similar to the VPs, we see reduced participation from females from the 40’s on.

Figure 11: VP age profile 2021-2023

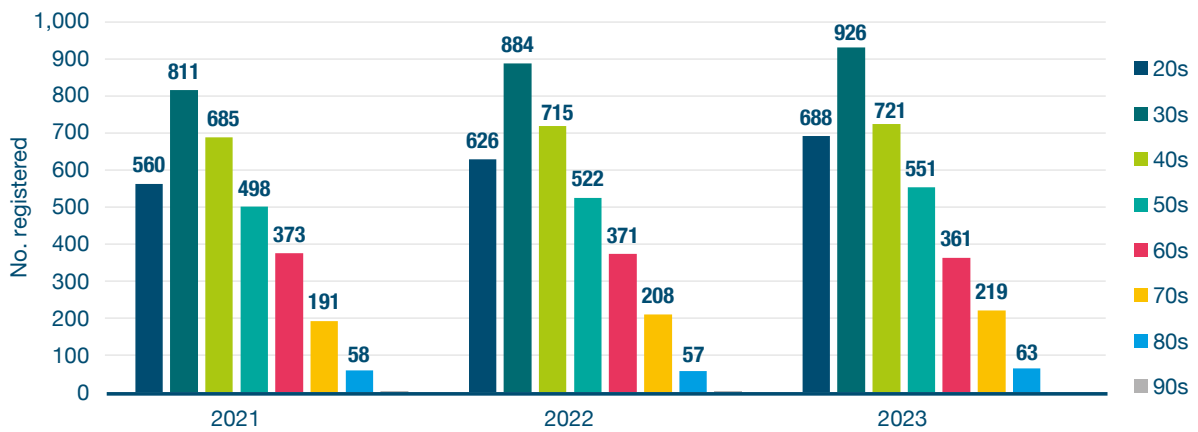
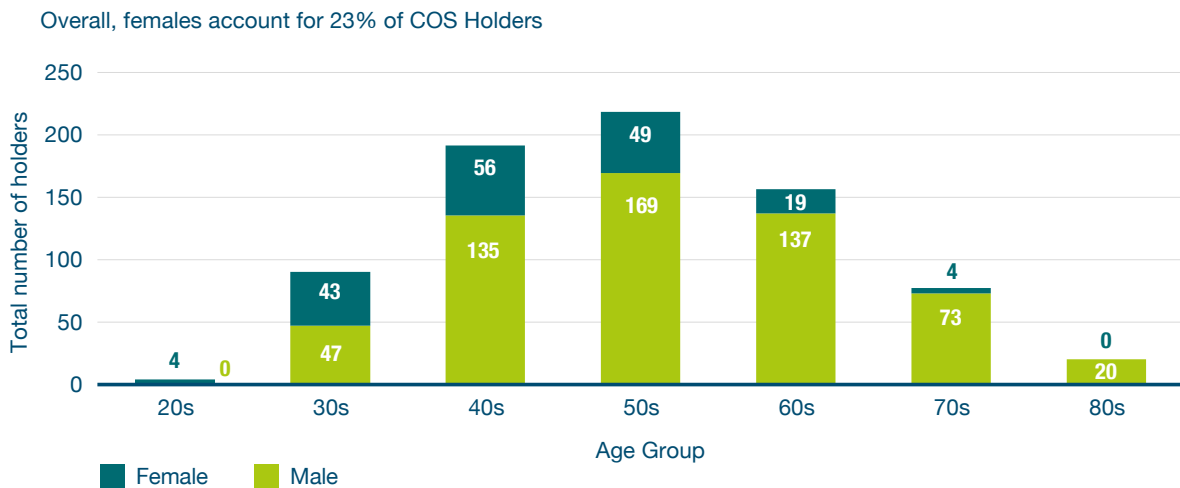


Figure 11 provides more detailed analysis on the change in the age structure of the Register of Veterinary Practitioners from 2021 to 2023.

Figure 12: COS Holder age and gender



A Certificate of Suitability (COS) is the official certificate which confirms that a veterinary practice premises is registered with the VCI. The COS Holder is the registered person to whom the COS is granted. A notable feature of the COS Register is the lower proportion of females who hold the COS certification. Figure 12 shows the breakdown of the COS Holders by gender and age where, males over 50 account for 53% of all COS Holders.

Figure 13: COS holder by type and gender

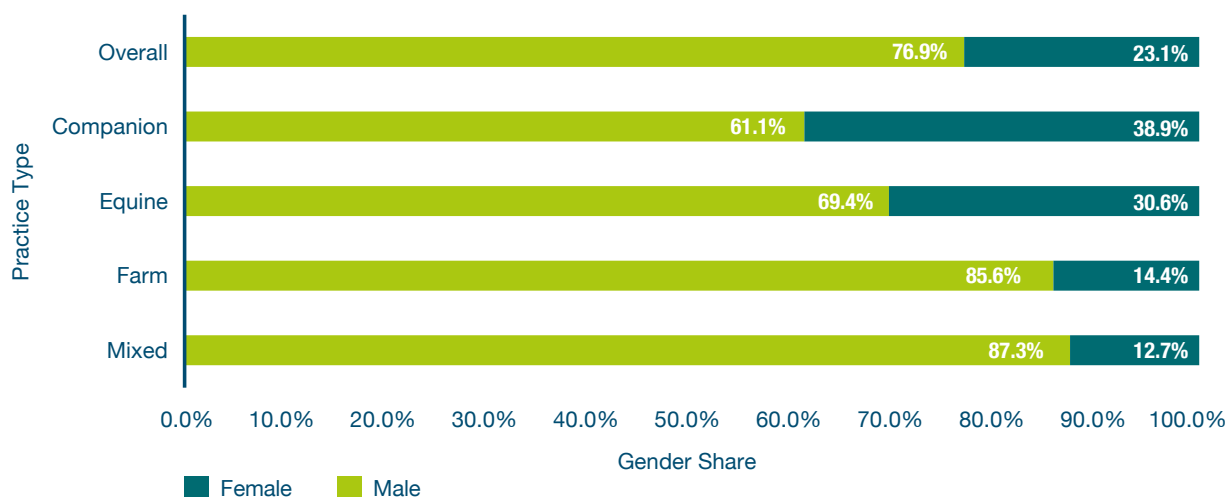


Figure 13 breaks down the different practice types by gender. Overall, 23.1% of COS Holders are female, but this varies across type. Both farm and mixed practice type premises have an exceptionally low share of female participation at 14.4% and 12.7%, respectively.

Figure 14: VP by experience and gender

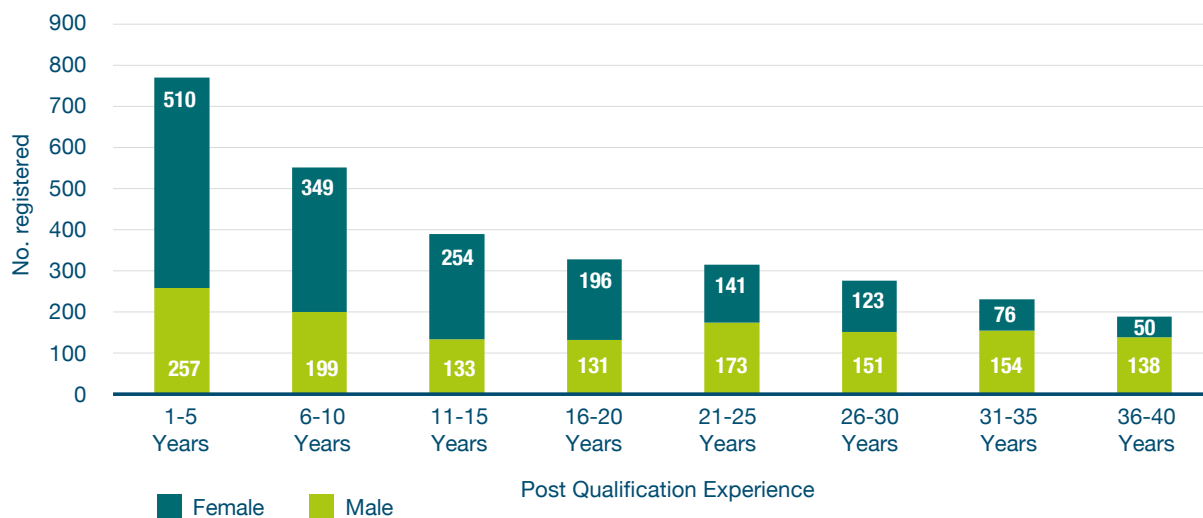


Figure 14 shows the level of experience in the VP register with most vets working ten years or less.

Figure 15: COS practice by size

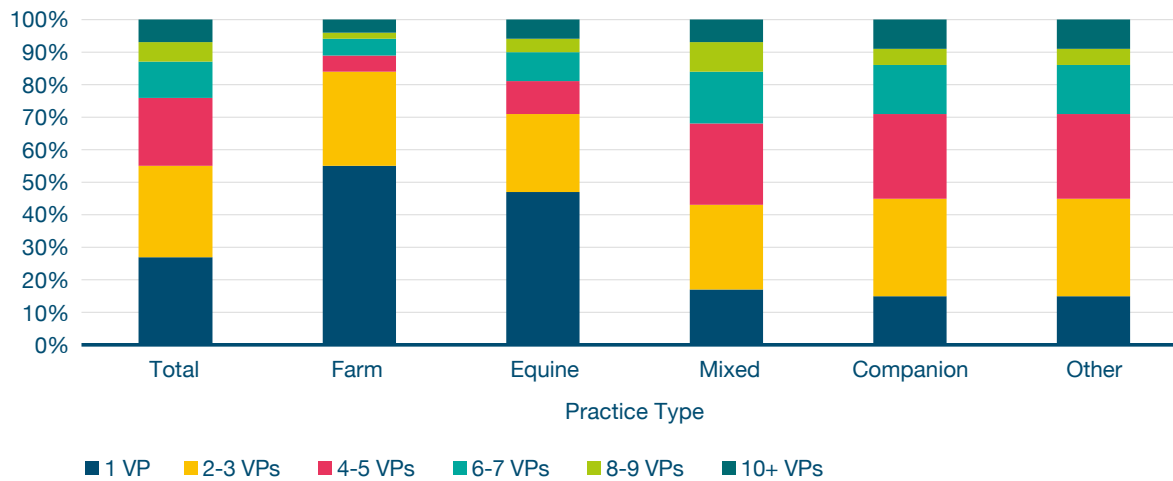


Figure 15 shows the distribution of the size of premises on the COS Register, categorised by practice type. Over half of farm premises operate with only one VP, while overall, almost three quarters of premises have five or less VPs.

Figure 16: Premises with veterinary nurses by type

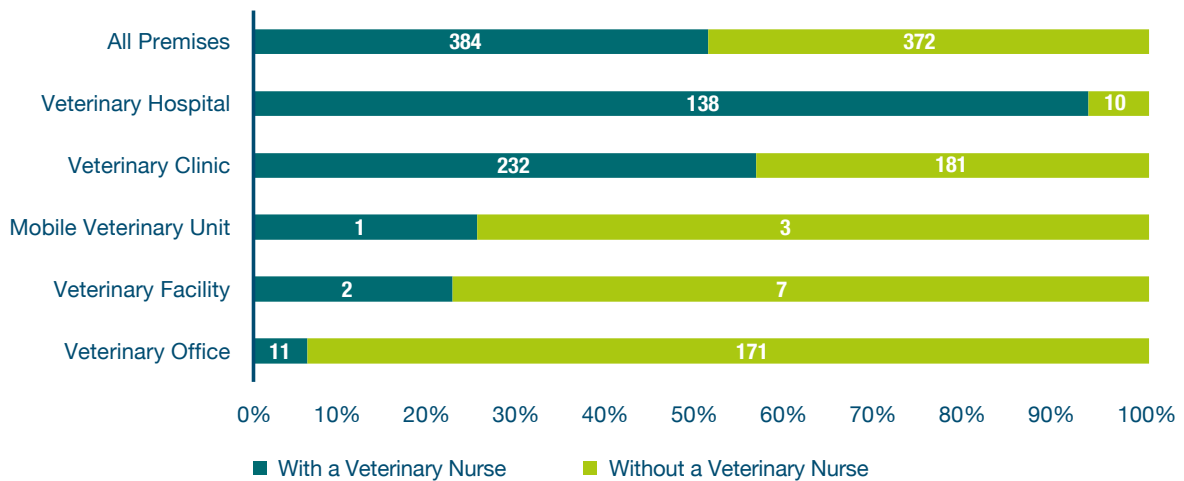


Figure 16 provides detailed information on the type of premises and the proportion of those that have a VN working in that area. Half of the premises on the COS Register employ a VN, with the vast majority working in a Registered Veterinary Clinic or Registered Veterinary Hospital.

