



# Ohio Veterinary Medical Association

Technician Task Force – Survey Results and Analysis  
October 2021

## Summary

Throughout the month of September 2021, the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA) distributed two surveys created by the *Technician Recruitment and Retention Task Force* (hereafter referred to in this document as the “Task Force”), chaired by Dr. Diana Cron. The purpose of the Task Force is to discuss the issues surrounding the industry-wide shortage of registered veterinary technicians. The Task Force created and distributed two surveys: one to be completed by Doctors of Veterinary Medicine (DVMs), and the other for Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs). This document will present the data collected from each survey, beginning with the survey for DVMs.

## Table of Contents

- **DVM Survey Results - Page 2**
  - General Practice Questions
  - Hiring, Retention, and Advancement Opportunities
  - Employment Benefits and Other Related Topics
  - Demographical Data
  
- **RVT Survey Results - Page 14**
  - General Profession and Current Employer Questions
  - Overall Job Satisfaction and Other Related Topics
  - Demographical Data
  
- **Comparison of Survey Results - Page 26**

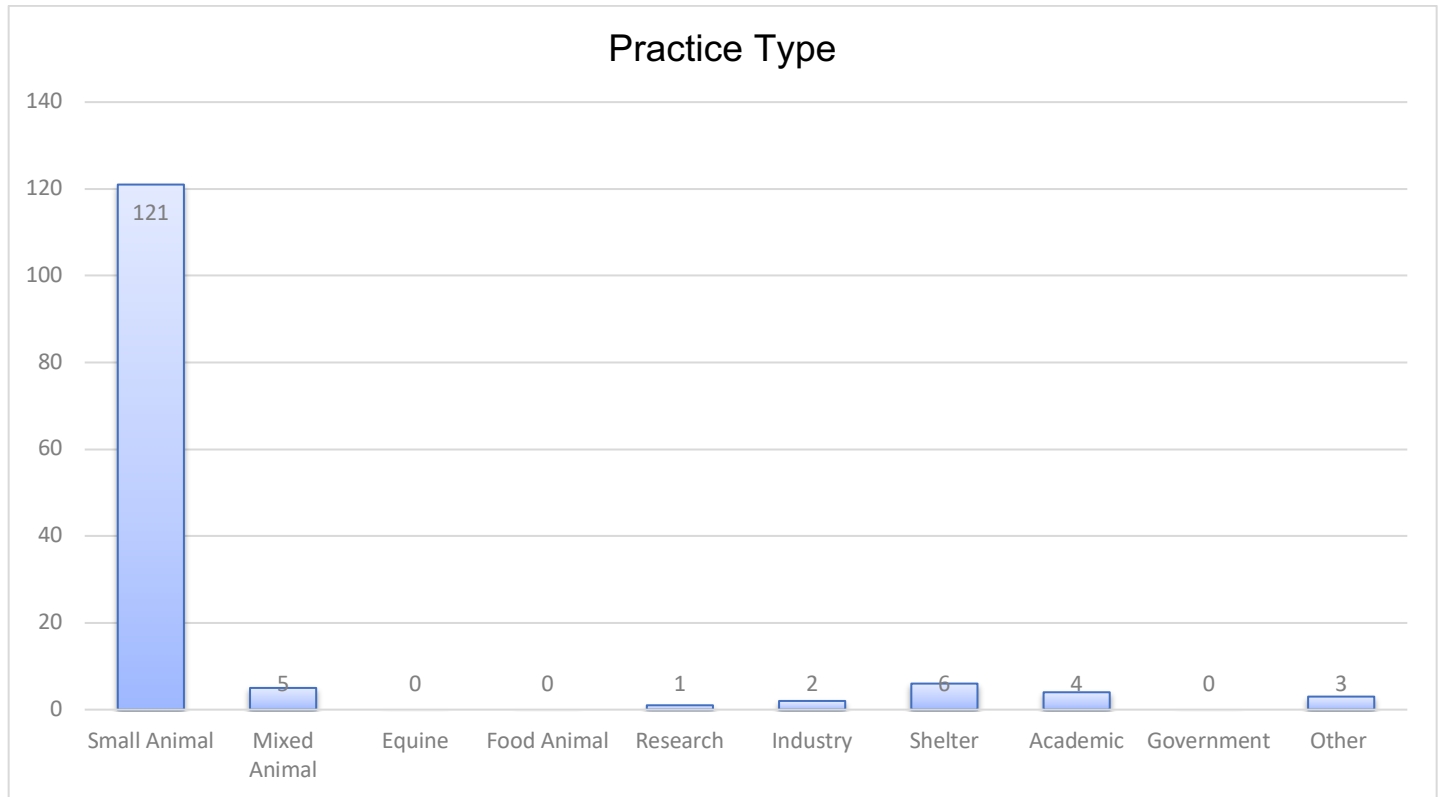
# DVM Survey Results

Total Respondents: 142

## General Practice Questions

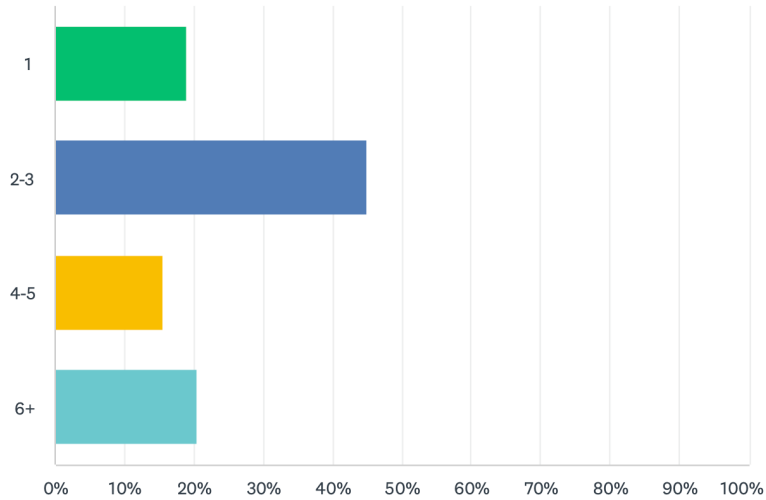
DVMs were asked several preliminary questions specific to the size and scope of their practice, and what, if any, staffing shortages exist.

**Question 1: Please indicate what type of type of veterinary medicine you predominantly practice.**



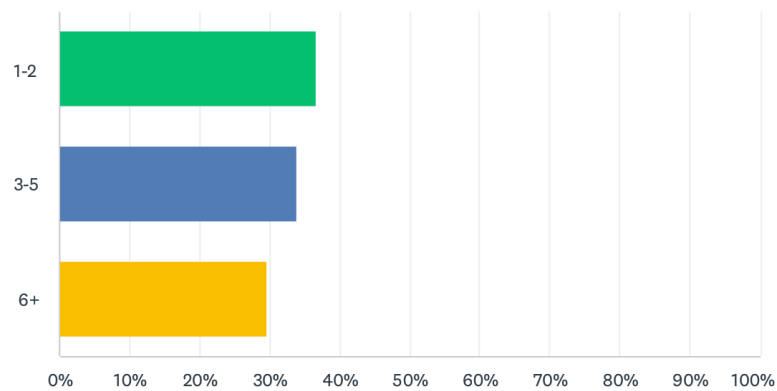
As you can see from the above graph, most survey respondents come from a background of small animal clinics, with over 85% indicating that is their primary practice type.

**Question 2: How many veterinarians (or full-time equivalent) are employed at your location?**



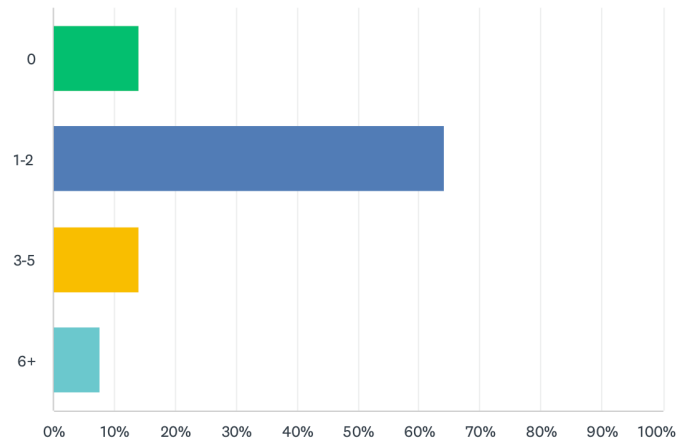
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1	19.01%	27
2-3	45.07%	64
4-5	15.49%	22
6+	20.42%	29
TOTAL		142

**Question 3: How many registered veterinary technicians do you employ at your location?**



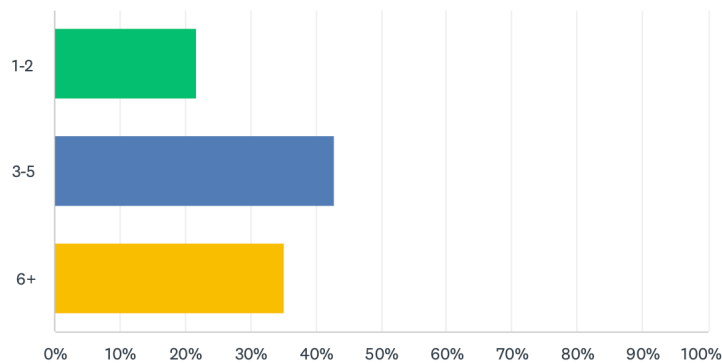
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1-2	36.62%	52
3-5	33.80%	48
6+	29.58%	42
TOTAL		142

