

Creating a Positive, More Energized Veterinary Team



Learnings from the
Merck Animal Health
2023 Veterinary Team
Wellbeing Study

Agenda



1 KEY FINDINGS

- Background
- Key Findings
- Job Satisfaction Measures
- Attitudes Toward the Profession



2 DETAILED FINDINGS

- Wellbeing
- Mental Health
- Burnout



3 ACTION STEPS

- What Veterinarians and Staff Can Do to Improve Wellbeing
- What Employers Can Do to Improve Wellbeing

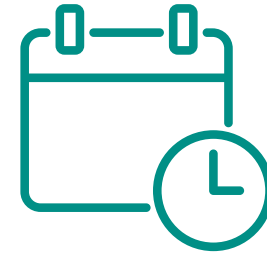


4 CONCLUSIONS/ Q&A

About the Study



First comprehensive study of wellbeing, burnout, and mental health of veterinary practice team



Data collected September 11-October 9, 2023



Submitted for IRB Review



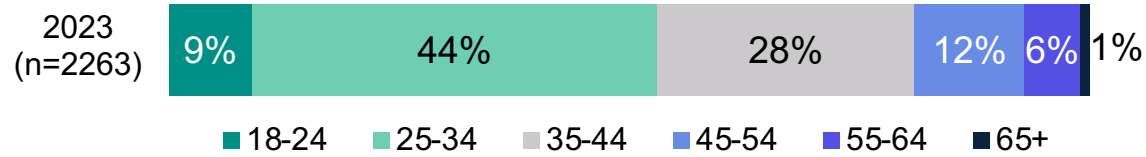
Large scale: nearly 2,300 respondents

Thank You to Collaborators

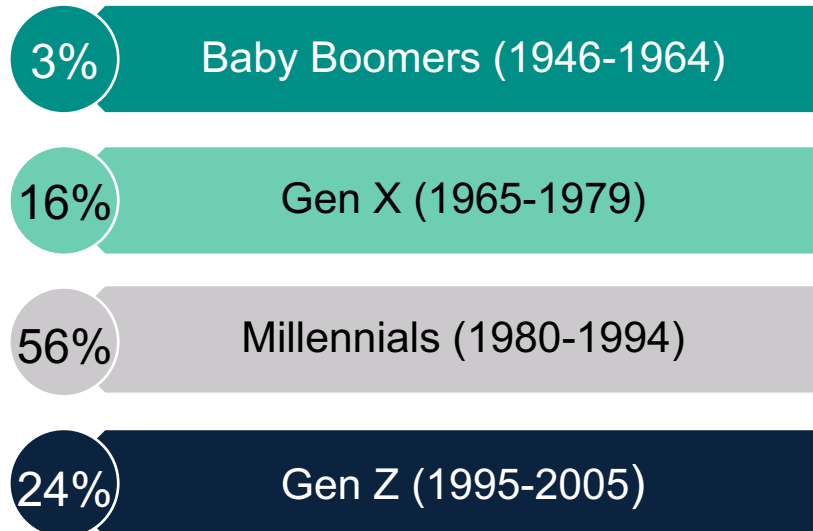
- North American Veterinary Technicians Association (NAVTA)
- Veterinary Hospital Managers Association (VHMA)
- Referrals from veterinarian respondents
- A large corporate practice owner

Respondent Profile

Age

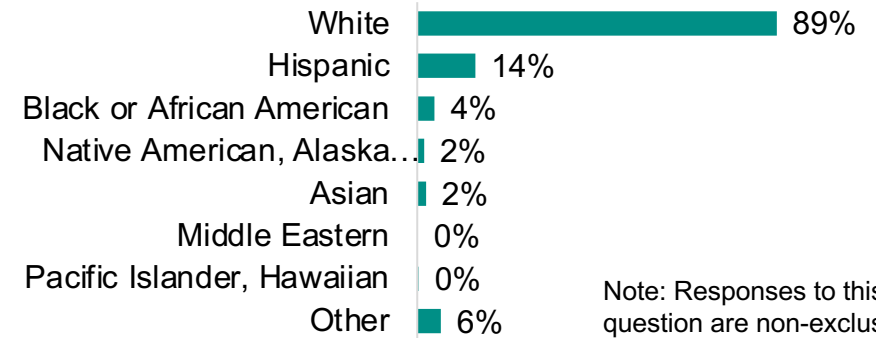


Generation



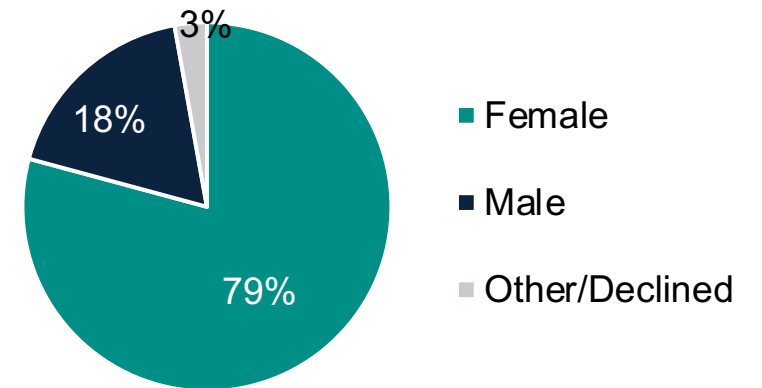
Note: 0.05% were older than Baby Boomers

Race/Ethnicity



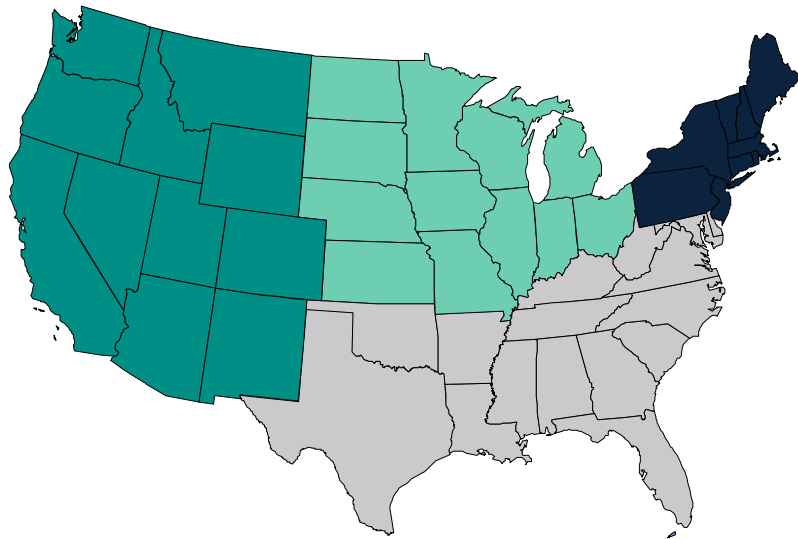
Note: Responses to this question are non-exclusive