Figure 17: Place of Graduation 2020-2023

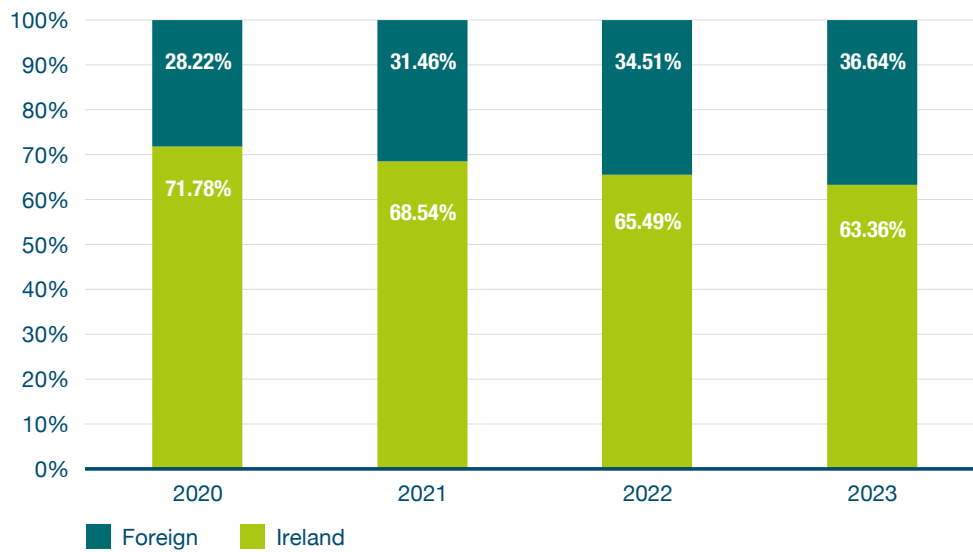


Figure 17 shows the composition of the Register of Veterinary Practitioners each year categorised by the place of graduation. The share of foreign trained VPs has increased from 28.2% to 36.6% from 2020 to 2023.

The following two tables combine information from the COS Register, the VP register and the Irish census from 2016 and 2022 to show a more detailed breakdown of the change in activity between these two points in time. These are important years as we have seen how the register growth accelerated from 2016 onwards and the following tables provide a more granular breakdown on a regional and county level.

Table 1: Practice Activity 2016 and 2022

COS Register 2016				
	Number of Practices			
	Mixed	Companion >90%	Equine >90%	Farm > 90%
National	352	192	66	113
Border	49	5	0	14
Dublin	4	62	1	2
Mideast	47	35	20	8
Midlands	29	8	6	15
Midwest	59	20	15	18
Southeast	40	17	12	13
Southwest	72	31	6	27
West	52	14	6	16

COS Register 2022				
	Number of Practices			
	Mixed	Companion >90%	Equine >90%	Farm > 90%
National	345	227	65	89
Border	48	4	1	10
Dublin	5	72	0	0
Mideast	39	46	20	6
Midlands	30	14	6	11
Midwest	59	23	14	13
Southeast	40	15	11	10
Southwest	69	34	6	26
West	55	19	7	13

Change from 2016-2022				
	Percentage Change 2016-2022			
	Mixed	Companion >90%	Equine >90%	Farm > 90%
National	-2%	+18%	-2%	-21%
Border	-2%	-20%	+100%	-28%
Dublin	+25%	+16%	-100%	-100%
Mideast	-17%	+31%	0%	-25%
Midlands	+3%	+75%	0%	-27%
Midwest	0%	+15%	-7%	-28%
Southeast	0%	-12%	-8%	-23%
Southwest	-4%	+9%	0%	-3%
West	+5%	+35%	+17%	-19%

Table 1 takes the share of activity that each practice lists on its COS registration and aggregates this at a national and county level. If a practice lists any of its activities as greater than 90% it is considered to operate within that service type. Overall, we see a slight decrease in Mixed and Equine practices, but the greatest movement has been in Companion services (+18%) and Farm services (-21%). This varies across the country however all regions saw a decrease in farm provision.

Table 2: Change in VP Density 2016 - 2022

VP Register 2016			
	Number of VPS	Population	VP per 1,000 population
Total	2,537	4,761,865	0.53
Border	213	394,333	0.54
Dublin	298	1,347,359	0.22
Mideast	379	688,857	0.55
Midlands	184	292,301	0.63
Midwest	389	473,269	0.82
Southeast	256	422,062	0.61
Southwest	396	690,575	0.57
West	297	453,109	0.66

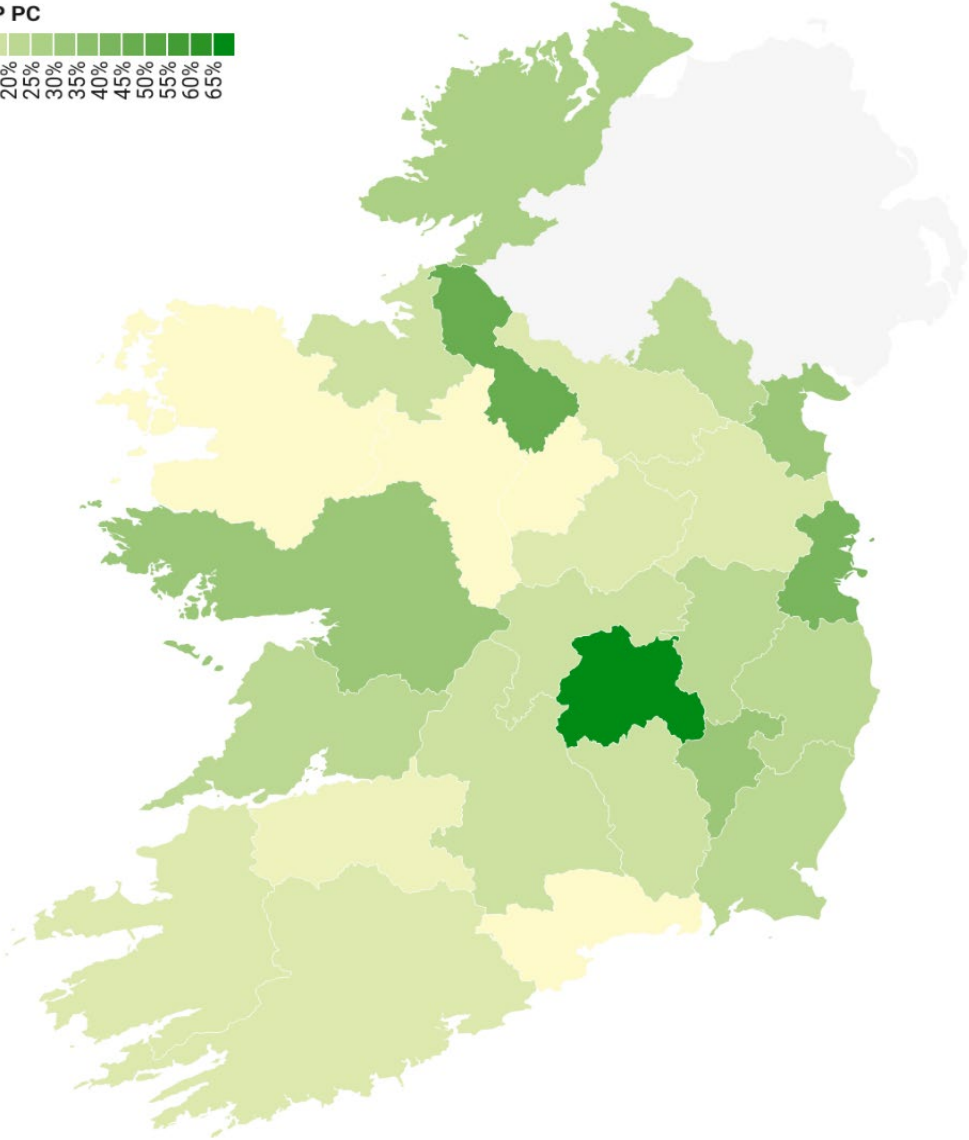
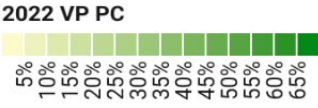
VP Register 2022			
	Number of VPS	Population	VP per 1,000 population
Total	3,398	5,149,139	0.66
Border	279	419,473	0.67
Dublin	461	1,458,154	0.32
Mideast	508	764,154	0.66
Midlands	244	317,999	0.77
Midwest	472	505,369	0.93
Southeast	321	457,410	0.70
Southwest	475	740,614	0.64
West	366	485,966	0.75

Percentage Change 2016-2022			
	Number of VPS	Population	VP per 1,000 population
Total	33.9%	8.1%	23.9%
Border	31.0%	6.4%	23.1%
Dublin	54.7%	8.2%	42.9%
Mideast	34.0%	10.9%	20.8%
Midlands	32.6%	8.8%	21.9%
Midwest	21.3%	6.8%	13.6%
Southeast	25.4%	8.4%	15.7%
Southwest	19.9%	7.2%	11.8%
West	23.2%	7.3%	14.9%

Table 2 shows the density of service provision across the country. There was an increase of 33.9% in the number of VPs, an 8.1% increase in the population, with a resulting 23.9% increase in the density of service provision. We need to be mindful of the level of agricultural demand in the different counties as the population density is likely to be more correlated with companion service demand. Nevertheless, in Dublin where companion services are the main activity, the density increased by 42.9% from 0.22 per thousand population to 0.33.