**Question 4: How many registered veterinary technician vacancies are there currently at your location?**



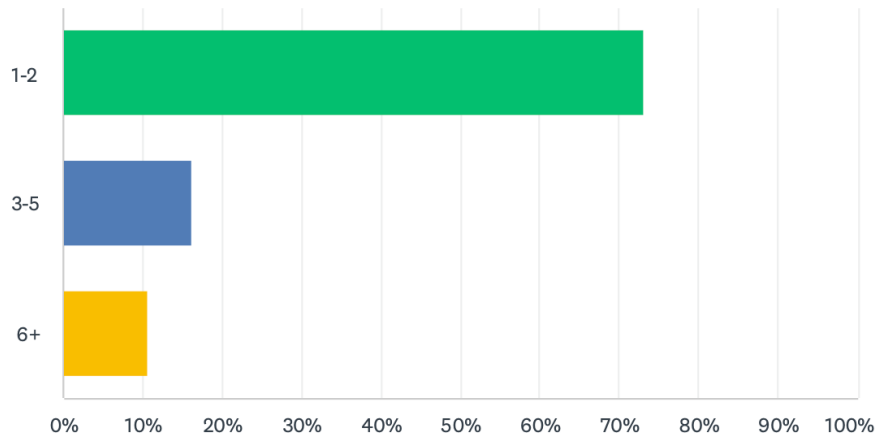
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0	14.08%	20
1-2	64.08%	91
3-5	14.08%	20
6+	7.75%	11
TOTAL		142

**Question 5: How many veterinary assistants/ animal aides do you employ at your location?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1-2	21.83%	31
3-5	42.96%	61
6+	35.21%	50
TOTAL		142

**Question 6: How many veterinary assistant/ animal aide vacancies are there currently at your location?**

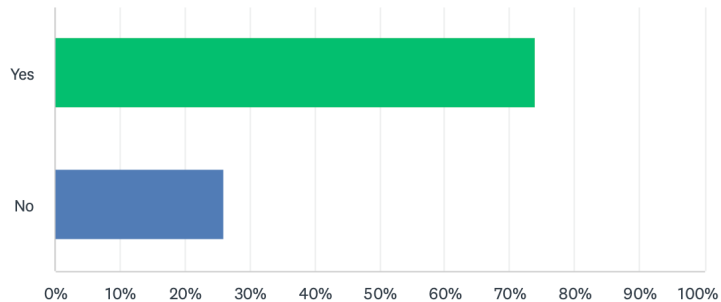


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1-2	73.24%	104
3-5	16.20%	23
6+	10.56%	15
TOTAL		142

## Hiring, Retention, and Advancement Opportunities

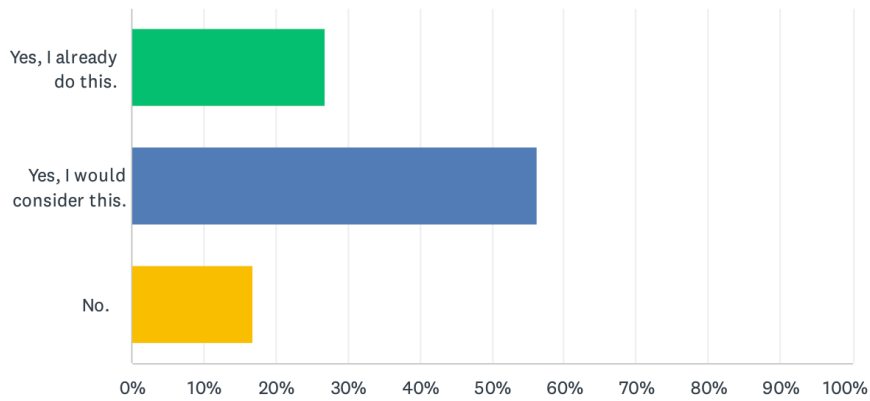
This section will cover what challenges DVMs face when hiring new RVTs, retention rates, successful recruitment methods, and advancement opportunities for RVTs and animal aides within a clinic. As well, various questions throughout the survey directed or allowed for the respondent to provide open-ended feedback. This section will also summarize the responses to each of those questions.

**Question 7: Have animal aides/veterinary assistants that you have employed ever gone on to become a registered veterinary technician?**



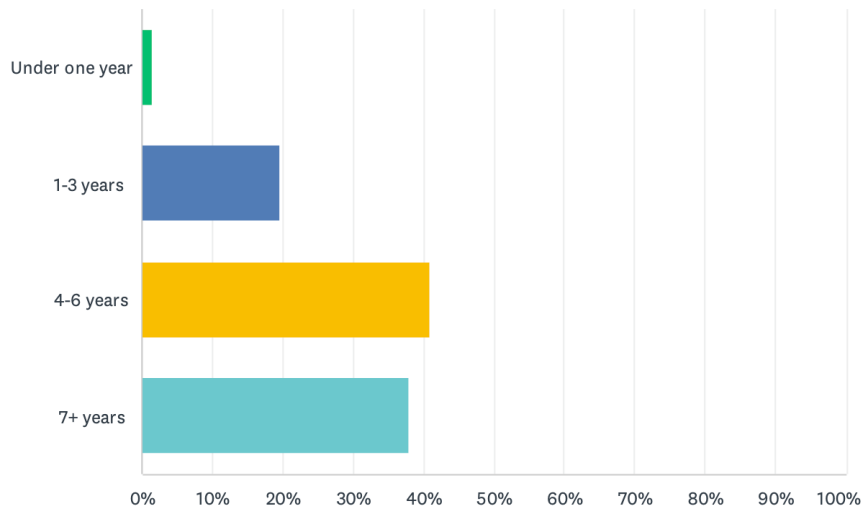
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	73.94%	105
No	26.06%	37
TOTAL		142

**Question 8: Would you consider providing tuition assistance and/or other incentives for animal aides/veterinary assistants to become RVTs?**



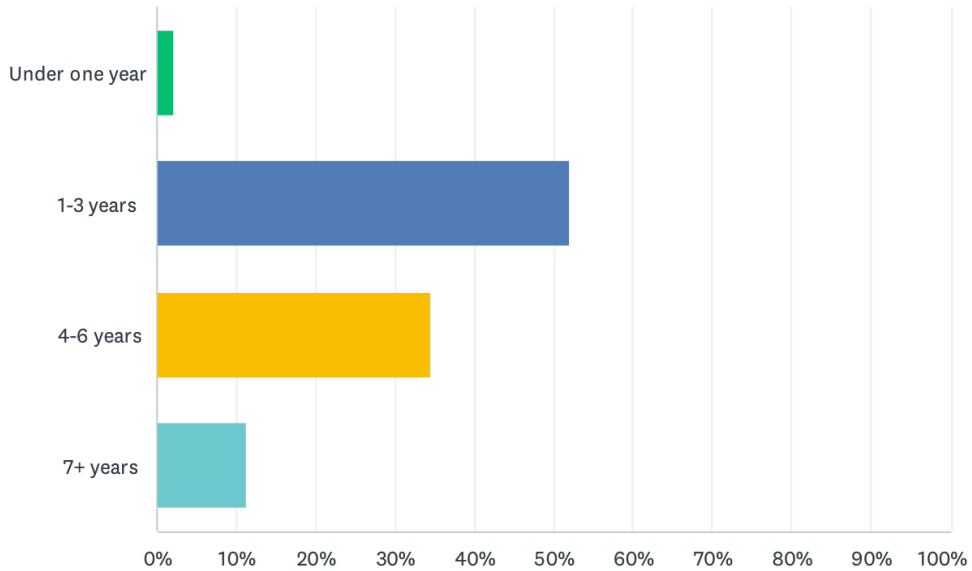
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I already do this.	26.76%	38
Yes, I would consider this.	56.34%	80
No.	16.90%	24
TOTAL		142

**Question 9: On average, how long do your RVTs remain in your employ?**



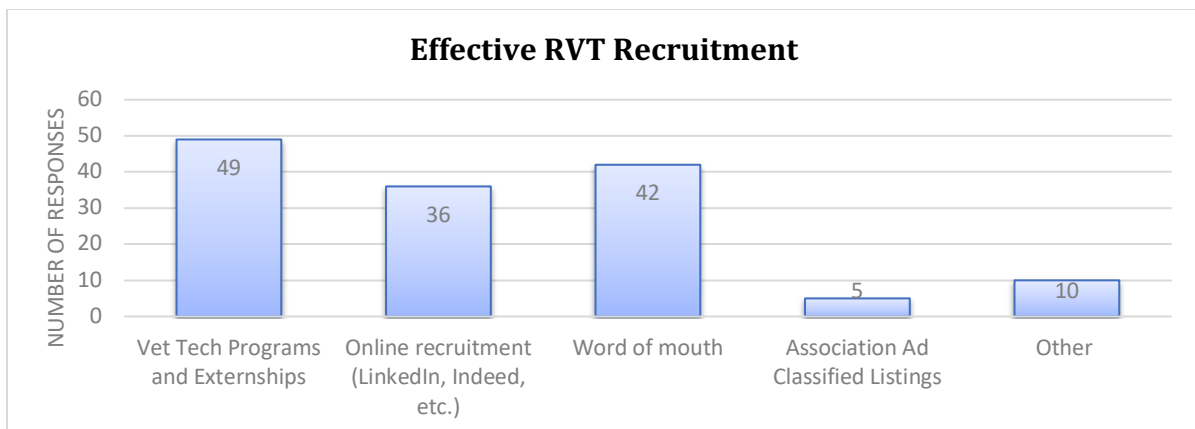
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under one year	1.41%	2
1-3 years	19.72%	28
4-6 years	40.85%	58
7+ years	38.03%	54
TOTAL		142

**Question 10: On average, how long do your animal aides/veterinary assistants remain in your employ?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under one year	2.11% 3
1-3 years	52.11% 74
4-6 years	34.51% 49
7+ years	11.27% 16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>142</b>

**Question 11: What strategy have you found to be most effective in finding RVTs to hire?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Vet Tech Programs and Externships	34.51% 49
Online recruitment (LinkedIn, Indeed, etc.)	25.35% 36
Word of mouth	29.58% 42
Association Ad Classified Listings	3.52% 5
Other	7.04% 10
	<b>Answered 142</b>

**Question 12: In a few sentences, describe the greatest challenge you face in hiring registered veterinary technicians.**

Out of 142 responses to the survey, most respondents indicate that simply finding candidates is the greatest challenge they currently face. Other reasons included compensation expectations, competition with other clinics, a proper work/life balance, etc. Please see the chart below for a full breakdown.