Gender

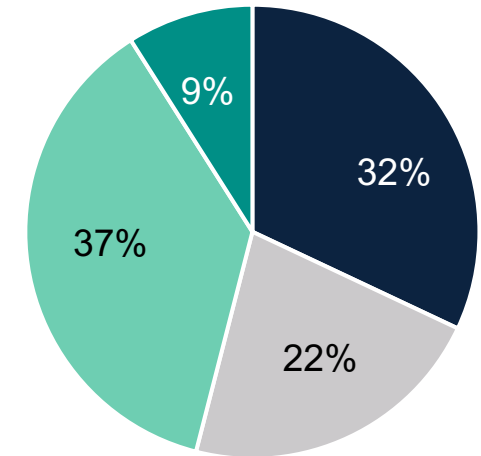


Base: All Respondents (n=2263)

Respondent Profile – Geographical Representation



Region	Percent
Northeast	20%
South	36%
Midwest	14%
West	31%



- Urban
- Mid-size city
- Suburban
- Rural/Small town

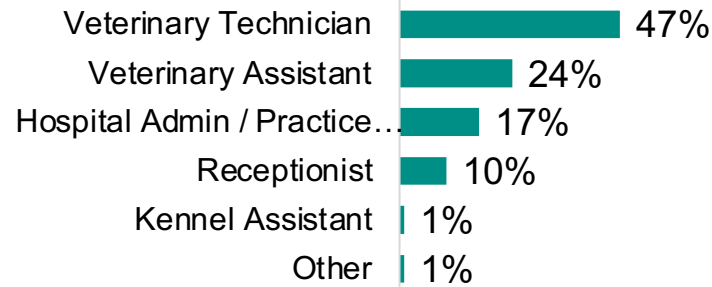
SC5. In what state are you located?

SC6. How would you characterize the primary practice you work for – as mostly serving urban, suburban or rural clients?

Base: All Respondents (n=2271)

Respondent Profile – Roles, Practices

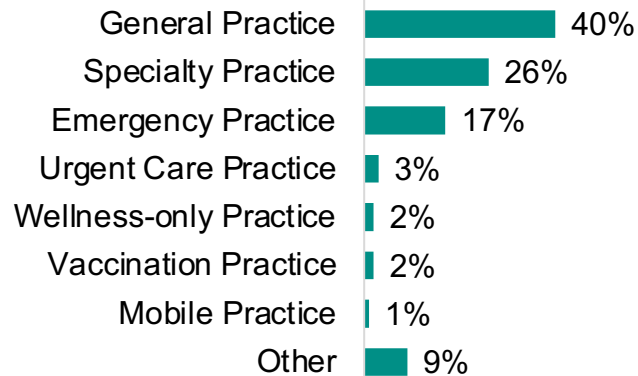
Type of Staff



SC2. Which of the following best describes your current position?

Base: All Respondents (n=2268)

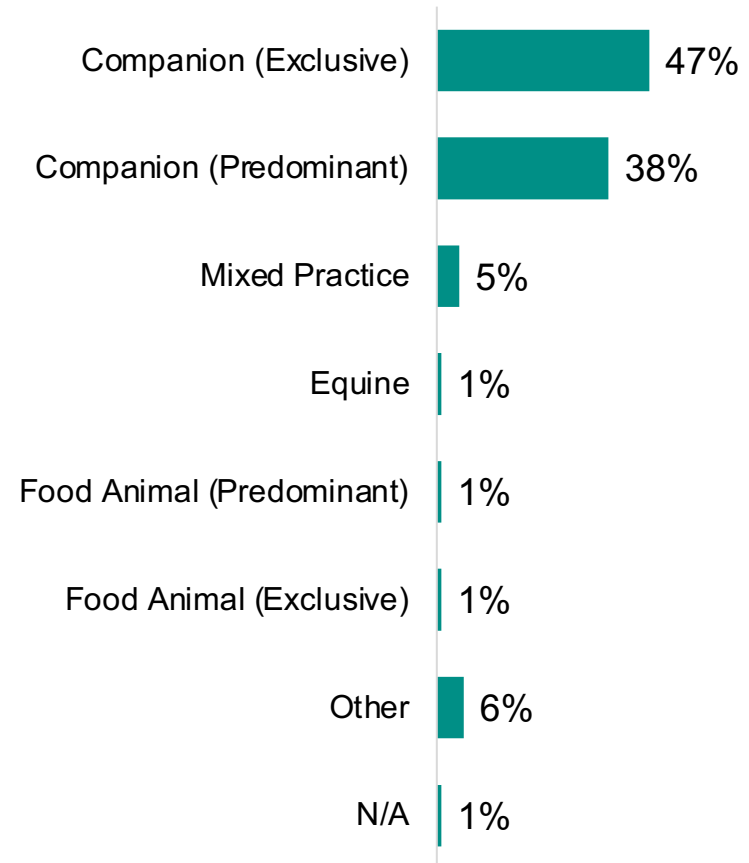
Type of Primary Practice



SC4. Which of the following best describes the practice at which you work?

Base: All Respondents (n=2117)

Type of Practice



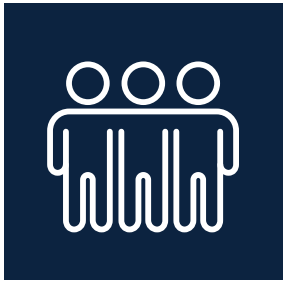
SC3. How would you best describe the practice at which you work?

Base: All Respondents (n=2267)