Figure 18: Map of change in VP density 2016-2022

Change in VP Density 2016-2022

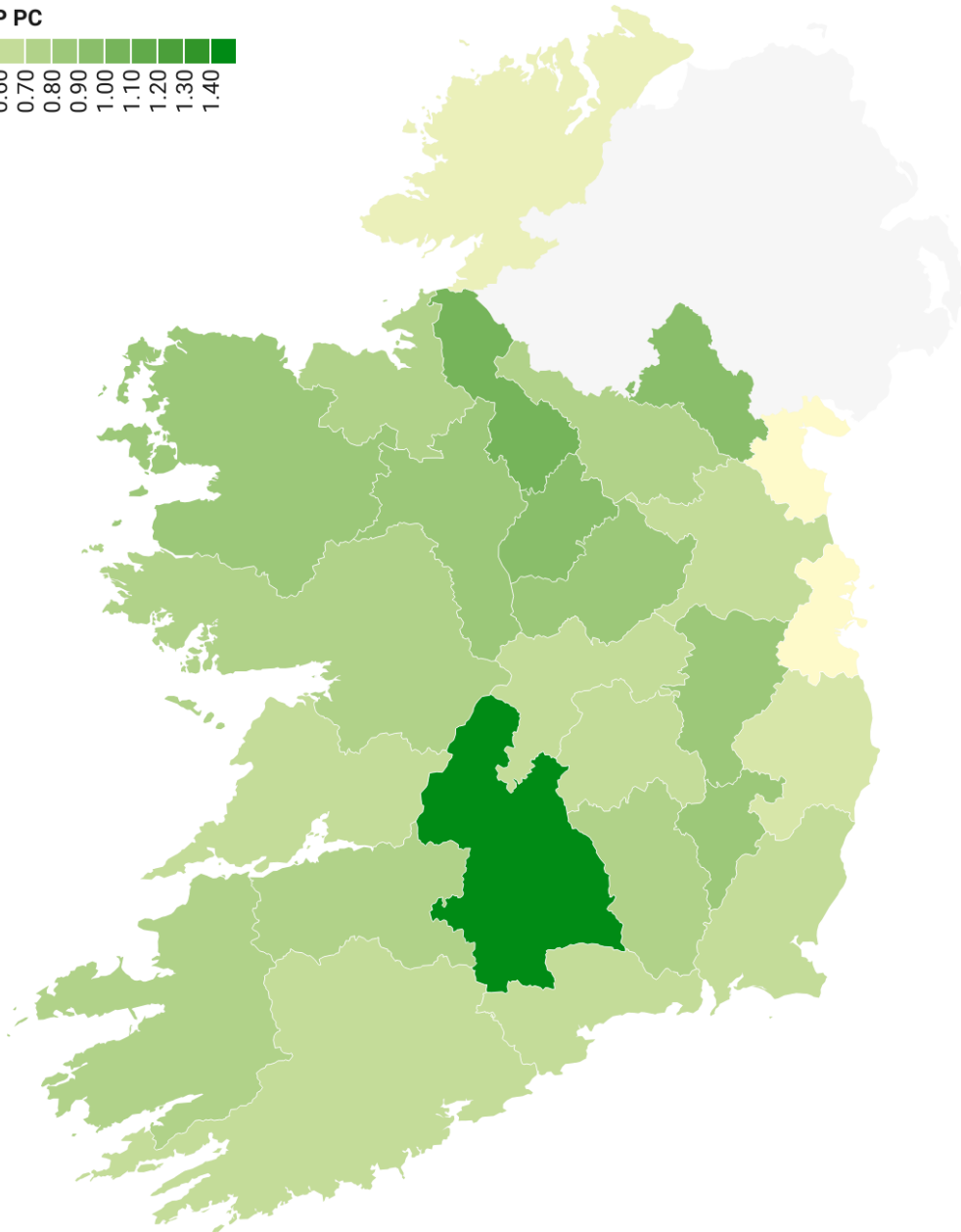
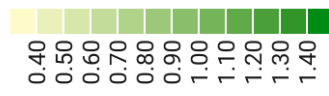


Map: Niall Devitt • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 19: Map of VP density 2022

Veterinary Practitioners per 1000 Population - 2022

2022 VP PC



Map: Niall Devitt • Created with Datawrapper

Section Two – COS Register Analysis December 2023

Table 3: COS Register December 2023 summary statistics

	Number of practices	Number of VPs in Private Practice	VPs per practice	Number of VNs in Private Practice	VNs per practice
National	756	3,163	4.2	1,273	1.7
Border	77	382	5.0	116	1.5
Dublin	86	627	7.3	374	4.3
Mideast	109	518	4.8	218	2.0
Midlands	61	193	3.2	62	1.0
Midwest	108	437	4.0	140	1.3
Southeast	76	260	3.4	73	1.0
Southwest	134	434	3.2	201	1.5
West	105	312	3.0	89	0.8

As part of the registration process for COS Holders, the practice must list the number of practitioners and nurses that work within the practice. In December 2023 there were 756 registered practices, with 3,163 VPs and 1,273 VNs listed as working across these practices. Nationally, each practice had an average of 4.2 VPs and 1.7 VNs but this varied across the country with much larger practices in Dublin and much smaller practices in the West. Appendix A summarises the information on a county level.

Table 4: VPs by type of activity

	Total VPs	Companion VPs	Equine VPs	Farm VPs	TVI/LVI VPs	Other VPs
National	3,163	1,669.1 (53%)	382.1 (12%)	965.2 (31%)	86.2 (3%)	60.5 (2%)
Border	382	152.2 (40%)	15.5 (4%)	195.1 (51%)	7.7 (2%)	11.5 (3%)
Dublin	627	557.4 (89%)	28.5 (5%)	14.4 (2%)	0.0 (0%)	26.7 (4%)
Mideast	518	274.7 (53%)	130.0 (25%)	96.7 (19%)	10.8 (2%)	5.8 (1%)
Midlands	193	74.1 (38%)	22.6 (12%)	87.2 (45%)	8.9 (5%)	0.3 (0%)
Midwest	437	161.8 (37%)	84.3 (19%)	170.0 (39%)	14.8 (3%)	6.1 (1%)
Southeast	260	110.5 (43%)	38.9 (15%)	94.8 (36%)	15.7 (6%)	0.1 (0%)
Southwest	434	202.4 (47%)	36.5 (8%)	182.8 (42%)	10.7 (2%)	1.6 (0%)
West	312	135.9 (44%)	25.8 (8%)	124.2 (40%)	17.7 (6%)	8.4 (3%)

Table 5 combines information on the share of activity that each practice engages in, along with the number of VPs in the practice to estimate the number of VPs that work in each sector in each region. For example, if a practice lists the number of vets as four, and its share of activity is equally split between farming and companion services, two vets are assigned to Farm VPs and two to Companion VPs. Nationally 53% of VPs work in companion services, 12% in equine services and 31% in farm services. The greatest reliance on equine services is in the Mideast with 25% of VPs working in this sector, while 51% of VPs in the Border region work in farming. The Dublin market is overwhelmingly dominated by companion animal services with 89% of the total workforce.

The information on the type and share of activity has only been captured recently but it will be a key variable to be analysed going forward and should be captured at each registration. The information is summarised at a county level in appendix B.

Figures 20, 21 and 22 summarise the above information.

Figure 20: VP by share of activity

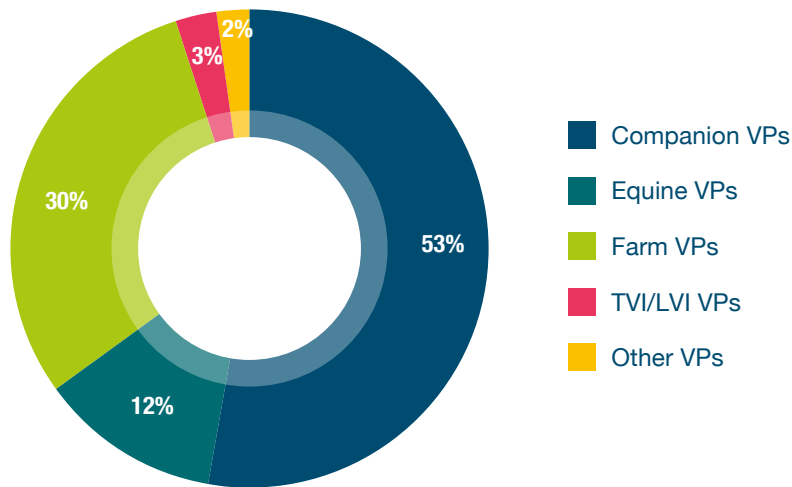


Figure 21: VP by type and region

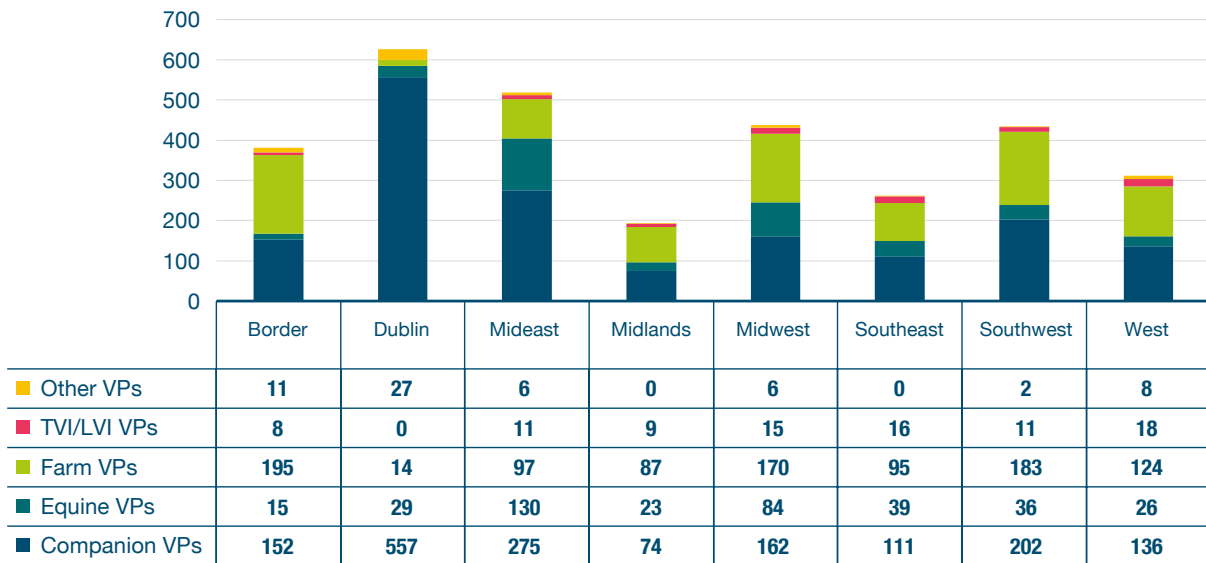


Figure 22: VP share of activity by region

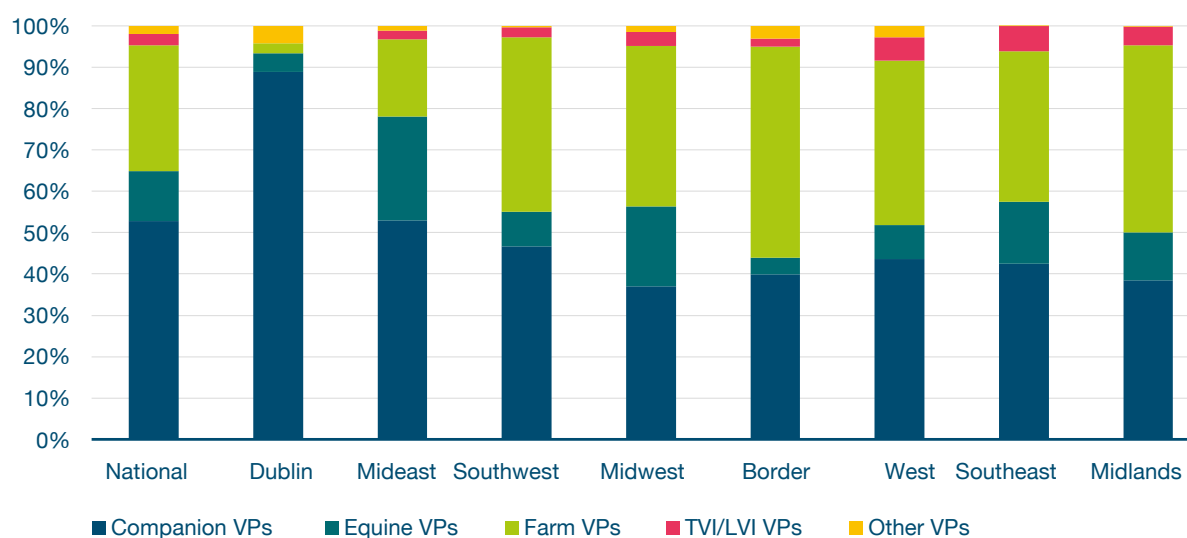


Table 5: VP Density (per COS register)