Several respondents expanded on this issue and provided their thoughts in greater detail, which mostly supported the above findings. See below for some of these comments from respondents.

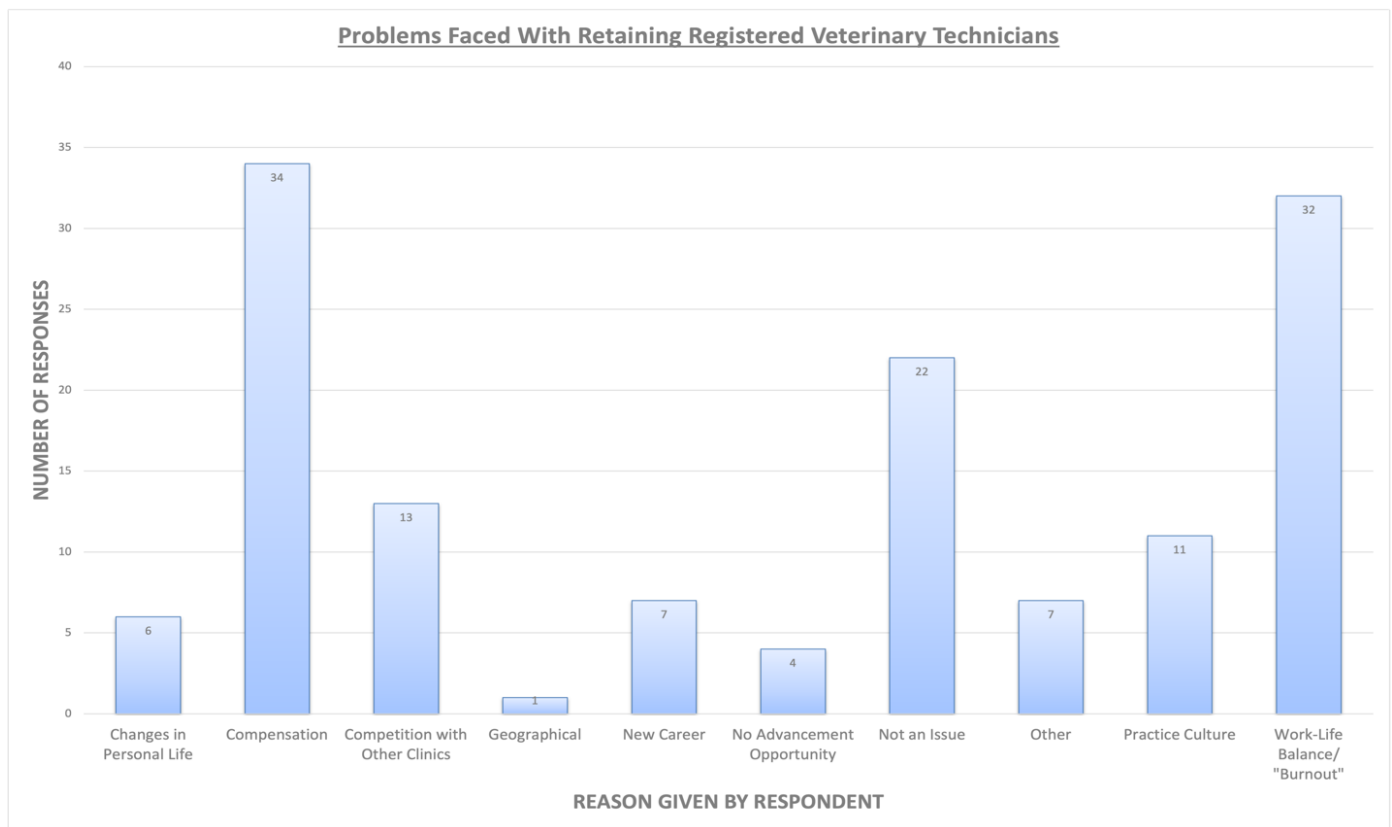
- “The new RVTs coming out of school are not prepared for real life daily tasks and basic diseases. Every time we hire a new RVT, we feel like we are training them on basics (blood draws and HWP/flea/tick prevention, vaccines etc.) They have unrealistic expectations of the new RVT pay straight out of school. I have no problem paying over 20.00 an hour for an RVT, but not one that can’t even educate owners on basic veterinary medicine that should be taught in school. Compensation competition with corporations is becoming a huge factor with finding experienced RVTs”
- “Finding applicants. I’d love to say that the challenge is finding a “qualified applicant,” but the fact of the matter is you can’t even find a candidate. As a small practice, most of them are lured by the MedVets, Care Centers, etc. They see the big and fancy emergency. They aren’t being taught the value in the relationship with the client.”
- “People are wise to not become licensed. Why become a licensed tech? It isn’t worth it monetarily and the stress is way too high to stay in the field. Ohio needs to not require a license to be a technician. That would solve the issue.”
- “I feel that many techs leave the field because of poor pay scale. I have new technicians asking for more pay per hour than my technicians with 10 years’ experience are paid even though I pay well above the national average.”
- “There is a mass exodus of technicians for other (sometimes related/allied) fields. They are simply hard to find. Those that do graduate frequently leave the field within a short period of time or stay at their current work environment. We are currently partnering with a local RVT program to have RVT externs every semester and teach them clinical skills so that we can have a chance to “interview” these students and hopefully hire a few.”
- “There are no applicants on the resources we use (indeed, monster, zip recruiter, AVMA, AAHA, OVMA, LinkedIn). The applicants we do get that are techs have either failed their boards (and because we are AAHA, cannot use them as anything other than assistants until they do pass) or are only ‘testing the waters to see what is out there’ but stay at their current jobs despite our offers and benefits.”



- “I work relief work as a veterinarian, and across the board I find long hours with low pay and lack of acknowledgement of good work, while quick to point out mistakes is across the board a problem. There also is born out in the ones that care and show up every day, when they are burdened with the extra work from those that habitually don't show up or are late. It makes for interpersonal drama that also feeds into techs wanting to leave the field.”

**Question 13: In a few sentences, describe the greatest challenge you face in retaining registered veterinary technicians.**

As you will see in the below chart, responses to this question were not as singularly agreed upon as the previous question.



Out of the 142 responses, 34 indicated that meeting compensation expectations was their main problem, 32 said the same of the issue of “burnout” or maintaining a proper work-life balance. Also of note, 22 indicated that retention is not an issue at all, and that the bigger issue is finding new candidates and filling existing vacancies. See below for some of additional comments from respondents.

- “I feel that the greatest challenge in retaining vet techs is being able to pay them fairly for their skills, utilizing their skills and not allowing the workplace to become toxic.”
- “We have several RVT's that have been with up > 7 years (one for 25, several for 15+). We find some attrition right as they graduate (we've trained them, they graduate from tech school, then they move off to another practice or something else); some a few years in (suspect burn out and desire to do something else is a factor).”
- “Our issue is mostly with retaining veterinary assistants. RVT's do not tend to leave our institution, but vet assistants will sometimes not even last 1 year. The starting pay for a vet assistant is lower than competitive non-veterinary jobs.”

- “Many technicians leave the field entirely to pursue human medical careers such as dental hygiene or nursing. Some leave because corporate practices and or specialty clinics offer higher pay and better benefits.”
- “In practices I have worked, vet techs are routinely underutilized, underappreciated for their work, and under compensated for what they bring to a clinic. Also, practice mismanagement is a constant problem in the veterinary world and until these problems can be resolved, then this will continue to become worsening issue.”
- “Relatively low compensation compared to other industries with comparable benefits or less stress. We have greatly increased wages and are continuing to explore opportunities to increase them even further. We can explore efficiencies and other business strategies, but the reality is that pet owners are going to have to pay more to make this a financial sustaining profession. While we can always improve ourselves as well, I also feel that the poor business management and cultures of many other veterinary practices have exacerbated this shortage - I don't blame RVTs for leaving the field based on what I've personally seen at many veterinary facilities!”
- “Inability to compare to corporate incentives, salary. Veterinary technicians seem to leave the field of veterinary medicine entirely. We have lost several women to become stay at home mothers.”
- “I'm not part of this but from what I've observed it has to do with frustration because of lack of feeling heard and therefore having to work under less-than-optimal conditions; this is compounded by less-than-optimal pay and no benefits. Feeling punished for speaking up (fewer hours or less pleasant shifts) has also been an issue.”
- “None. If we manage to hire them, we can usually keep them. If we don't keep them, it is because we have encouraged them to seek employment elsewhere (poor attitude, poor work ethic, or poorly aligned with how we practice medicine).”