1. Key Findings

Key Findings



Veterinary team
invested in and take
pride in work



Majority satisfied
with their job



There are notable
differences in wellbeing
among roles



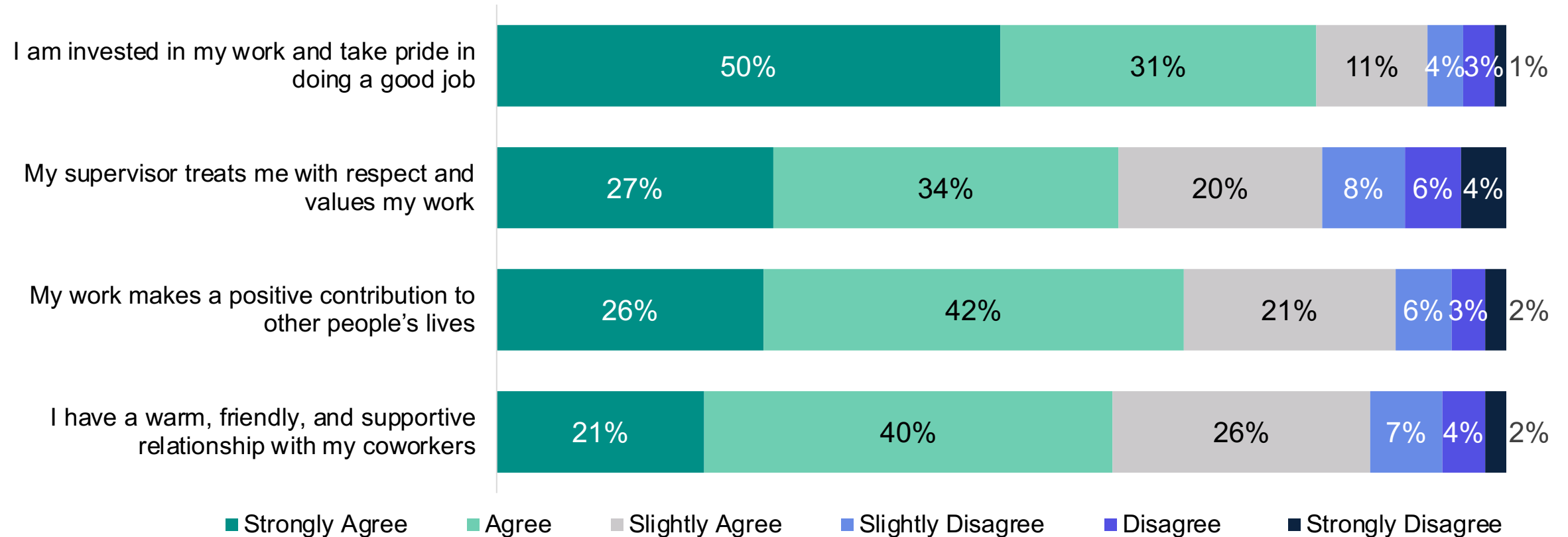
Significant financial
stress is common
among team members



There are multiple
steps individuals and
practices can take to
improve wellbeing

Veterinary Work Is Important and Meaningful to the Team

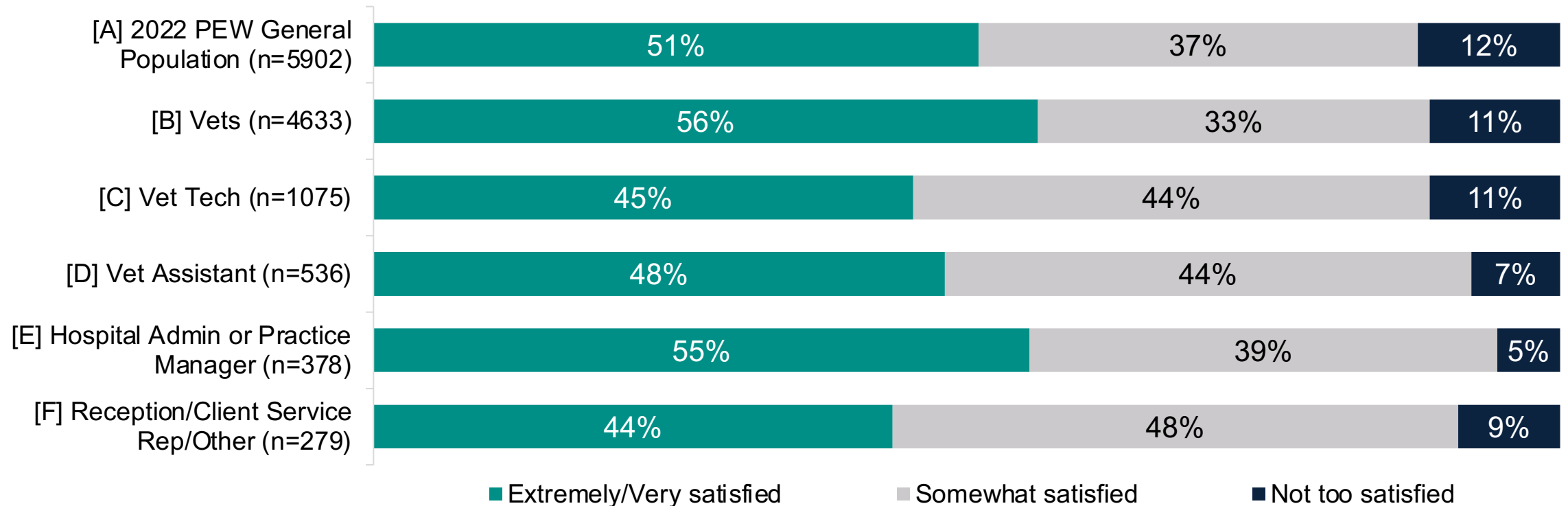
81% of respondents strongly agree/agree they are invested and take pride in their work.



WB5. Please indicate the degree to which you agree, or disagree, with the statements below
Base: All Respondents (n=2265)

Overall Team Is Generally Satisfied With Job

Vets and hospital admin more satisfied with their jobs than the general population or the other veterinary clinic staff types.



General Population data taken from PEW
WB6. Overall. How satisfied are you with your job?
Base: All Respondents



2. Detailed Findings



Wellbeing, Burnout, Mental Health

How Is the Team Doing?

3 Major Measures



Wellbeing

How people view their welfare level in terms of happiness, health, prosperity, and resources



Burnout

State of exhaustion (physical, mental, and emotional) resulting from prolonged stress



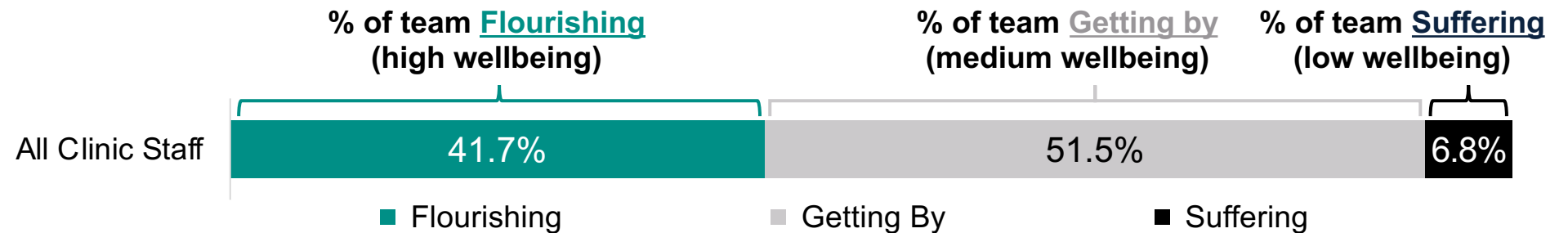
Mental health

Condition of an individual's mental and emotional state, including prevalence or absence of serious psychological distress