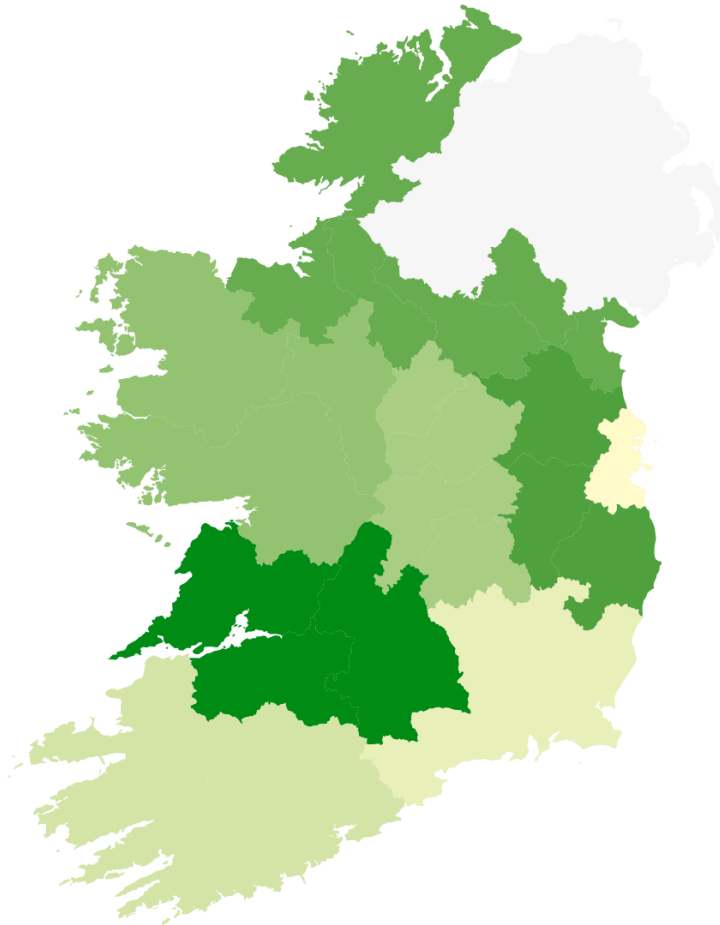
	Number of VPs	Population	VPs per 1000 population
National	3,163	5,149,139	0.61
Border	382	559,176	0.68
Dublin	627	1,458,154	0.43
Mideast	518	624,451	0.83
Midlands	193	317,999	0.61
Midwest	437	505,369	0.86
Southeast	260	457,410	0.57
Southwest	434	740,614	0.59
West	312	485,966	0.64

The density of the provision of veterinary services is typically calculated as the number of VPs per thousand population. Using the census population figures from 2022 along with the number of VPs working in each region as specified in the COS Register, Table 5 presents the density of service provision nationally and regionally. Dublin has the lowest density at 0.43 with the Mideast having twice as many VPs at 0.86.

Figure 23 presents the density on a regional basis, while Appendix C also includes county level information.

Figure 23: Regional Map of VP Density

Veterinary Practitioners (per 1000 Population)



Created with Datawrapper

Table 6: Gender Analysis COS Register

	Female VPs	Male VPs	Female COS Holders	Male COS Holders	Female Share VPs	Female share COS Holders
National	1,625	1,538	176	580	51.4%	23.3%
Border	186	196	17	60	48.7%	22.1%
Dublin	413	214	27	59	65.9%	31.4%
Mideast	305	213	36	73	58.9%	33.0%
Midlands	90	103	14	47	46.6%	23.0%
Midwest	196	241	27	81	44.9%	25.0%
Southeast	118	142	12	64	45.4%	15.8%
Southwest	169	265	23	111	38.9%	17.2%
West	148	164	20	85	47.4%	19.0%

Each registered premises specifies the number of male and female VPs working within the practice, and also the gender of the COS Holder. Table 6 summarises the register information into both the number and share of female and male VPs and COS Holders. Notably, over half of VPs in private practice are female yet less than a quarter are the registered COS Holder.

Figure 24 shows the variation in the share of VPs in private practice and COS Holders nationally and regionally.

Figure 24: Female VPs and COS Holders

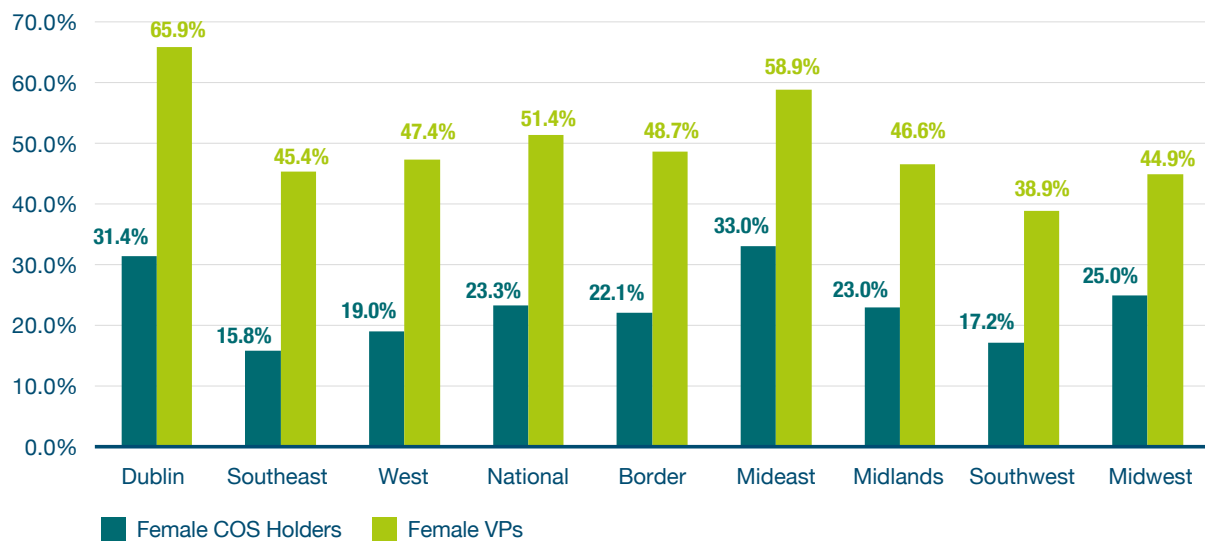


Table 7: COS Holder by Age and Region

	20's	30's	40's	50's	60's	70's	80's
National	4	90	191	218	157	76	20
Border	0	9	15	26	18	9	0
Dublin	2	10	28	21	23	1	1
Mideast	1	17	22	33	26	6	4
Midlands	1	10	16	15	7	8	4
Midwest	0	12	32	27	19	11	7
Southeast	0	3	24	27	11	9	2
Southwest	0	19	25	40	30	19	1
West	0	10	29	29	23	13	1

Table 7 presents the age profile of the COS Holders in the different regions while figures 25, 26 and 27 display the same information in separate ways. Even though most of the registered VPs are less than fifty, the majority of COS Holders are older than fifty. Figure 25 shows that those in their 40s, 50s and 60s hold most of the COS.

Figure 25: Age Share of COS Holders

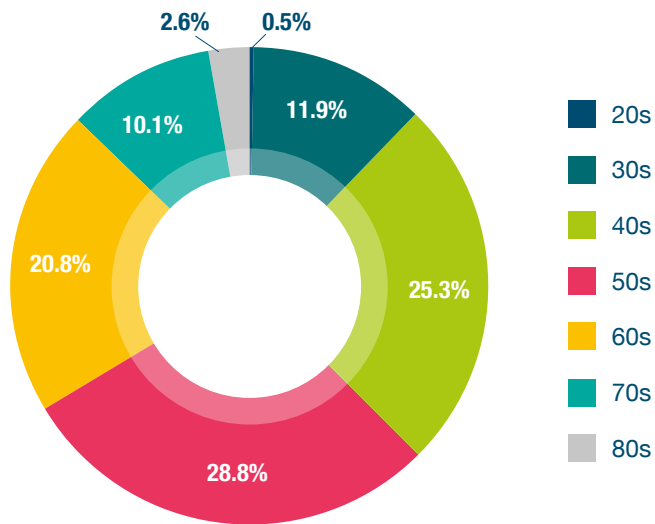


Figure 26: COS Holder age share by region

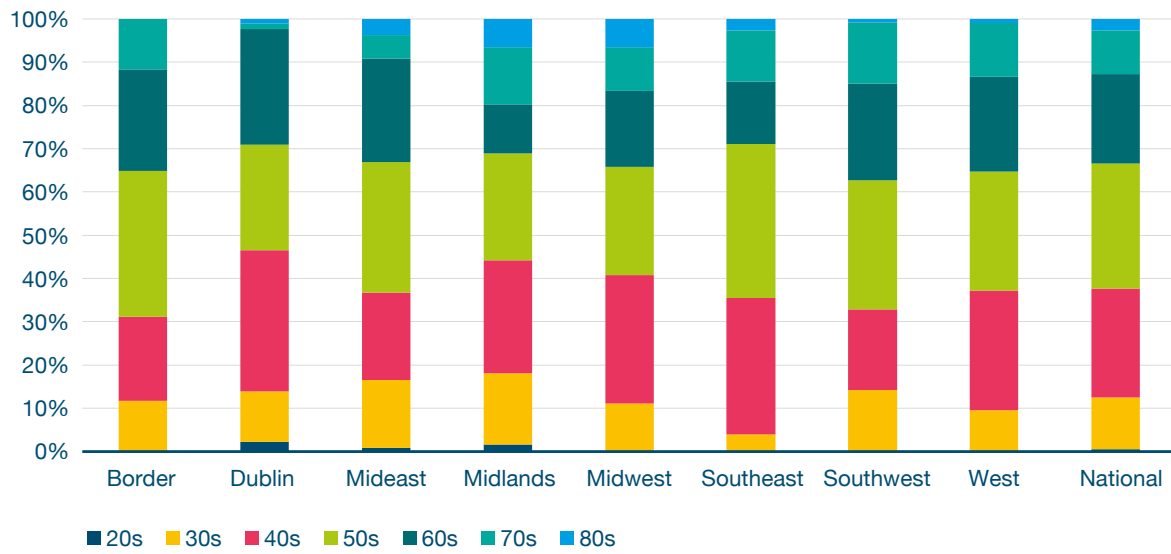


Figure 27: COS Holder by age and region

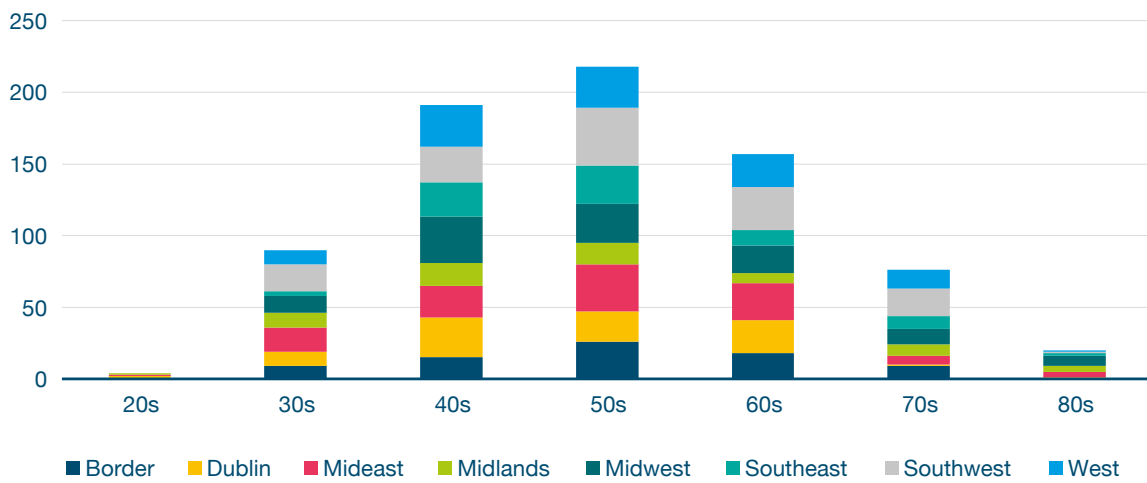


Table 8: Practices by Activity December 2023

	Number of Practices	Mixed Practice	Companion >90%	Farm >90%	Equine >90%	TVI/LVI >90%	Other >90%
National	756	342	238	89	69	3	15
Border	77	50	11	12	1	0	3
Dublin	86	4	77	0	1	0	4
Mideast	109	32	44	8	23	0	2
Midlands	61	30	14	11	6	0	0
Midwest	108	60	22	11	14	0	1
Southeast	76	38	15	11	11	1	0
Southwest	134	68	34	26	6	0	0
West	105	60	21	10	7	2	5

Table 8 summarises the number of practices that specialise in each service area. If a practice lists its activity as 90% or more in one service area it is considered to be operating solely in that area. For example, if a practice has 90% companion work and 10% farm work it will be categorised as a companion practice. Figure 28 shows the national share where 48% of all activity takes places in mixed practices, 30% in companion practices, 11% in farm practices and 9% in equine services.