## Employment Benefits and Other Related Topics

This section will cover what types of benefits are offered to RVTs, animal aides/ veterinary assistants, and will also explore what aspects of employment DVMs feel are most important to RVTs.

**Questions 14 and 15 asked the respondent what benefits are provided to their registered veterinary technicians and/or animal aides. See below for responses.**

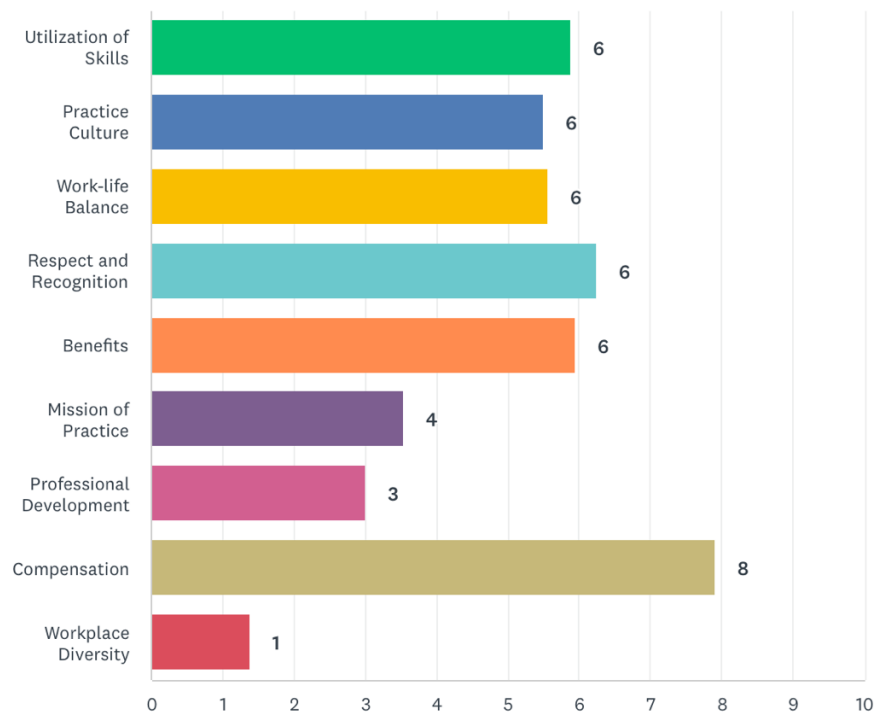
Benefit Offered	Percentage of Respondents That Offer Benefit	
	RVTs	Animal Aides
401k/Retirement Plan	78%	70%
Dental/Vision Insurance	51%	49%
Discounts on Veterinary Services	94%	90%
Flexible Spending Account	27%	27%
Health Insurance	80%	74%
Paid Continuing Education	81%	35%
Paid Holidays	79%	75%
Paid Time Off	88%	81%
Sign-on Bonus	15%	5%
Work-life balance Initiatives/ Mental Health Assistance	30%	28%
No Benefits Offered	0%	1%

**Question 16: Rank the following aspects of employment in order with what you feel are most important to your registered veterinary technicians:**

- Compensation
- Benefits
- Respect and Recognition from coworkers, management, and/or clients
- Utilization of skills
- Management and Culture of Practice
- Work-life balance
- Professional development (continuing education, opportunities for advancement, etc.)
- Mission of practice aligns with my personal priorities and passions
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace

58% of respondents say that **compensation** is the most important aspect of employment, with benefits, utilization of skills, management and practice culture, and a proper work-life balance ranking among the top as the most impactful to overall job satisfaction.

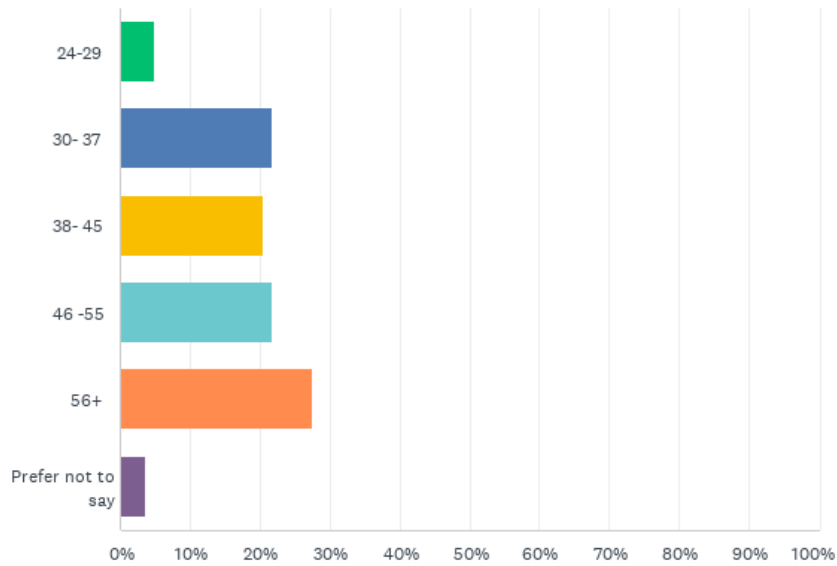
As we dive deeper into this data, we are able to see not only which aspects of employment DVMs feel are important to RVTs, but *how* important DVMs think they each are. The survey asked the respondent to rank the choices in order of importance, and when controlled for which choices garnered not only the most responses – but also the most responses at the highest rank – we can assign a value to each aspect of employment on a scale. More simply put... on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most important, we can score responses based on which are considered to be the most important by the greatest number of respondents. Please see the below graphic for this information.



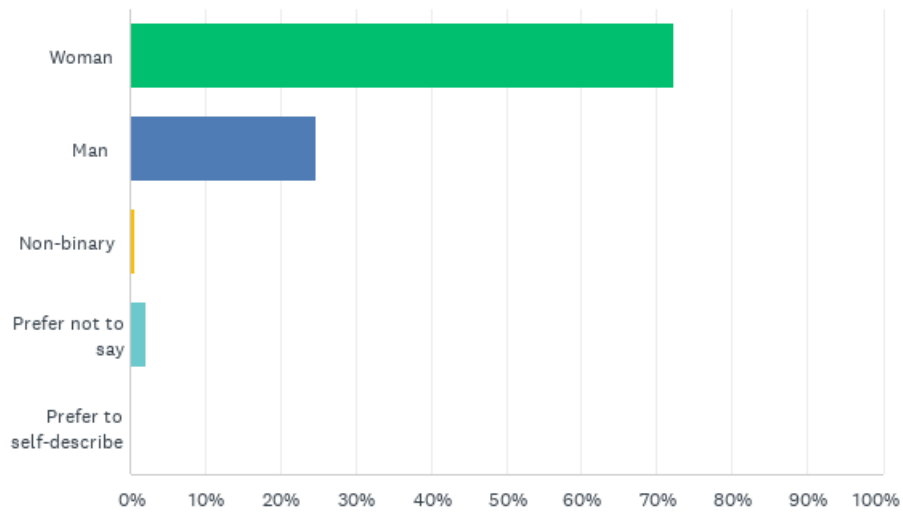
## Demographical Data

Respondents were asked to provide basic demographical information. Responses to these questions were optional.

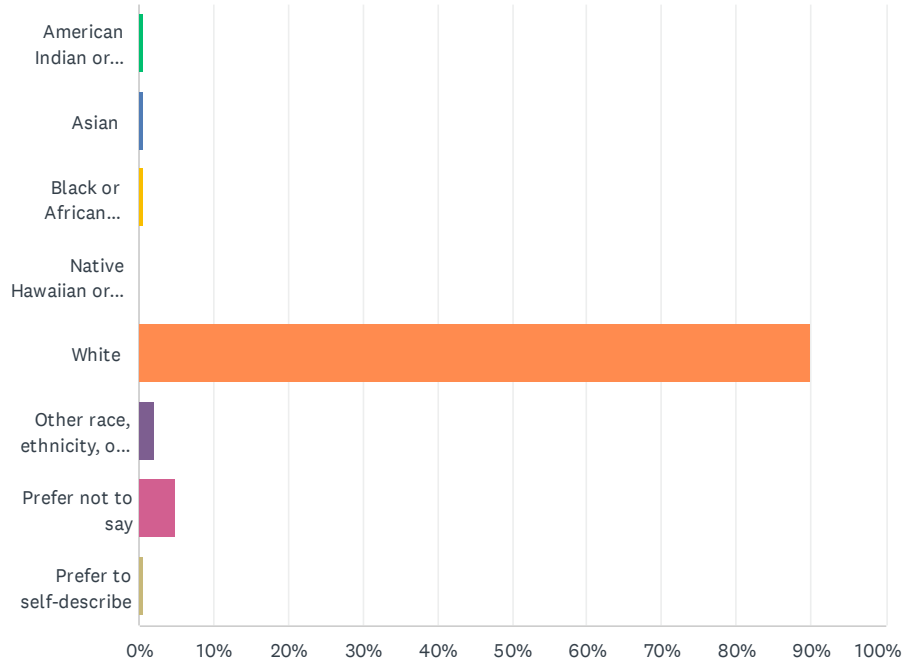
### Age of Respondent



### Gender of Respondent



## Ethnicity of Respondent



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.71%	1
Asian	0.71%	1
Black or African American	0.71%	1
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
White	90.07%	127
Other race, ethnicity, or origin	2.13%	3
Prefer not to say	4.96%	7
Prefer to self-describe	0.71%	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>141</b>