Wellbeing: A Measure of Happiness

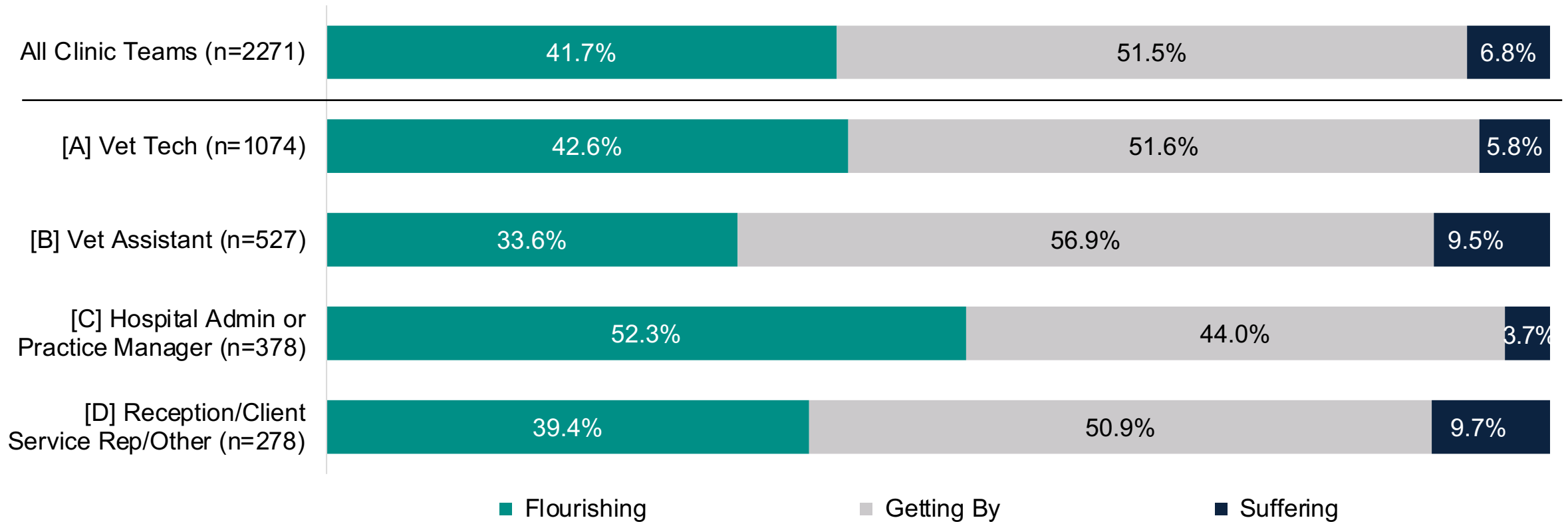
- Wellbeing examines how an individual feels about how satisfied they were with their life compared with the best possible/worst possible or ideal life
- More than 93% of respondents report medium to high levels of wellbeing

Wellbeing Question	Wellbeing Scale and Points System
Examination of wellbeing uses the Cantril ladder: 1. On a 10-step ladder, on which step do you feel you personally stand at the present time (0 = worst; 10 = best possible)	Responses were indexed on a 10-point scale Flourishing - 7-10 Getting By - 4-6 Suffering - 0-3



Wellbeing Varies Somewhat by Position

- Vet assistants and receptionists/client service team members have lower wellbeing than other team types
- Hospital administrators/practice managers have significantly higher wellbeing when compared with any other team type

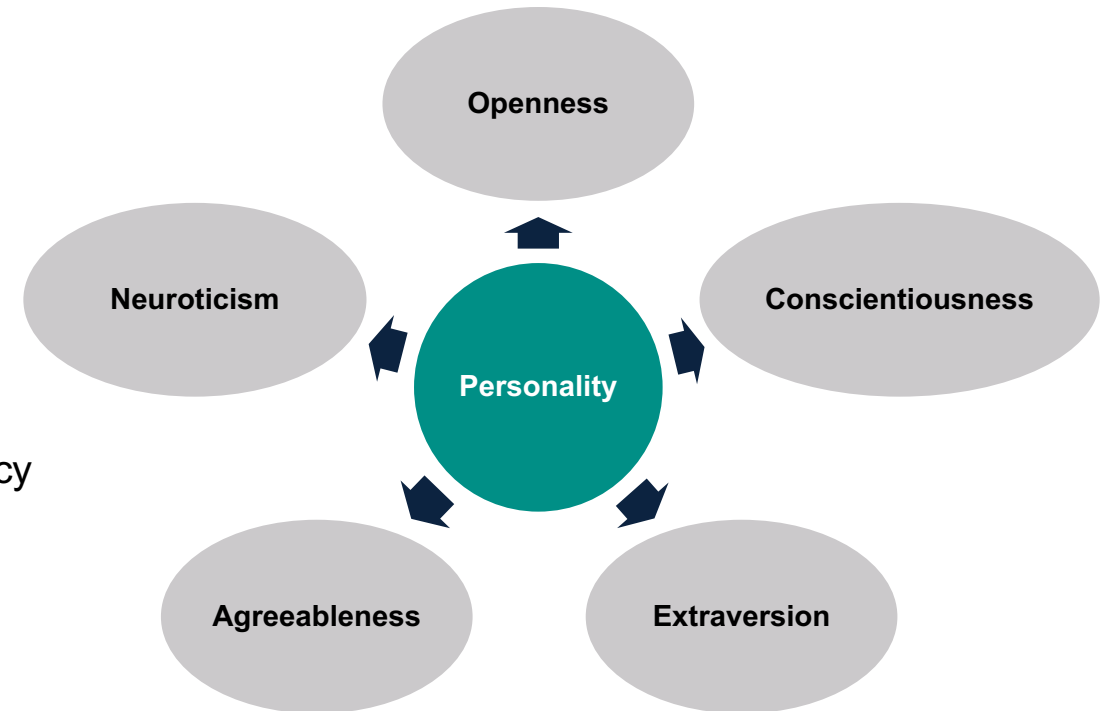


Wellbeing Index
Base: All Respondents

Personality Affects Wellbeing, Burnout, Mental Health

The **Big Five personality traits**, also known as the **five-factor model (FFM)**, are based on common language descriptors of personality.