Figure 28: Practices by type of activity

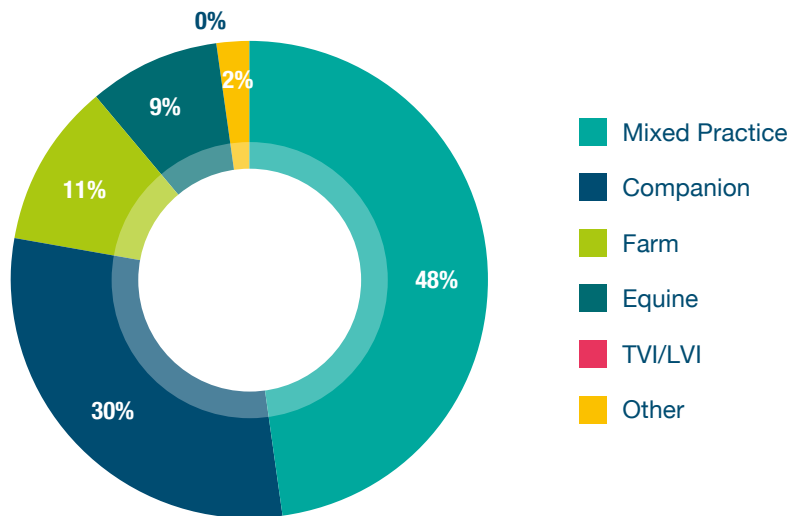


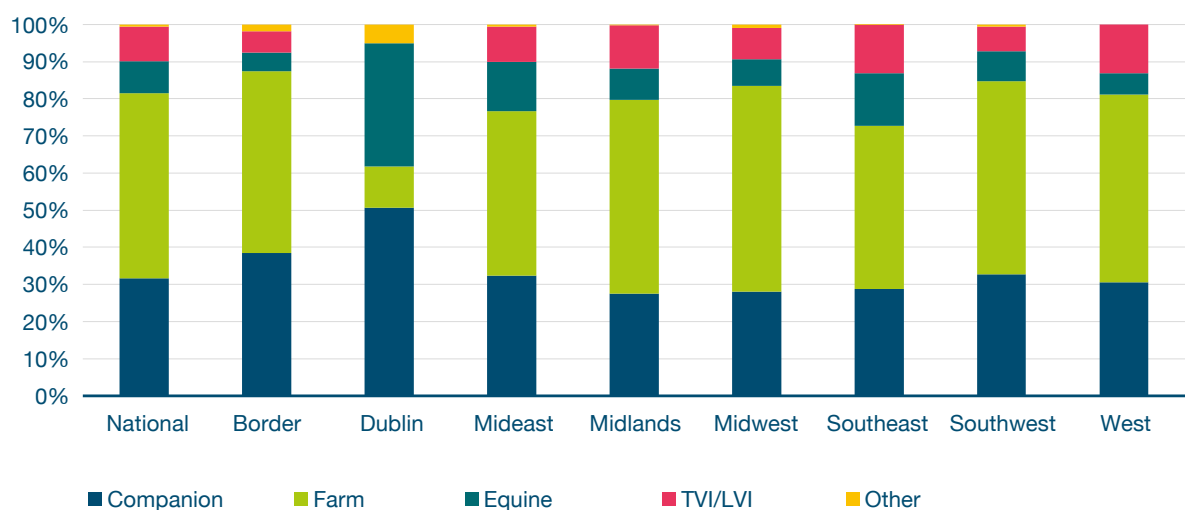
Table 9: Activity of Mixed Practices

	Number of Mixed Practices	Companion %	Farm %	Equine %	TVI/LVI %	Other %
National	342	31.7%	49.8%	8.5%	9.3%	0.6%
Border	50	38.4%	49.0%	5.0%	5.8%	1.8%
Dublin	4	50.8%	11.0%	33.3%	0.0%	5.0%
Mideast	32	32.4%	44.2%	13.4%	9.5%	0.5%
Midlands	30	27.5%	52.3%	8.4%	11.6%	0.2%
Midwest	60	28.0%	55.4%	7.2%	8.5%	0.9%
Southeast	38	28.9%	43.9%	14.1%	13.1%	0.1%
Southwest	68	32.8%	52.0%	8.1%	6.7%	0.5%
West	60	30.5%	50.7%	5.7%	13.1%	0.0%

As Mixed Practices constitute a large share of overall activity, Table 9 further breaks down the types of activities that take place within this sector. Interestingly, of the 342 practices 49.8% of their business is in farm services, 31.7% in companion services and 8.5% equine.

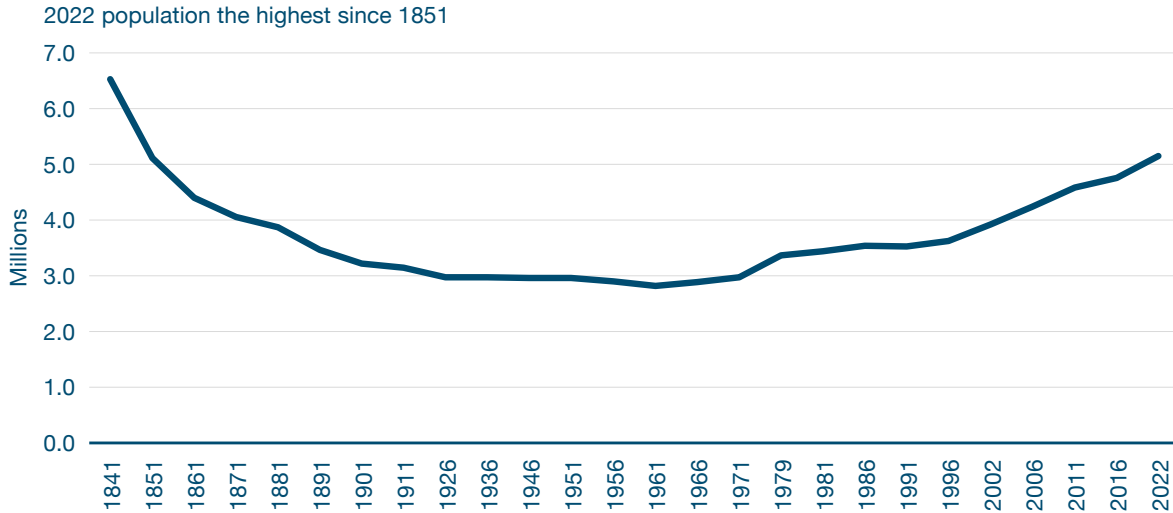
Figure 29 visually presents the information in Table 9.

Figure 29: Share of Activity of Mixed Practices



Section Three – Market Conditions and Projections

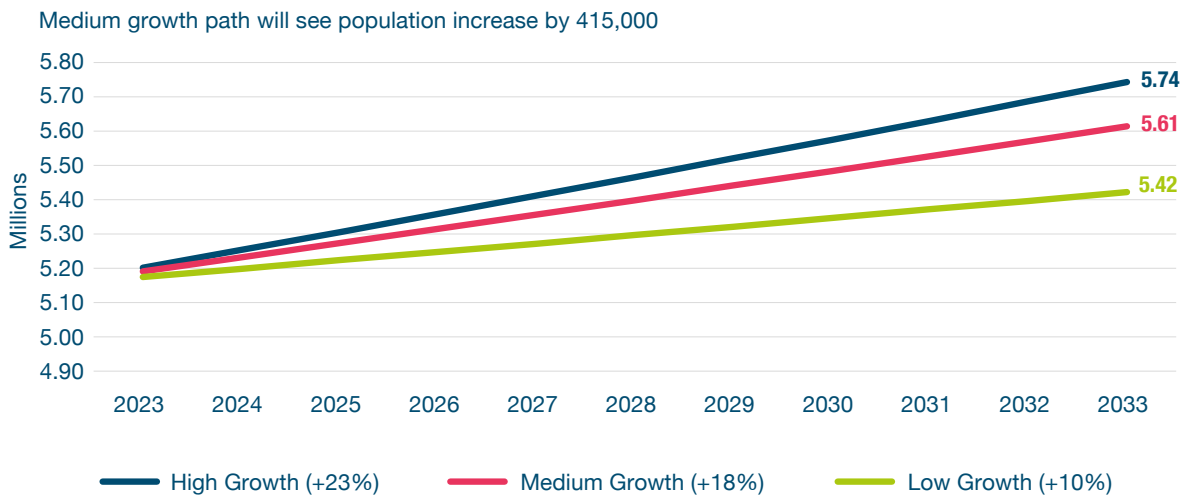
Figure 30: Irish population 1841-2022



(Source: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-plfp/populationandlabourforceprojections2023-2057/introductionandsummaryofassumptions/>)

A major component of the demand for veterinary services is the population of the economy. Ireland has experienced consistent population growth since the 1970s, with accelerated increases in recent years, which places pressures on the capacity of the veterinary care market.

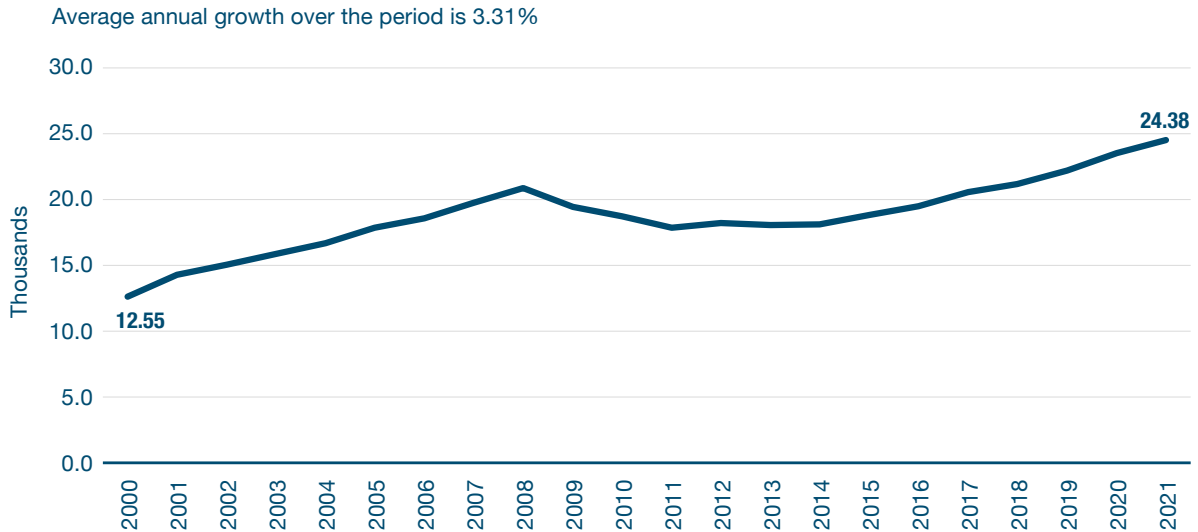
Figure 31: Population projections 2023-2033



(Source: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-plfp/populationandlabourforceprojections2023-2057/introductionandsummaryofassumptions/>)

Using the 2016 census, the Central Statistics Office uses six different development paths for the Irish economy to make predictions on the future population, with all indicating an increase in the total population. The graph above shows the three scenarios which represent the greatest increase in total population (M1F1), the lowest increase in population (M3F2), and a mid-range growth path (M2F1). To update the data with the most recent census figures in 2022, the forward projection of the population takes the compound annual growth rates from the three scenarios and projects these from the 2022 census population figure.