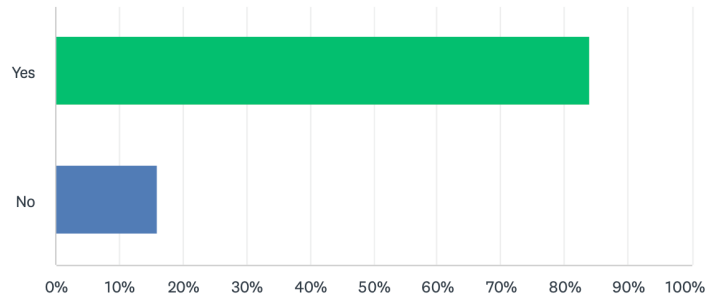
# RVT Survey Results

Total Respondents: 696

## General Profession and Current Employer Questions

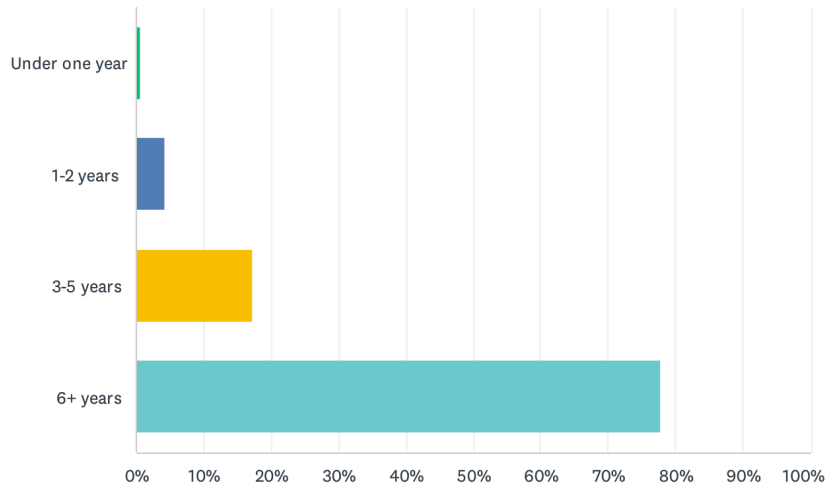
RVTs were asked several preliminary questions specific to the profession and their current employer.

### Question 1: Are you currently employed as a registered veterinary technician?



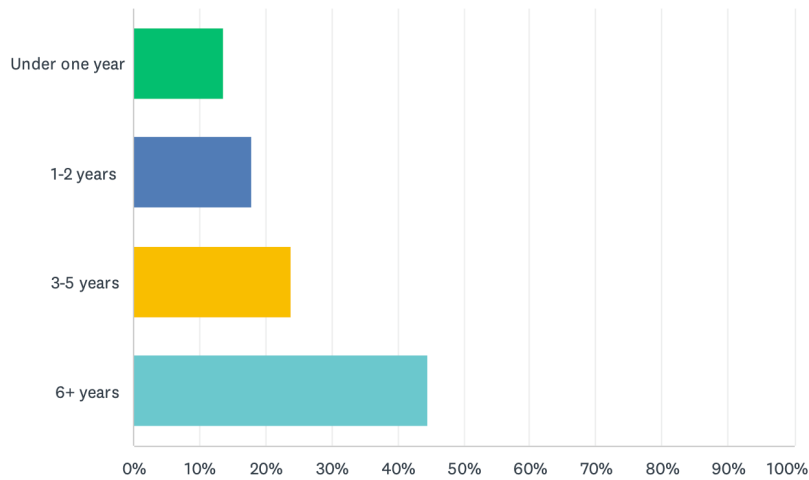
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	83.91% 584
No	16.09% 112
TOTAL	696

### Question 2: How long have you been a registered veterinary technician?



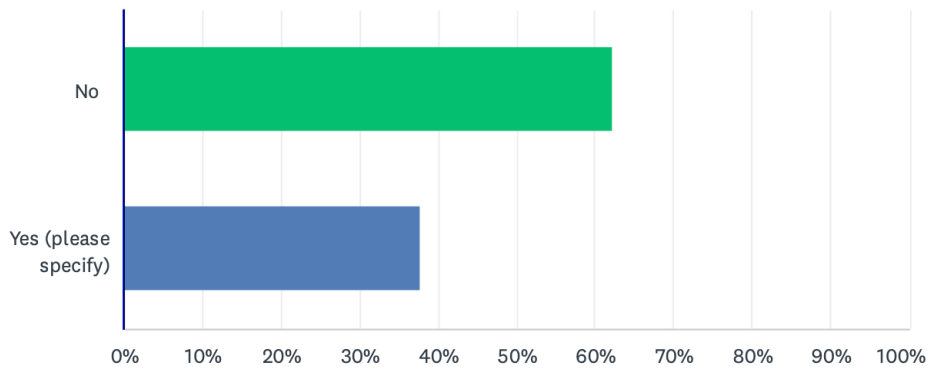
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under one year	0.72% 5
1-2 years	4.17% 29
3-5 years	17.24% 120
6+ years	77.87% 542
TOTAL	696

**Question 3: How long have you been with your current employer?**



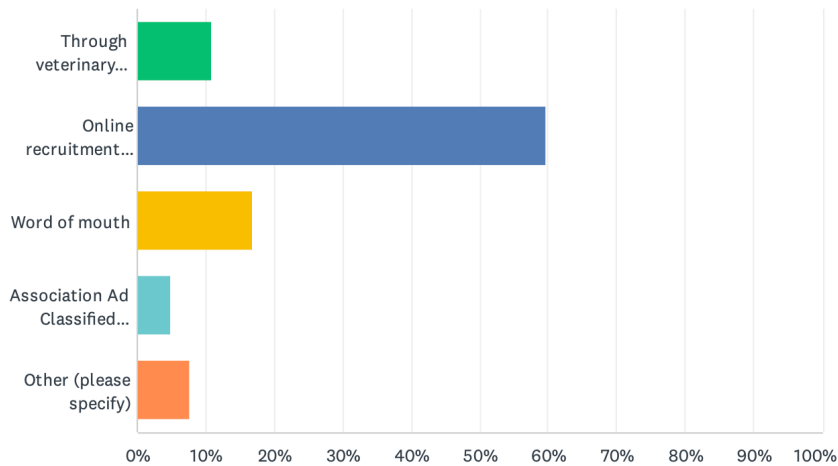
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under one year	13.65%	95
1-2 years	17.96%	125
3-5 years	23.85%	166
6+ years	44.54%	310
TOTAL		696

**Question 4: Are there opportunities for career progression at your current place of employment?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No	62.21%	433
Yes (please specify)	37.79%	263
TOTAL		696

**Question 5: How do you find employment opportunities?**

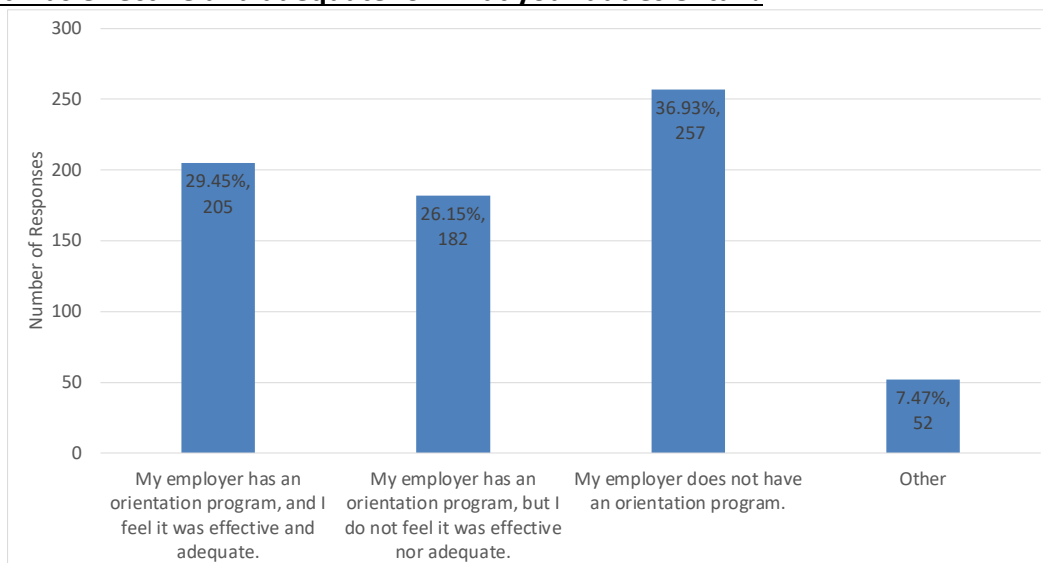


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Through veterinary technician programs/ hired out of externship	10.92%	76
Online recruitment (LinkedIn, Indeed, etc.)	59.63%	415
Word of mouth	16.81%	117
Association Ad Classified Listings	4.89%	34
Other (please specify)	7.76%	54
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>696</b>