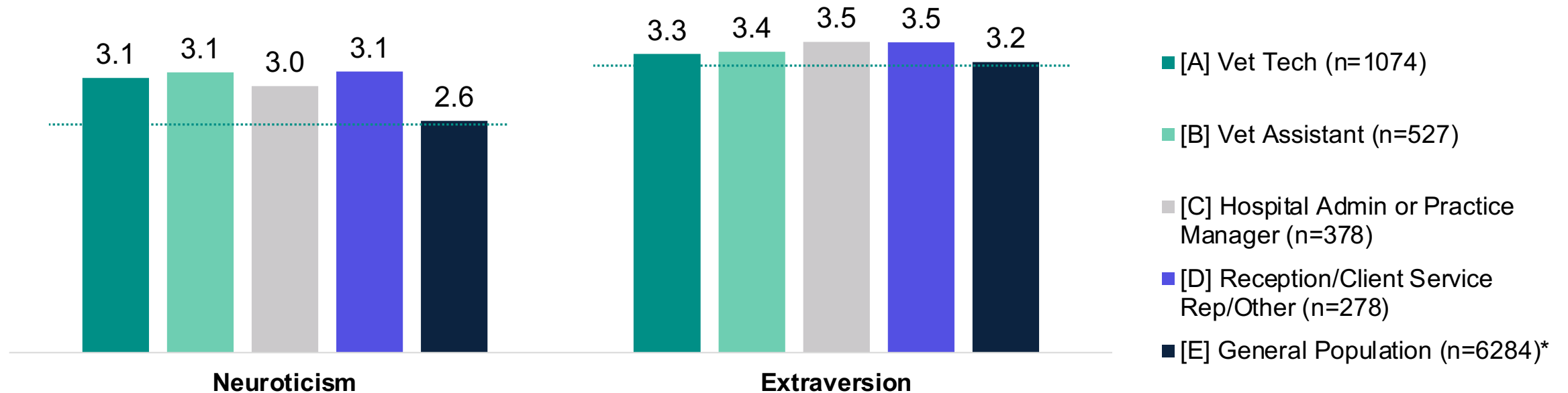
- **Openness** to experience (inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious). Appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, curiosity, and variety of experience.
- **Conscientiousness** (efficient/organized vs. easy-going/careless). A tendency to be organized and dependable, show self-discipline, act dutifully, aim for achievement, and prefer planned rather than spontaneous behavior.
- **Extraversion** (outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved). Energy, positive emotions, surgency, assertiveness, sociability and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others, and talkativeness.
- **Agreeableness** (friendly/compassionate vs. challenging/detached). A tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others.
- **Neuroticism** (sensitive/nervous vs. secure/confident). The tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily, such as anger, anxiety, depression, and vulnerability.



Respondents receive a score on each personality trait. Those with particularly strong scores for a given trait can be identified and compared.

Individuals Higher in Neuroticism More Sensitive to Stress

- Personality traits neither good nor bad
- Vet team members tend to be higher in neuroticism
- Also high in extroversion, which is a benefit in a service profession



Key Predictors of Wellbeing

Positive predictors

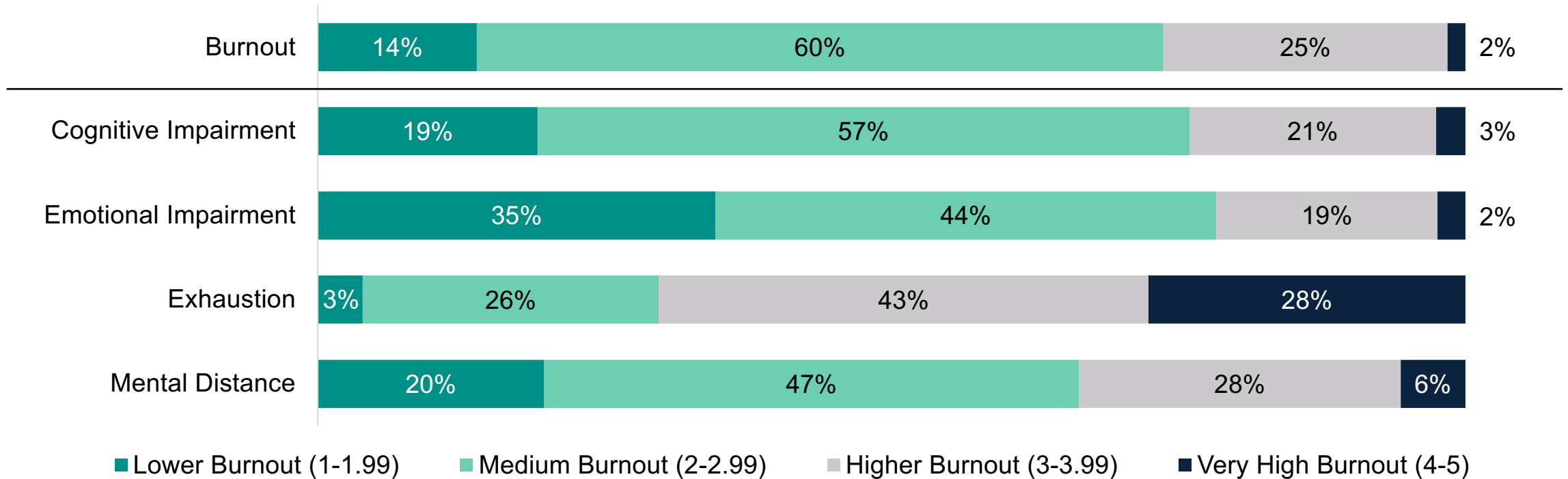
- Clinic culture
- Healthy activities
- Satisfaction with position, promotion opportunities
- Strategies to cope with stress