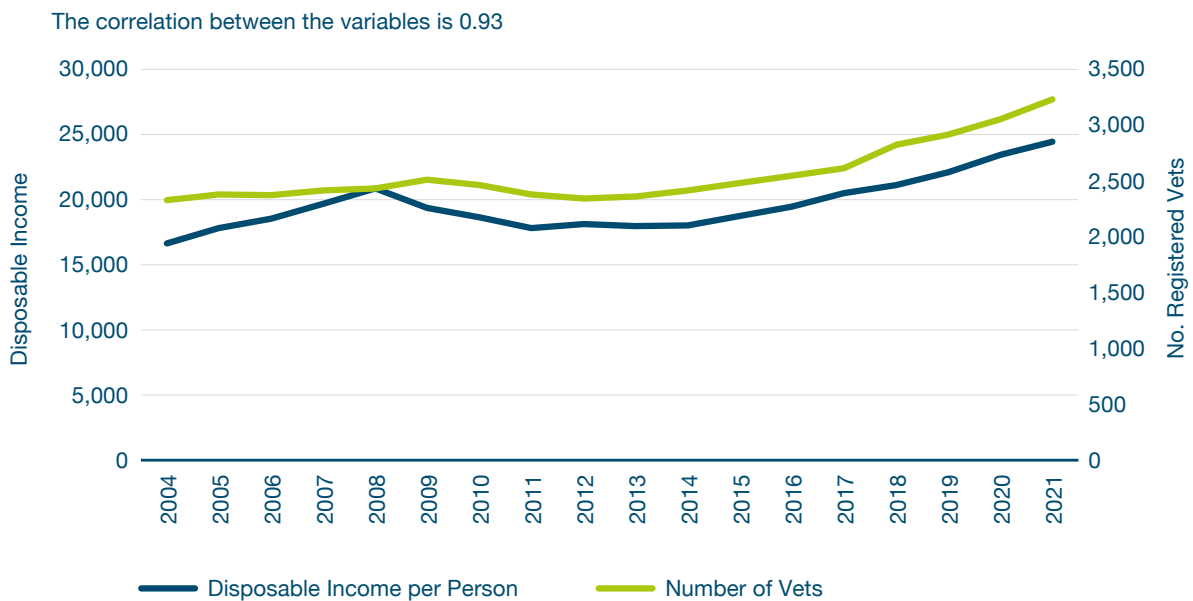
Figure 32: Disposable income 2000-2021



(Source: CSO Statbank Series RAA02 – Estimates of Household Income <https://data.cso.ie/>)

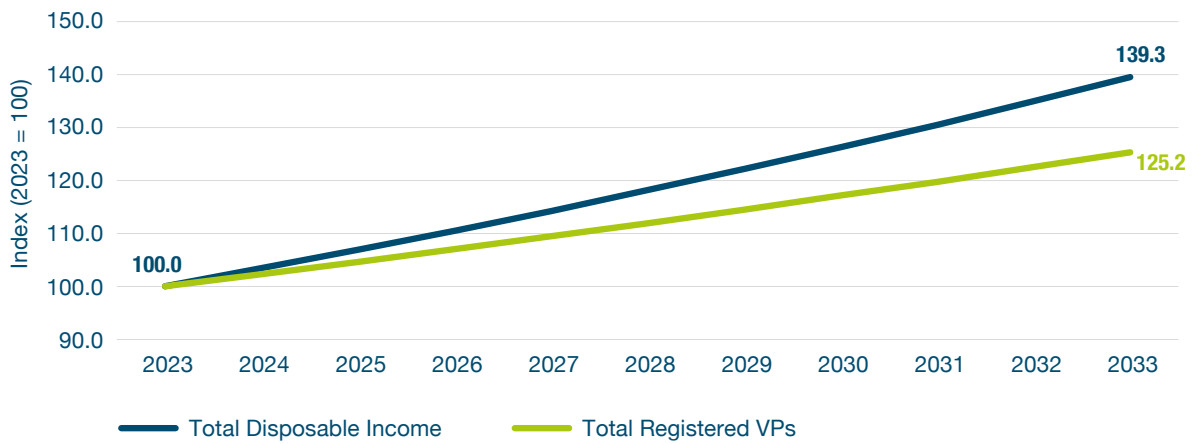
A commonly accepted measure of the demand for veterinary services, and specifically companion animal services, is the level of disposable income in the economy. Since the Celtic Tiger years of the 1990's, disposable income per capita has consistently increased with the trend expected to continue into future years.

Figure 33: Income and VPs 2004-2021



One notable feature of the data is the economic cyclicality of both disposable income and the number of Registered Veterinary Practitioners. When these are plotted together it is apparent that there is a high correlation between the two. This is in concurrence with the literature and shows how strong the relationship is in determining activity. Moreover, it points to a market which is especially dependent on economic conditions which may require government support in times of distress.

Figure 34: Projected Market Conditions 2023-2033



The long-run growth rate in the number of Registered Veterinary Practitioners from 2004-2023 has been 2.27%, with even greater increases noted in the most recent years. This long-run growth rate is assumed to continue from 2023 to 2033 which results in an overall growth of 25.2% in the registered numbers. Likewise, disposable income is assumed to follow its own long-run path over the preceding twenty years and grow by 3.37% resulting in a 39.3% overall increase. If VP growth rates slow down and the Brexit boom in supply is short-lived, the shortfall in VP numbers may be greater than above. If we estimate the growth rate in the Register before 2018 it only averages 0.91% i.e. from 2004-2017.

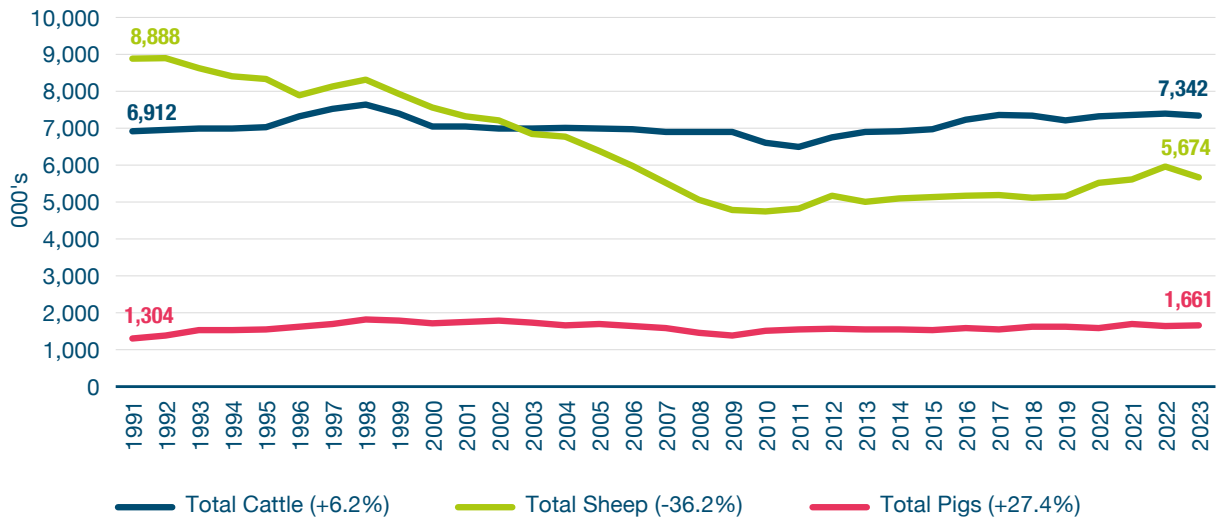
Table 10: Projected supply and demand 2023-2033

Projected Veterinary Market Conditions			
Number of Veterinary Practitioners	Demand Growth (3.37%)	Supply Growth (2.27%)	Veterinary Practitioner Shortage
2023	3,534	3,534	-
2025	3,776	3,696	100
2027	4,035	3,865	170
2029	4,311	4,043	268
2031	4,607	4,229	378
2033	4,922	4,423	499

Using the projected growth in disposable income per capita and veterinary supply, it is possible to estimate the absolute number of veterinary practitioners which are required in the market each year. Within five years, there will be a shortage of 217 vets with this increasing to 499 by 2033. If a lower supply growth rate of 0.91% is assumed, the shortfall could amount to 1,026 VPs.

Figure 35: Irish livestock numbers 1991-2023

The stock of cattle has remained consistent over the past three decades

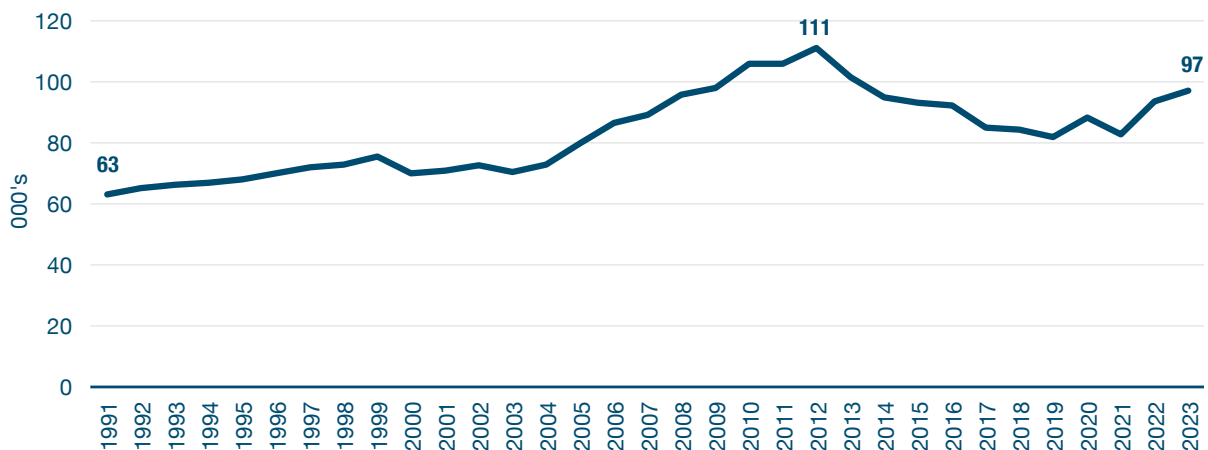


(Source: CSO <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-lsd/livestocksurveydecember2023/>)

The livestock numbers are a strong indicator of the demand for farming veterinary services. Although there has been a notable decrease in sheep numbers and an increase in pig numbers, the national herd of cattle has remained consistent over the past thirty years.

Figure 36: Irish equine numbers 1991-2023

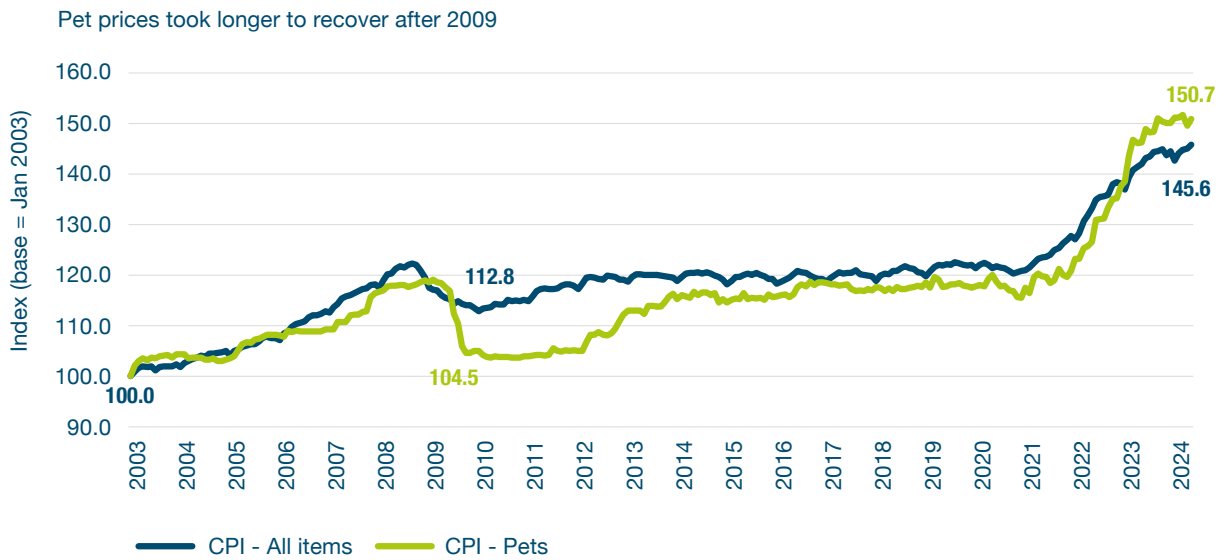
The variance in equine stock is more closely related to economic growth trends



(Source: CSO <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-lsd/livestocksurveydecember2023/>)

The total of the stock of horses and ponies on agricultural holdings has increased from 63,100 in 1991 to 97,100 in 2023.