**Overall Job Satisfaction and Other Related Topics**

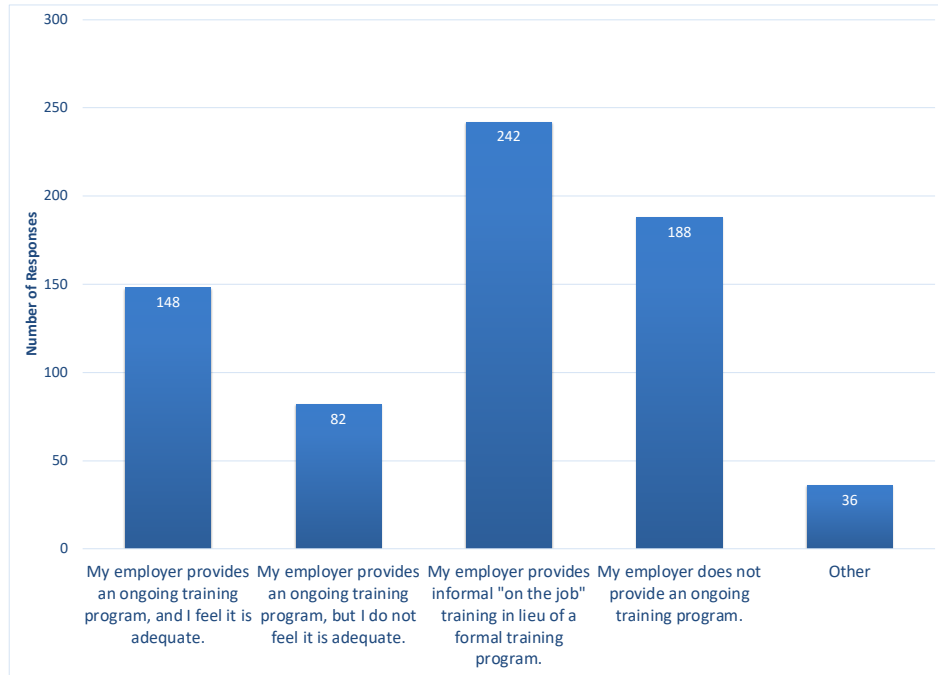
RVTs were asked the following questions related to job satisfaction, which aspects of employment are of the highest importance, and other related questions.

**Question 5: Does your current employer have an orientation or onboarding for new employees? If so, do you feel that it was effective and adequate for what your duties entail?**

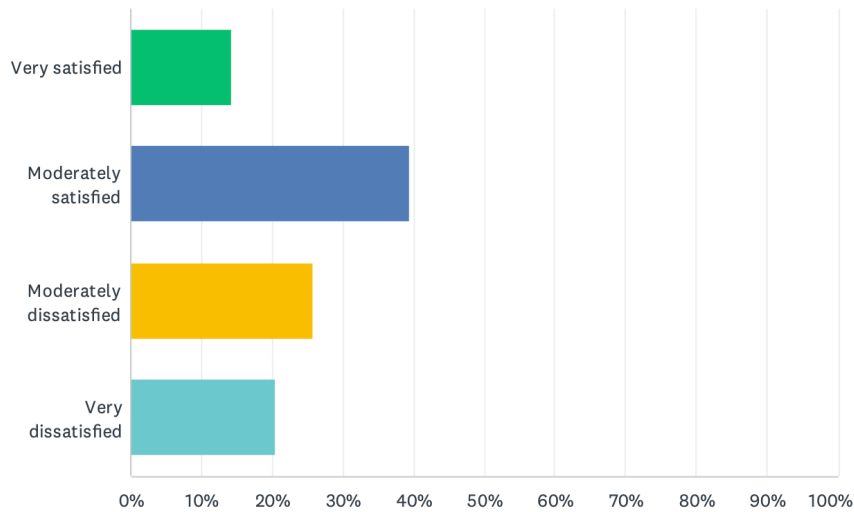




**Question 6: Does your current employer provide an ongoing training program? If so, do you feel it is adequate?**

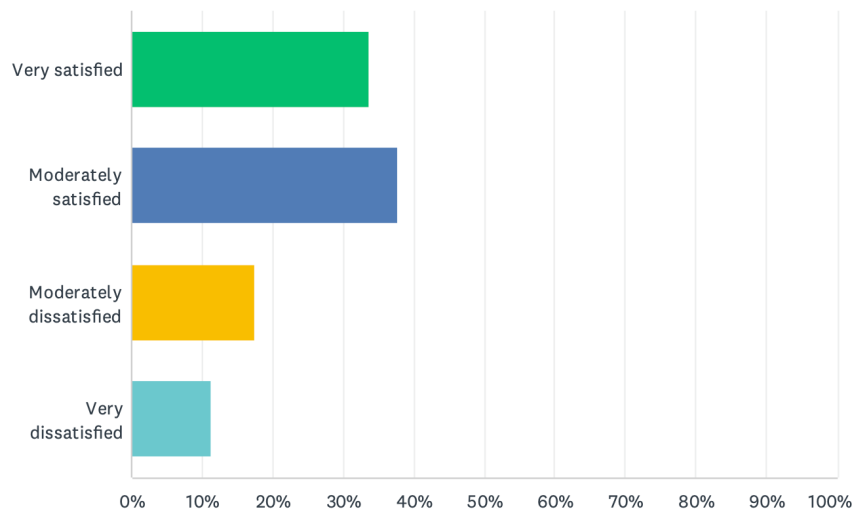


**Question 7: To what degree are you satisfied with your opportunities to participate in practice management and/or decision making?**



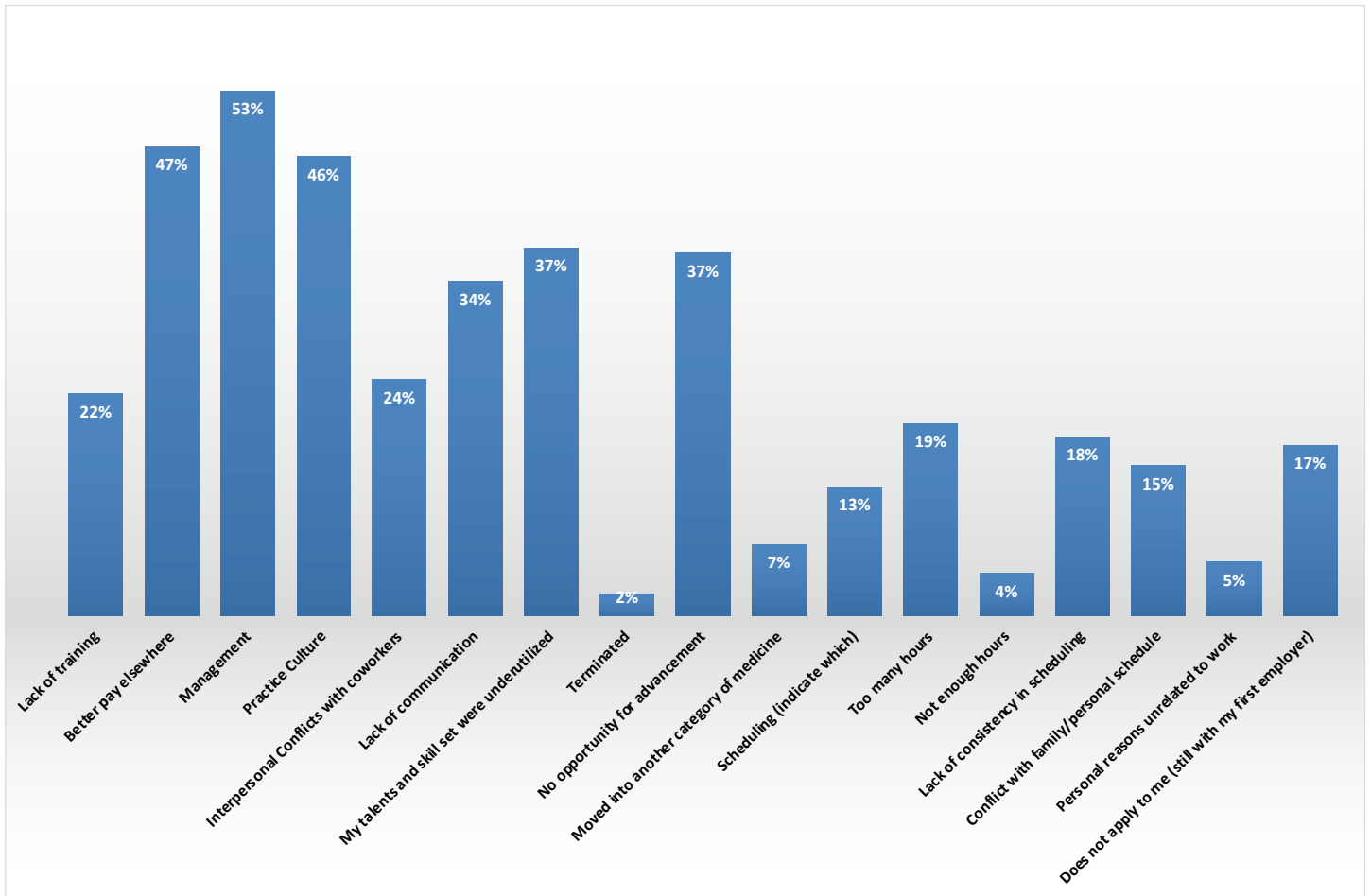
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very satisfied	14.37%	100
Moderately satisfied	39.51%	275
Moderately dissatisfied	25.72%	179
Very dissatisfied	20.40%	142
TOTAL		696