Negative predictors

- Long work hours
- Neuroticism

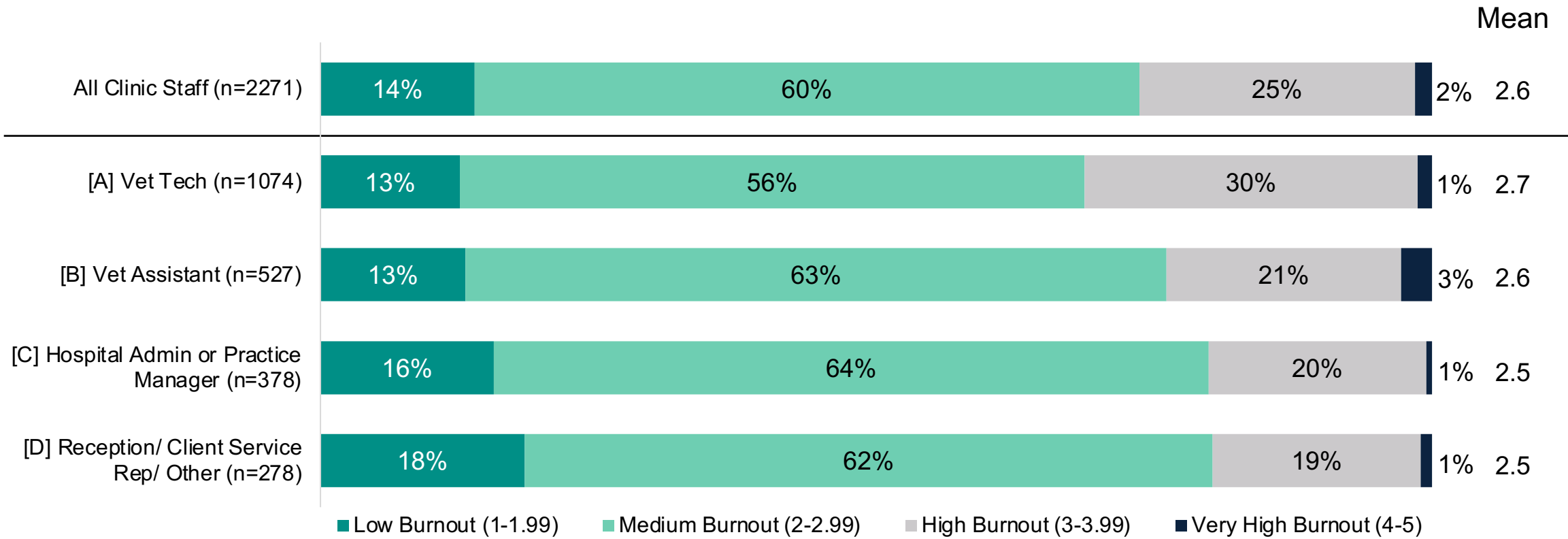
Framework for Measuring Burnout

Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT-12) includes five measures of burnout: overall burnout, cognitive impairment, emotional impairment, exhaustion, and mental distance. Exhaustion is the major contributor to burnout for team members.



Burnout Varies Among Vet Team Roles

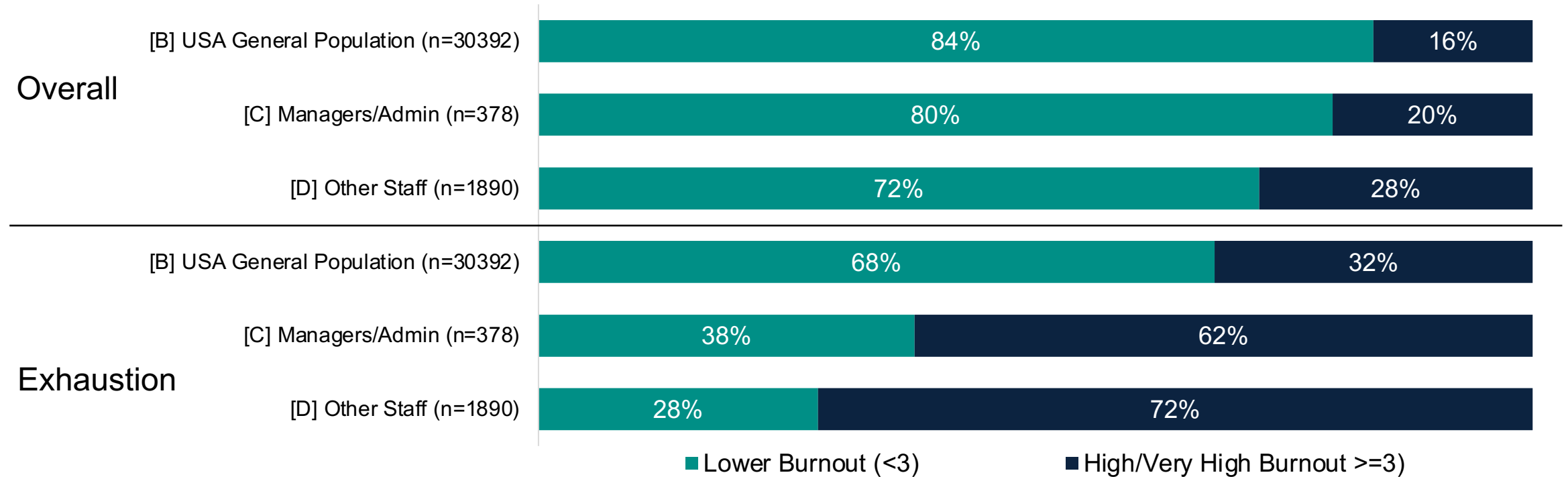
Most vet clinic team members experience at least a moderate level of burnout. Vet assistants experience the highest level of burnout compared with other groups.



QBO1. The following statements are related to your work situation and how you experience it. Please state how often each statement applies to you.
Base: All Respondents

Vet Team Burnout Higher Than General Population

- Vet team more likely to experience exhaustion
- Managers tend to have less burnout than rest of team



QBO1. The following statements are related to your work situation and how you experience it. Please state how often each statement applies to you.

Base: All Respondents

Characteristics Correlated with Low Burnout

Positive predictors

- Work-life balance
- Satisfaction with position, promotion opportunities
- Clinic culture
- Strategies to cope with stress