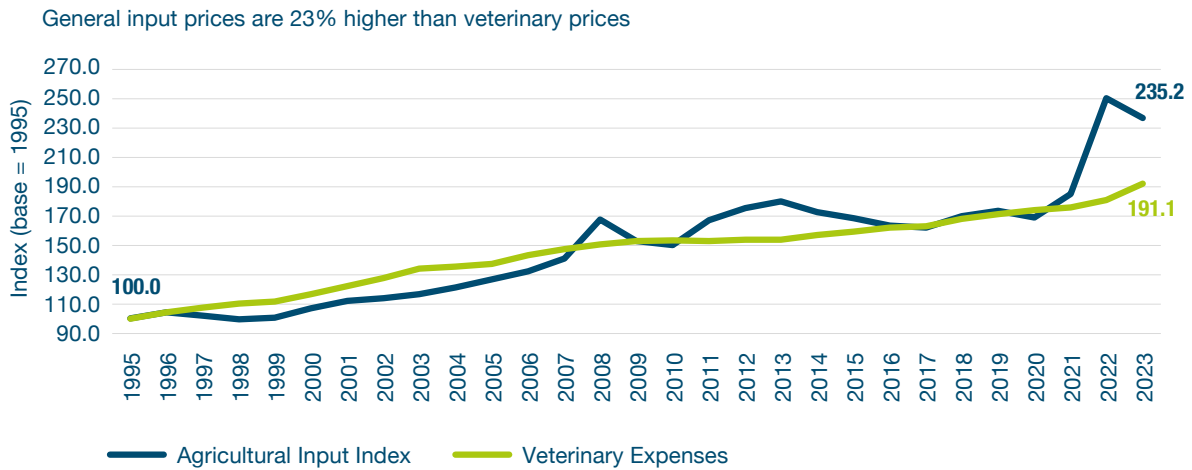
Figure 37: Consumer Price Index 2003-2024



(Source: CSO <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/prices/consumerpriceindex/>)

The price of goods in the market is a reliable indicator of the supply and demand conditions i.e. if prices are rising, it indicates either an increase in the demand for goods, or a fall in supply. The financial crisis had a more pronounced effect on pet prices than those in the general economy with the recovery taking a much longer time period. In the most recent inflationary period since 2021, pet prices have risen by more than those in the general economy.

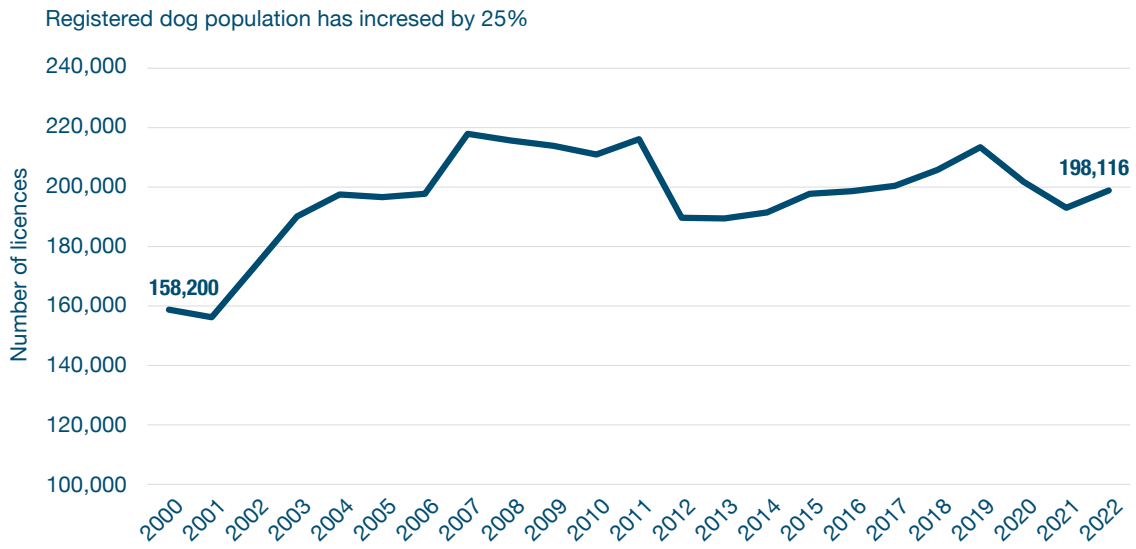
Figure 38: Agricultural Price Index 1995-2023



(Source: CSO <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/agriculture/agriculturalpriceindices/>)

Another measure of farming demand and supply conditions is the agricultural price index. Similar to the CPI it is possible to identify a component that relates to veterinary services. Veterinary Expenses show a more consistent rate of growth that appears less prone to general economic conditions than both the CPI equivalent and the general agricultural input price Index. The notable increase in general prices in 2021 has moderated in 2023 however it is now 23% higher than veterinary expenses. The future path may see further increases in veterinary expenses as it returns to parity with the overall index.

Figure 39: Registered dogs 2000-2022



(Source: <https://assets.gov.ie/266598/aa4a76b2-21ed-4a93-92de-acb159291a1b.pdf>)



Appendices

Appendix A: County Version of “Table 3: COS Register December 2023 summary statistics”

	Number of practices	Number of VPs	VPs per practice	Number of VNs	VNs per practice
National	756	3,163	4.2	1,273	1.7
Carlow	13	41	3.2	11	0.8
Cavan	19	98	5.2	3	0.2
Clare	21	69	3.3	28	1.3
Cork	99	350	3.5	171	1.7
Donegal	19	97	5.1	12	0.6
Dublin	86	627	7.3	374	4.3
Galway	55	193	3.5	65	1.2
Kerry	35	84	2.4	30	0.9
Kildare	46	218	4.7	88	1.9
Kilkenny	23	75	3.3	18	0.8
Laois	19	46	2.4	15	0.8
Leitrim	6	17	2.8	6	1.0
Limerick	39	138	3.5	55	1.4
Longford	8	34	4.3	7	0.9
Louth	8	49	6.1	48	6.0
Mayo	39	85	2.2	21	0.5
Meath	38	191	5.0	74	1.9
Monaghan	14	74	5.3	24	1.7
Offaly	15	51	3.4	20	1.3
Roscommon	11	34	3.1	3	0.3
Sligo	11	47	4.3	23	2.1
Tipperary	48	230	4.8	57	1.2
Waterford	13	51	3.9	17	1.3
Westmeath	19	62	3.3	20	1.1
Wexford	27	93	3.4	27	1.0
Wicklow	25	109	4.4	56	2.2

Appendix B: County Breakdown of “Table 4: VPs by type of activity”

	Total VPs	Companion VPs	Equine VPs	Farm VPs	TVI/LVI VPs	Other VPs
National	3,163	1,669	382	965	86	61
Carlow	41	19	8	13	1	0
Cavan	98	26	3	63	4	2
Clare	69	32	4	32	1	0
Cork	350	167	33	139	9	1
Donegal	97	49	8	39	0	1
Dublin	627	557	29	14	0	27
Galway	193	95	18	70	6	3
Kerry	84	35	4	43	1	0
Kildare	218	96	96	20	3	3
Kilkenny	75	26	12	28	9	0
Laois	46	20	3	21	2	0
Leitrim	17	6	0	10	1	0
Limerick	138	63	18	48	3	6
Longford	34	10	2	21	2	0
Louth	49	34	0	14	0	0
Mayo	85	32	5	35	8	5
Meath	191	110	26	47	5	2
Monaghan	74	15	3	47	2	8
Offaly	51	17	5	26	3	0
Roscommon	34	9	3	18	4	0
Sligo	47	22	2	23	0	0
Tipperary	230	67	63	90	11	0
Waterford	51	26	2	22	0	0
Westmeath	62	27	13	19	3	0
Wexford	93	40	17	31	5	0
Wicklow	109	68	8	29	3	0

Appendix C: County Breakdown of “Table 5: VP Density (per COS register)”

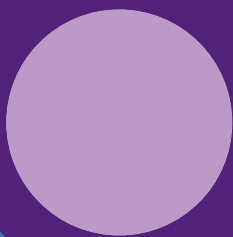
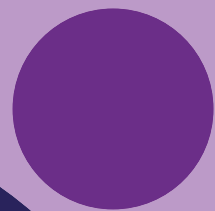
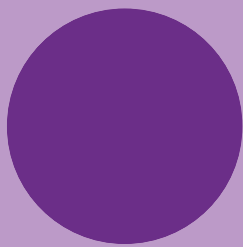
	Number of VPs	Population	VPs per 1,000 population
National	3,163	5,149,139	0.61
Carlow	41	56,932	0.72
Cavan	98	76,176	1.29
Clare	69	118,817	0.58
Cork	350	542,868	0.64
Donegal	97	159,192	0.61
Dublin	627	1,347,359	0.47
Galway	193	258,058	0.75
Kerry	84	147,707	0.57
Kildare	218	222,504	0.98
Kilkenny	75	99,232	0.76
Laois	46	84,697	0.54
Leitrim	17	32,044	0.53
Limerick	138	194,899	0.71
Longford	34	40,873	0.83
Louth	49	128,884	0.38
Mayo	85	130,507	0.65
Meath	191	195,044	0.98
Monaghan	74	61,386	1.21
Offaly	51	77,961	0.65
Roscommon	34	64,544	0.53
Sligo	47	65,535	0.72
Tipperary	230	159,553	1.44
Waterford	51	116,176	0.44
Westmeath	62	88,770	0.70
Wexford	93	149,722	0.62
Wicklow	109	142,425	0.77

Appendix D: County Breakdown of “Table 6: Gender Analysis COS Register”

	Female VPs	Male VPs	Female COS Holder	Male COS Holder	Female Share VPs	Female share COS Holders
National	1,625	1,538	176	580	51.3%	23.3%
Carlow	17	24	0	13	41.5%	0.0%
Cavan	36	62	2	17	36.7%	10.5%
Clare	39	30	7	14	56.5%	33.3%
Cork	143	207	21	78	40.9%	21.2%
Donegal	70	27	7	12	72.2%	36.8%
Dublin	413	214	27	59	65.9%	31.4%
Galway	99	94	10	45	51.3%	18.2%
Kerry	26	58	2	33	31.0%	5.7%
Kildare	140	78	19	27	64.2%	41.3%
Kilkenny	31	44	4	19	41.3%	17.4%
Laois	23	23	7	12	50.0%	36.8%
Leitrim	7	10	1	5	41.2%	16.7%
Limerick	57	81	10	29	41.3%	25.6%
Longford	12	22	1	7	35.3%	12.5%
Louth	27	22	2	6	55.1%	25.0%
Mayo	35	50	9	30	41.2%	23.1%
Meath	104	87	8	30	54.5%	21.1%
Monaghan	21	53	2	12	28.4%	14.3%
Offaly	24	27	2	13	47.1%	13.3%
Roscommon	14	20	1	10	41.2%	9.1%
Sligo	25	22	3	8	53.2%	27.3%
Tipperary	100	130	10	38	43.5%	20.8%
Waterford	26	25	2	11	51.0%	15.4%
Westmeath	31	31	4	15	50.0%	21.1%
Wexford	44	49	6	21	47.3%	22.2%
Wicklow	61	48	9	16	56.0%	36.0%

Appendix 3

**VCI Survey of Veterinary
Practitioners & Veterinary Nurses
Leaving the Registers**



VCI Survey of Veterinary Practitioners & Veterinary Nurses Leaving the Registers

To assist its review, the Workforce Review Working Group identified the need for more information on those removing their name from the Register of Veterinary Practitioners and Register of Veterinary Nurses and whether they intend to return. To gather this information the Workforce Review Working Group determined to commission a survey of those who have voluntarily removed themselves from the Registers over the last five years.