**Question 9: To what degree are you satisfied with your employers' accommodation of your personal/family needs?**



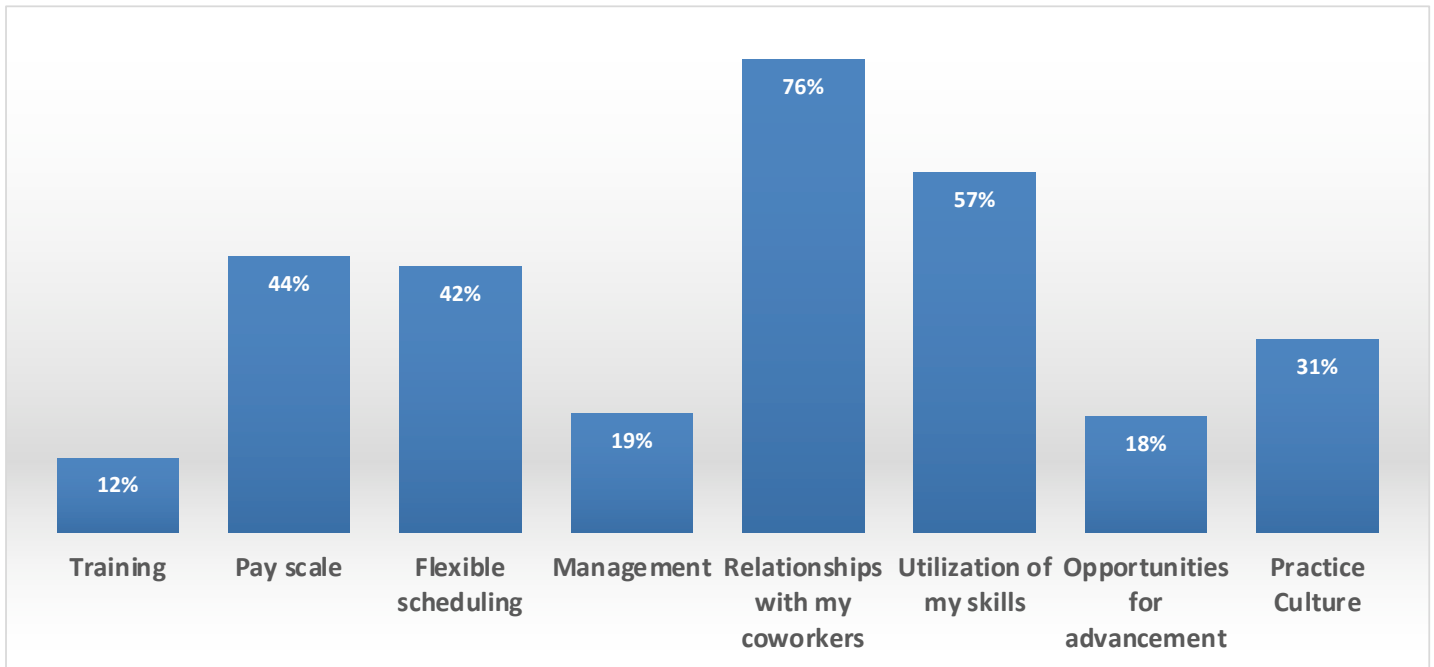
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very satisfied	33.62%	234
Moderately satisfied	37.64%	262
Moderately dissatisfied	17.39%	121
Very dissatisfied	11.35%	79
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>696</b>

**Question 10: Consider the practice you worked at for the shortest period. Why did you leave? Select all that apply.**



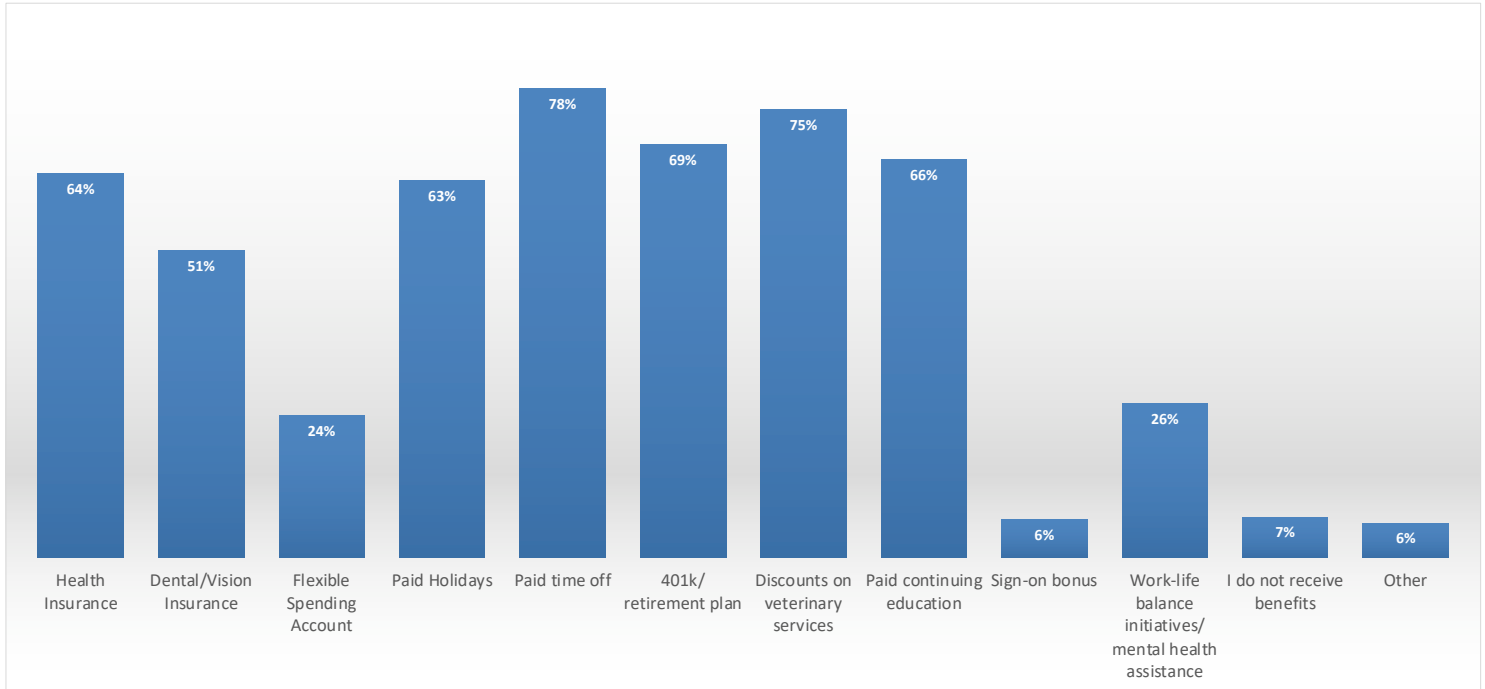
Reason	Number of Responses
Lack of training	156
Better pay elsewhere	330
Management	369
Practice Culture	323
Interpersonal Conflicts with coworkers	166
Lack of communication	235
My talents and skill set were underutilized	259
Terminated	16
No opportunity for advancement	255
Moved into another category of medicine	50
Scheduling (indicate which)	91
Too many hours	135
Not enough hours	30
Lack of consistency in scheduling	126
Conflict with family/personal schedule	106
Personal reasons unrelated to work	38
Does not apply to me (still with my first employer)	120

**Question 11: Consider the practice you worked at for the longest period. Why did you stay? Select all that apply.**



<b>Reason</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Training	84
Pay scale	307
Flexible scheduling	295
Management	133
Relationships with my coworkers	526
Utilization of my skills	400
Opportunities for advancement	128
Practice Culture	214

**Question 12: What benefits do you currently receive? Select all that apply.**



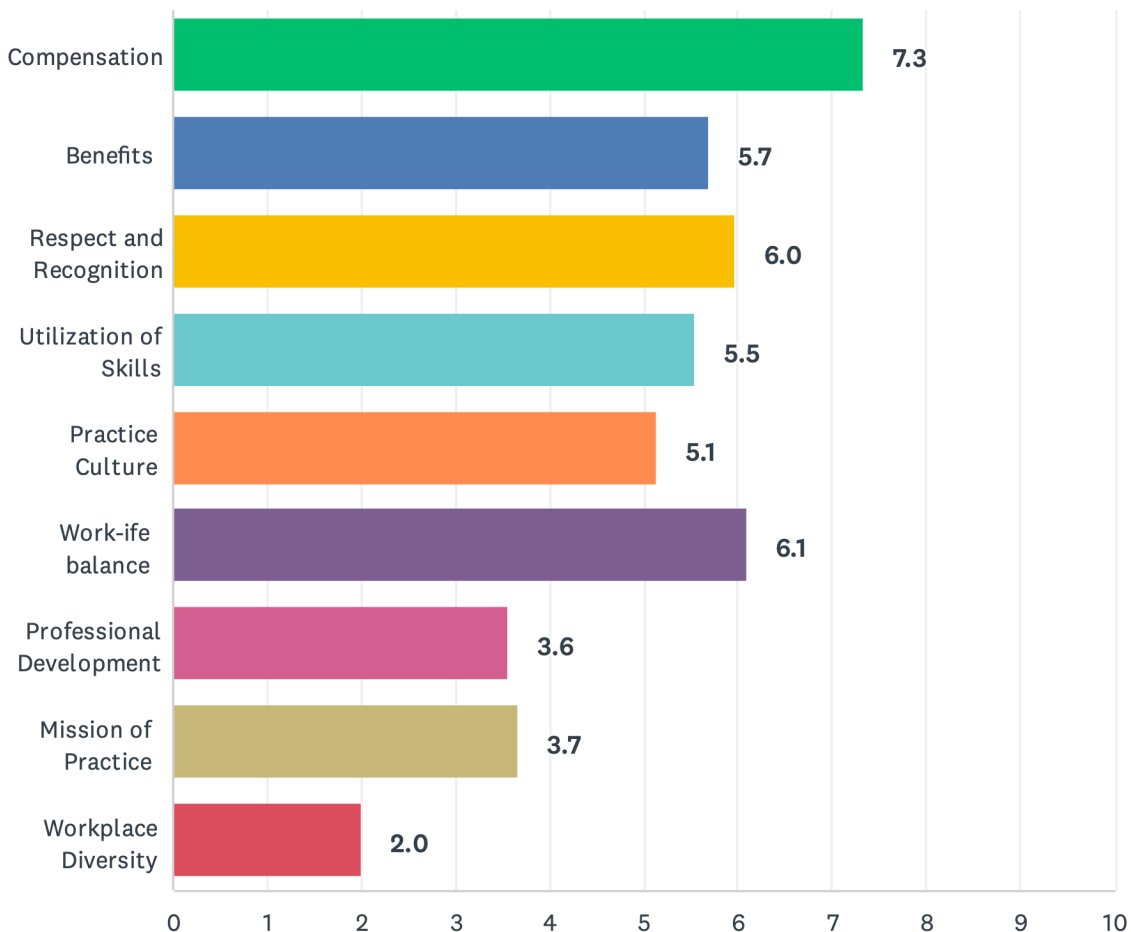
<b>Benefit Received</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Health Insurance	446
Dental/Vision Insurance	356
Flexible Spending Account	165
Paid Holidays	438
Paid time off	544
401k/ retirement plan	480
Discounts on veterinary services	520
Paid continuing education	462
Sign-on bonus	45
Work-life balance initiatives/ mental health assistance	179
I do not receive benefits	48
Other	41