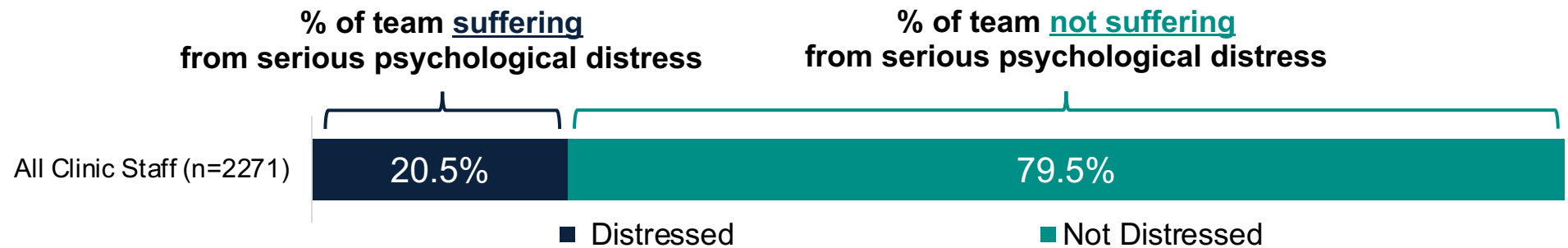
Negative predictors

- Neuroticism
- Long work hours
- Negative work environment
- Student debt

4 out of 5 Show No Signs of Serious Psychological Distress

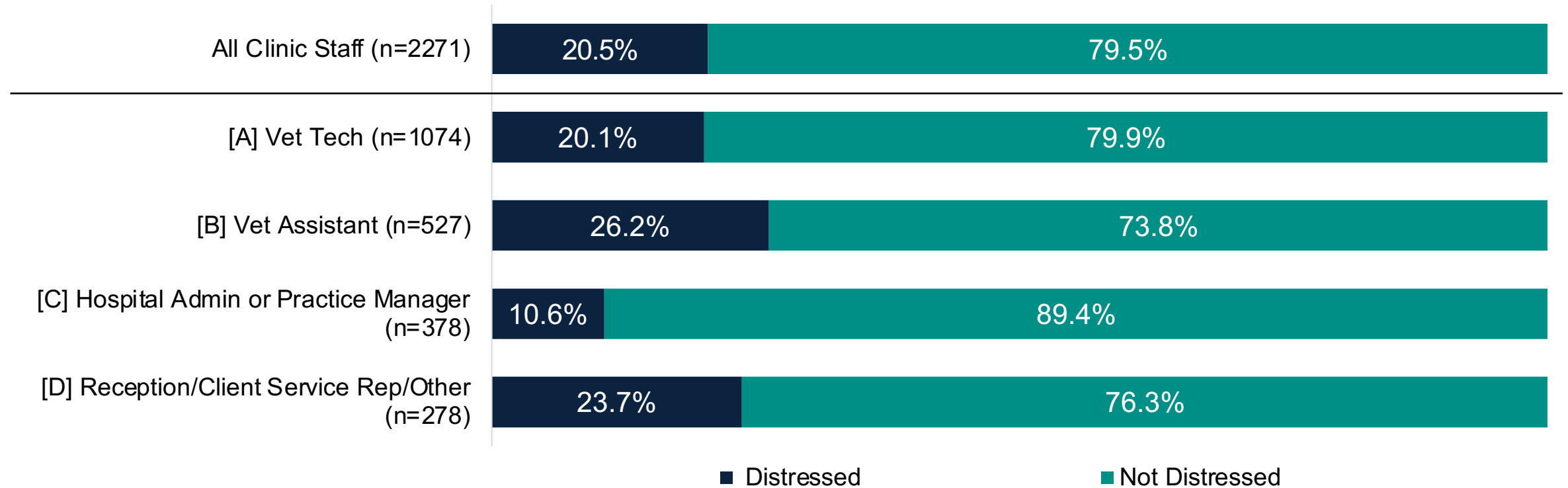
- Kessler 6 is a six-question framework for establishing a person’s emotional state and is recognized as a method for identifying individuals suffering from psychological distress or mental illness
- Around 80% of respondents did not score in the serious psychological distress category

Kessler 6 Question	Kessler 6 Scale and Points System
During the past 30 days, how much of the time did you feel each of the following... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nervous • hopeless • so sad nothing could cheer you up • worthless • restless or fidgety • that everything was an effort 	All of the time – 4 Points
	Most of the time – 3 Points
	Some of the time – 2 Points
	A little of the time – 1 Point
	None of the time – 0 Points



Serious Psychological Distress Varies by Position

- Around 90% of Hospital Admin and Practice Managers are not distressed
- Around 75% of Vet Assistants are not distressed



MH1. Results based on results of Kessler 6.
Base: All Respondents

Characteristics Correlated with Lack of Psychological Distress

Positive predictors

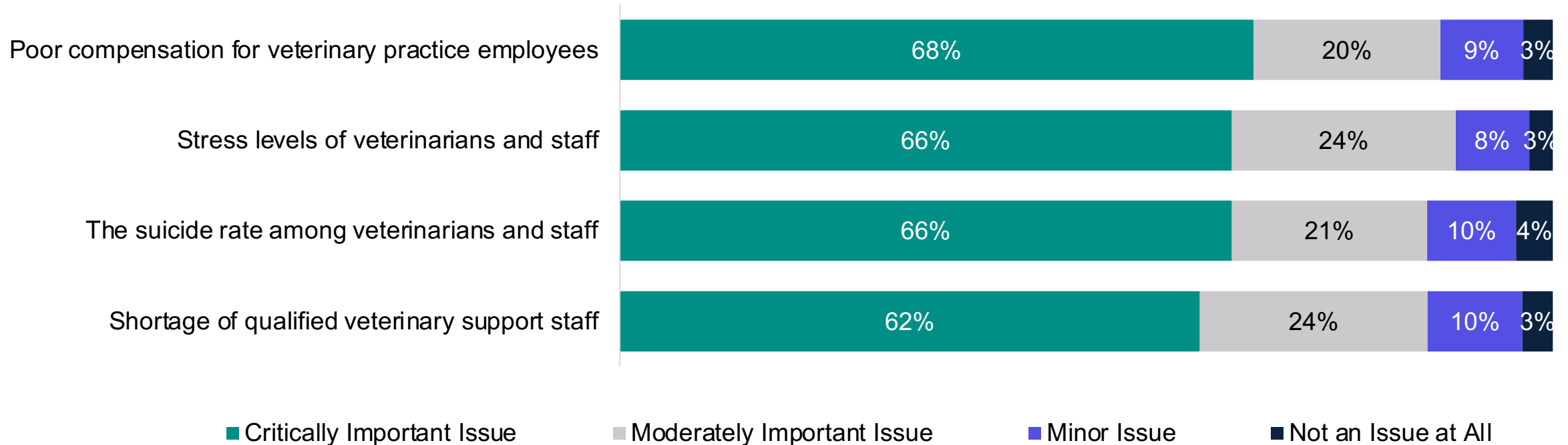
- Strategies to cope with stress
- Healthy activities
- Work-life balance
- Satisfaction with position, promotion opportunities

Negative predictors

- Neuroticism
- Negative work environment
- Long work hours
- Student debt

Team-reported Significant Challenges

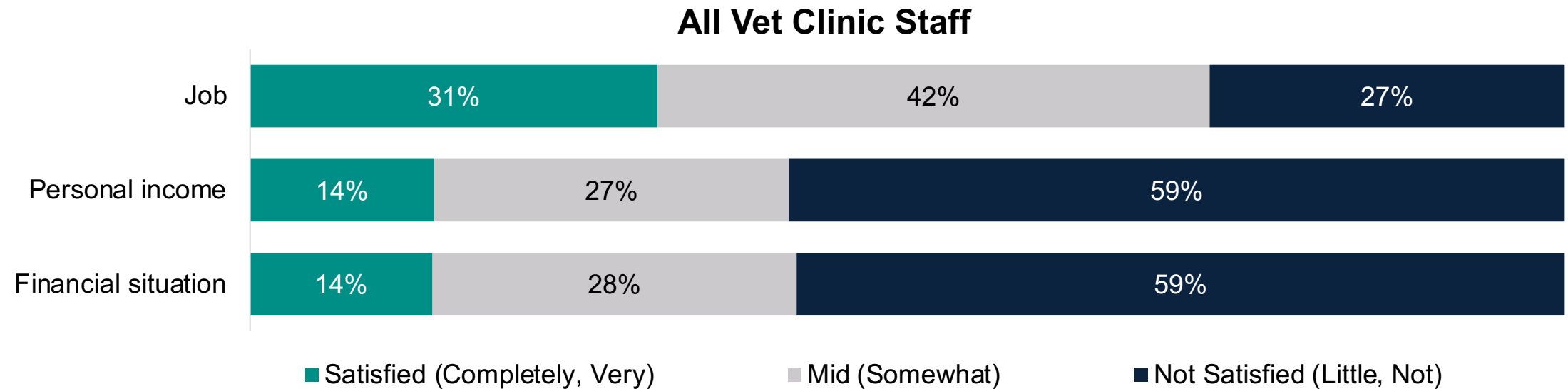
Of 14 issues, compensation was single most important, followed by stress.