Veterinary Practitioner Responses

The survey issued to 629 veterinary practitioners and had a 16% response rate.

Q1 Please confirm why you voluntarily removed your name from the VCI Register of Veterinary Practitioners:

ANSWER CHOICES (MULTIPLE CHOICE)	RESPONSES
Non-practising role in Republic of Ireland	14%
Practising role in another country	58%
Non-practising role in another country	9%
Personal/family reasons	7%
Retiring from practice	8%
To complete further education	5%
To travel	2%
Occupational injury received while in private practice	1%
Other (please specify)	13%
<i>Summary of Other Comments: maternity leave, health reasons, retirement, unable to secure a work visa, did not enjoy practice in Ireland.</i>	

Q2 Was your voluntary removal from the VCI Register driven by:

ANSWER CHOICES (MULTIPLE CHOICE)	RESPONSES
Personal circumstances	63%
An express wish to leave the veterinary profession	8%
Other (please specify)	35%
<i>Summary of Other Comments: Retirement, visa issues, desire to work abroad, desire to move back to home country to live and work, health reasons, unhappy in veterinary practice in Ireland, cost of living in Ireland, low pay.</i>	

Q3 If you selected “an express wish to leave the veterinary profession”, was this driven by any of the following factors:

ANSWER CHOICES (MULTIPLE CHOICE)	RESPONSES
Pathways to progression	15%
Job satisfaction	27.5%
Work life balance	32.50%
Terms and conditions	5%
Working environment	25%
Health and safety	7.5%
Well being	32.5%
Other (please specify)	52.5%
<i>Summary of Other Comments: Unhappy in the veterinary industry in Ireland, poor remuneration, change in career path.</i>	

Q4 Do you plan to rejoin the VCI Register in the future?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	22%
No	29%
Maybe	49%

Q5 If you answered yes, what area of practice do you plan to work in?

ANSWER CHOICES (MULTIPLE CHOICE)	RESPONSES
Companion Animal	47.27%
Farm Animal	3.64%
Equine	14.55%
Mixed	25.45%
Government/Local Authority	14.55%
Non-Practising Role	16.36%

Q6 If you answered no/maybe, please confirm why:

Summary of Responses to Protect Anonymity:

1. Uncertainty or Reluctance to Return to Ireland:

Many respondents express uncertainty about returning to Ireland, either for work or living purposes.

2. Negative Experiences in Ireland:

A significant number of respondents cite negative work experiences in Ireland, such as poor working conditions, long hours, lack of work-life balance, and toxic environments. Specific references to stress, mental health issues, and negative career starts were mentioned.

3. Better Opportunities Abroad:

Several responses indicate that respondents are currently living or working abroad due to better opportunities (higher salaries, better working conditions, and work-life balance). These respondents express no desire to return to Ireland.

4. Retirement or Career Change:

A number of individuals have either retired or transitioned into different industries outside of veterinary practice, indicating a shift away from Ireland and the veterinary profession.

5. Family and Personal Circumstances:

Family considerations (e.g., living with a family in a different country, partner’s location) factor heavily into decisions not to return to Ireland. Many individuals mention that their family or home base is not in Ireland or that they have no intention of relocating there.

6. Conditions for Returning:

Some respondents are open to returning to Ireland, but only under specific conditions, such as finding a suitable job with the right pay and benefits, or if the housing market becomes more affordable. A few are also considering temporary roles like locum work.

7. Career Progression:

Career progression opportunities are a recurring theme. Some respondents express interest in returning to Ireland if the right role becomes available, while others have no plans to return for work, particularly due to salary concerns or lack of suitable positions.

8. Geographical Factors:

Respondents from outside Ireland mention that they are not currently planning to move back to Ireland, either due to career satisfaction, family reasons, or better working conditions abroad.

Q7 If you answered no/maybe, what factors would make you reconsider rejoining the VCI Register:

ANSWER CHOICES (MULTIPLE CHOICE)	RESPONSES
Change in work life balance	34.15%
Career progression	26.83%
Change in working terms & conditions	24.39%
Pathways to progression	15.85%
Working environment	15.85%
Health and safety	7.32%
Well being supports	18.29%
Other	43.9%
<i>Summary of Other Comments: Better pay, more job opportunities, improvement in sustainability, environmental impact and antimicrobial directives introduced, reduction in cost of housing, changes in out of hours options in rural Ireland, improvements in practice management and practice culture.</i>	

Q8 Please confirm your place of undergraduate study:

45% of respondents listed UCD as their place of study.

Other places of study listed include:

America	France	Portugal
Australia	Germany	Scotland
Austria	Greece	Slovakia
Bulgaria	Hungary	Slovenia
Canada	Italy	South Africa
Denmark	Lithuania	Spain
England	Poland	The Netherlands

Q9 Please confirm your age range:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
20s	23%
30s	42%
40s	12%
50s	7%
60s	11%
70s	5%
80s	0%
90s	0%

Q10 Please confirm your gender:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Female	68%
Male	31%
Other	1%
Prefer not to say	0%

Q11 While registered, what area of practice did you work in:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Private Practice	82%
Government/Local Authority	13%
Non-Practising Role	5%

Q12 If applicable, please confirm what area of private practice you were in:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Companion Animal	45.35%
Farm Animal	10.46%
Equine	12.79%
Mixed	31.40%

Q13 If applicable, please confirm the number of vets where you worked:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
1-3	40.22%
4-6	28.26%
7-10	14.13%
Over 10	17.39%

Q14 If applicable, please confirm the number of veterinary nurses where you worked:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
1-3	50.62%
4-6	24.69%
7-10	16.05%
Over 10	8.64%
<i>11 respondents confirmed there were no veterinary nurses where they worked.</i>	

Veterinary Nurse Responses

The survey issued to 380 veterinary nurses and had a 25% response rate.

Q1 Please confirm why you voluntarily removed your name from the VCI Register of Veterinary Nurses:

ANSWER CHOICES (MULTIPLE CHOICE)	RESPONSES
Non-practising role in Republic of Ireland	36.84%
Practising role in another country	10.53%
Non-practising role in another country	4.21%
Personal/family reasons	10.53%
Retiring from practice	7.37%
To complete further education	6.32%
To travel	4.21%
Occupational injury received while in private practice	0%
Other (please specify)	27.37%
<i>Summary of Other Comments: Poor pay, long hours, burn out and stress, feeling underappreciated, moved abroad for better working conditions, health reasons, career change.</i>	

Q2 Was your voluntary removal from the VCI Register driven by:

ANSWER CHOICES (MULTIPLE CHOICE)	RESPONSES
Personal circumstances	30.53%
An express wish to leave the veterinary profession	49.47%
Other (please specify)	32.63%
<i>Summary of Other Comments: Poor pay and working conditions, moved abroad, physical and mental health reasons, did not want to pay the registration fee while not practising, CVE requirement even when not practising, veterinary nursing not a financially sustainable career in Ireland.</i>	

Q3 If you selected “an express wish to leave the veterinary profession”, was this driven by any of the following factors:

ANSWER CHOICES (MULTIPLE CHOICE)	RESPONSES
Pathways to progression	56.25%
Job satisfaction	47.50%
Work life balance	65%
Terms and conditions	32.50%
Working environment	46.25%
Health and safety	18.75%
Well being	58.75%
Other (please specify)	33.75%
<i>Summary of Other Comments: Lesser skilled jobs offering higher salaries, lack of pension or health benefits, difficult to get mortgage approval with vet nurse salary, lack of respect for nurses in practice, veterinary nursing skills not being utilised by employers, better work life balance and working environment in non-practising roles, no real career progression opportunities.</i>	

Q4 Do you plan to rejoin the VCI Register in the future?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	12.63%
No	52.63%
Maybe	34.74%

Q5 If you answered yes, what area of practice do you plan to work in?

ANSWER CHOICES (MULTIPLE CHOICE)	RESPONSES
Companion Animal	50%
Farm Animal	10.71%
Equine	10.71%
Mixed	21.43%
Government/Local Authority	12.50%
Non-Practising Role	42.86%

Q6 If you answered no/maybe, please confirm why:**Summary of Responses to Protect Anonymity:****1. Poor Pay and Working Conditions:**

The most frequent reason for not returning to veterinary nursing in Ireland is low pay. Many respondents express frustration with the lack of a liveable wage and inadequate compensation for the long hours and stressful conditions. This issue was consistently mentioned across multiple responses.

2. Burnout, Stress, and Physical Injury:

Respondents frequently mention burnout, stress, and physical injuries (such as back or neck problems) resulting from the job. These factors contribute to the decision to leave the profession or seek alternative careers. The high stress of the job, combined with lack of work-life balance and the inability to “switch off” after work, is a major concern.

3. Lack of Support and Respect:

Lack of respect from employers and colleagues is another consistent theme. Respondents feel that veterinary nurses do not receive the recognition they deserve for their hard work. Many cite poor support from employers and disrespectful attitudes from clients and other staff, which leads to dissatisfaction.

4. Desire for Career Change:

A significant number of respondents mention that they have either already changed careers or are considering it. Many have transitioned to roles in other healthcare fields or into completely different industries. The lack of career progression and limited opportunities for growth in the veterinary field are highlighted as contributing factors to these career changes.

5. Desire for Better Work-Life Balance:

Respondents emphasise the importance of work-life balance. Many of them are currently in jobs that offer better hours, reduced stress, and improved conditions compared to veterinary nursing. Better pay, pension benefits, and more reasonable work hours (e.g., 9-to-5 jobs) are often cited as key factors in their career transition.

6. Frustration with Lack of Reform:

Many respondents believe that wages, job recognition, and working conditions have not improved over time. Respondents express the belief that significant change is needed, such as better pay structures, workplace reforms, and enforcement of laws around animal welfare to improve the profession.

7. Uncertainty About Returning to Ireland:

Many respondents are unsure about returning to Ireland to work in veterinary nursing, with some expressing a desire to return if conditions improve. However, most indicate that they would only consider returning if the profession offered better wages, recognition, and work-life balance.

Q7 If you answered no/maybe, what factors would make you reconsider rejoining the VCI Register:

ANSWER CHOICES (MULTIPLE CHOICE)	RESPONSES
Change in work life balance	57.65%
Career progression	52.94%
Change in working terms & conditions	55.29%
Pathways to progression	40%
Working environment	38.82%
Health and safety	18.82%
Well being supports	37.65%
Other	50.59%
<i>Summary of Other Comments: Better pay, a proper pay scale for the profession, unionisation, enforcement of animal cruelty laws.</i>	

Q8 Please confirm your place of undergraduate study:

92.7% of respondents listed an Irish veterinary nursing course as their place of study.

Other places of study listed included:

Australia

England

Slovakia

Q9 Please confirm your age range:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
20s	34.74%
30s	49.47%
40s	8.42%
50s	2.11%
60s	3.16%
70s	2.10%
80s	0%
90s	0%

Q10 Please confirm your gender:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Female	95.79%
Male	3.16%
Other	0%
Prefer not to say	1.05%

Q11 While registered, what area of practice did you work in:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Private Practice	94.74%
Government/Local Authority	2.11%
Non-Practising Role	3.15%

Q12 If applicable, please confirm what area of private practice you were in:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Companion Animal	58.70%
Farm Animal	2.17%
Equine	4.35%
Mixed	34.78%

Q13 If applicable, please confirm the number of vets where you worked:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
1-3	37.64%
4-6	49.46%
7-10	10.75%
Over 10	2.15%

Q14 If applicable, please confirm the number of veterinary nurses where you worked:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
1-3	44.08%
4-6	46.24%
7-10	5.38%
Over 10	4.3%



Veterinary Council of Ireland

Email: info@vci.ie
Website: www.vci.ie
Telephone: 01 668 4402
Address: Veterinary Council of Ireland,
53 Lansdowne Road, Ballsbridge,
Dublin 4 D04 NY29.

© 2024 Veterinary Council of Ireland

The text of this document may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing it is reproduced accurately and not in a misleading context.

The material must be acknowledged as VCI copyright and the document title specified. The VCI is under the aegis of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