**Question 13: Rank the following aspects of employment which are most important to you, with the top item being the most important:**

- Compensation
- Benefits
- Respect and Recognition from coworkers, management, and/or clients
- Utilization of skills
- Management and Culture of Practice
- Work-life balance
- Professional development (continuing education, opportunities for advancement, etc.)
- Mission of practice aligns with my personal priorities and passions
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace

This question is identical to Question 16 from the survey for DVMs. RVTs were asked to rank the above aspects of employment based on which are most important to them. 42% responded that **compensation** is the most important to them, along with respect and recognition from their coworkers and staff, and a proper work-life balance.

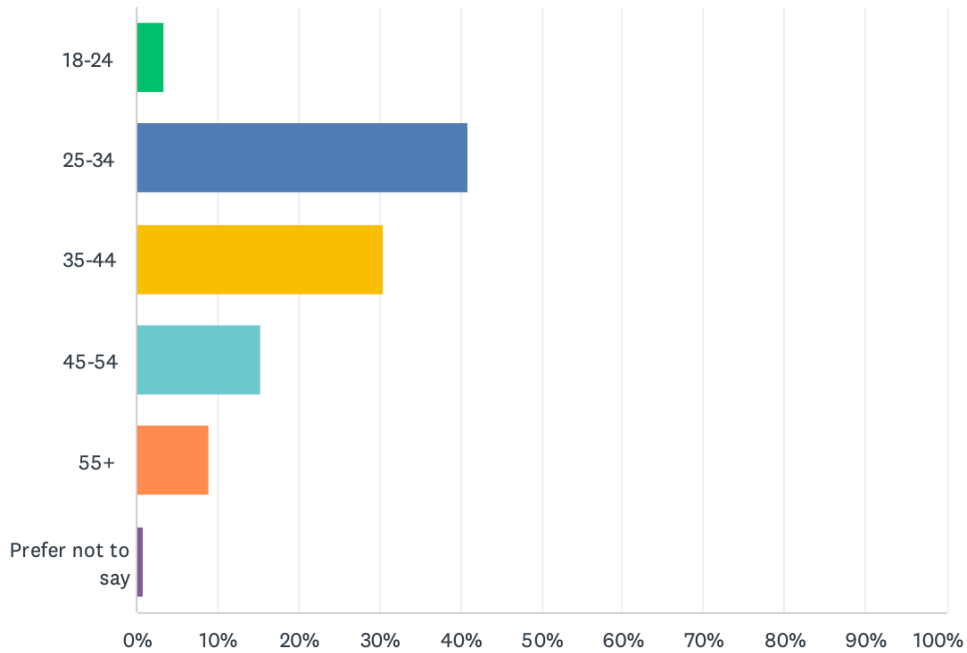
As we were able to do with the similar question mentioned above, we can score responses based on which are considered to be the most important by the greatest number of respondents. The weighted scores range from 1-10. Please see the below graphic for this information.



# Demographical Data

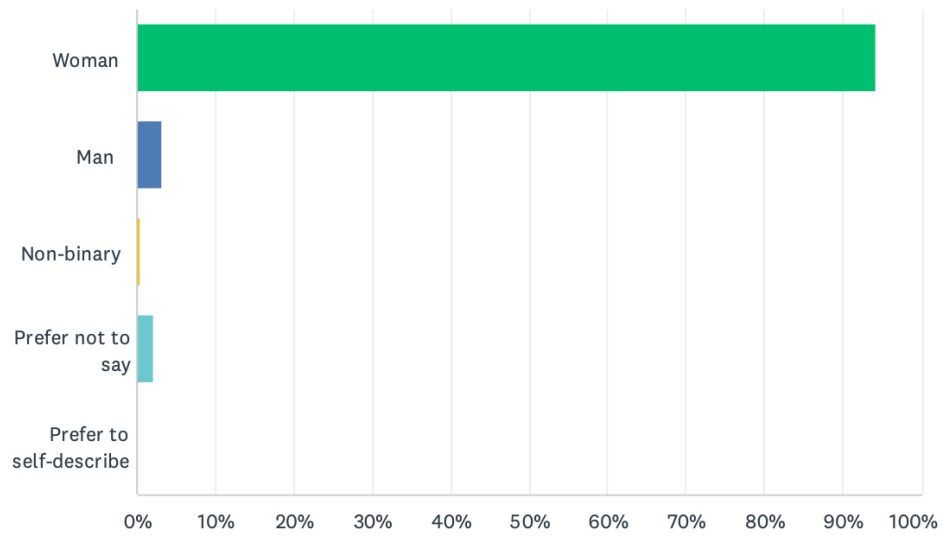
Respondents were asked to provide basic demographical information. Responses to these questions were optional.

## What is your age?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
18-24	3.31%	23
25-34	40.92%	284
35-44	30.55%	212
45-54	15.42%	107
55+	8.93%	62
Prefer not to say	0.86%	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>694</b>

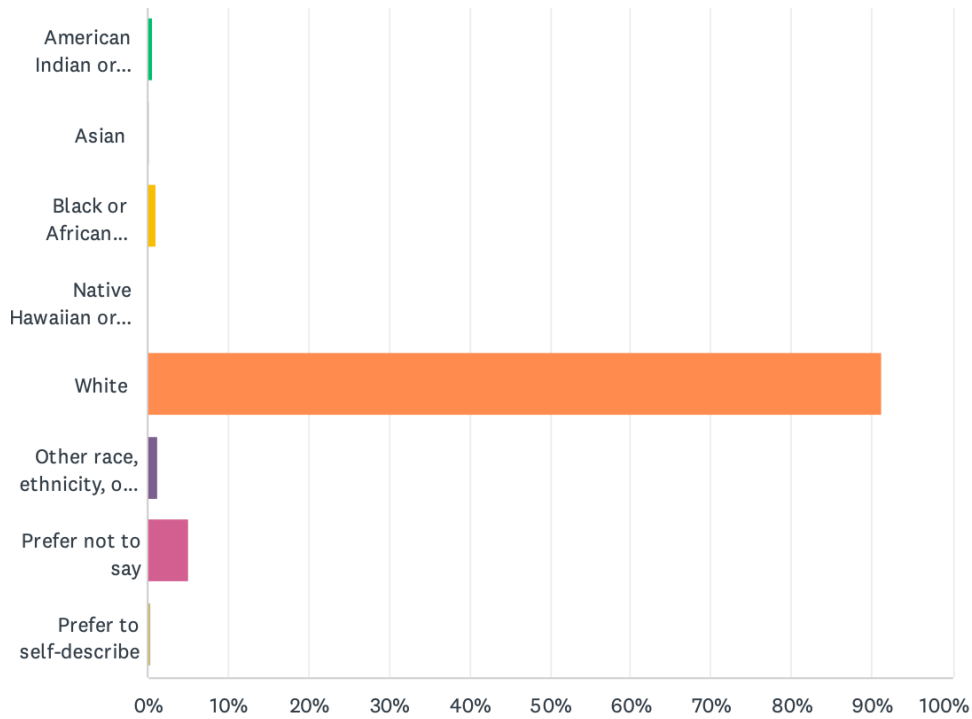
## What is your gender?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Woman	94.23%	653
Man	3.17%	22
Non-binary	0.43%	3
Prefer not to say	2.16%	15
Prefer to self-describe	0.00%	0
TOTAL		693



## What is your ethnicity?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.58%	4
Asian	0.14%	1
Black or African American	1.15%	8
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
White	91.35%	634
Other race, ethnicity, or origin	1.30%	9
Prefer not to say	5.04%	35
Prefer to self-describe	0.43%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>694</b>

# Comparison of Survey Results

DVMs were asked to rank which aspects of employment (from a list of choices) they feel are most important to their RVTs and animal aides. RVTs were asked, from the same list, which aspects of employment were most important to them. This section will briefly compare the responses to each of those questions.

As we remember from above, each aspect of employment was given a weighted score based on the number of responses that ranked each the highest. The below chart compares the feedback from each survey.

Aspect of Employment	Weighted Score	
	DVM	RVT
Compensation	7.9	7.3
Benefits	6.0	5.7
Respect and Recognition	6.3	6.0
Utilization of Skills	5.9	5.5
Practice Culture	5.5	5.1
Work-life balance	5.6	6.1
Professional Development	3.0	3.6
Mission of Practice	3.5	3.7
Workplace Diversity	1.4	2.0