ISSUE1. Listed below are several issues you may or may not consider to be significant challenges faced by the veterinary profession today. Please rate each issue using the scale below.
Base: Veterinary Staff (n=2226)

Less Satisfied With Finances Than Job

- 73% of Veterinary Staff report they have a mid to high level of job satisfaction
- Nearly 60% of Veterinary Team feel unsatisfied with their income and financial situations

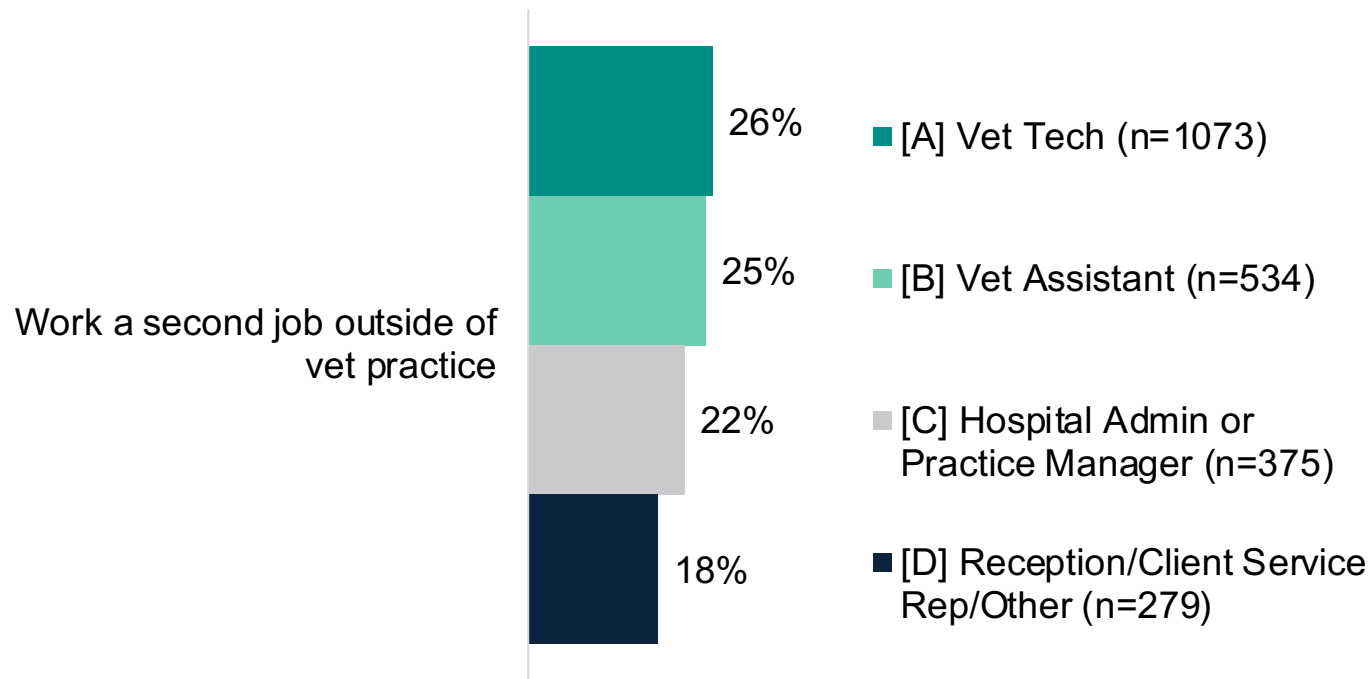


WB4. How satisfied are you with each of the following:

Base: Veterinary Staff (n=2232)

1 in 4 Work a Second Job; Many Have Student Debt

Jobs Outside of Vet Practices



Mean Student Debt

Staff Type	Mean Student Debt
Vet Tech	\$14,800
Vet Assistant	\$15,400
Admin/Manager	\$14,800
Client Service/Other	\$12,300

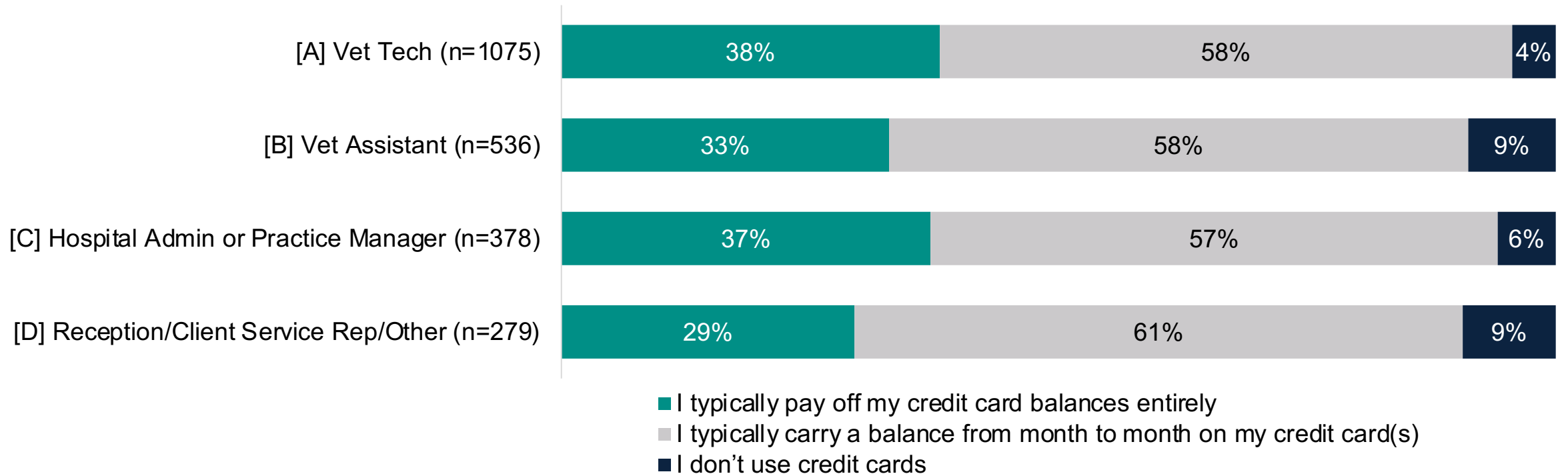
DEM9. In addition to your regular job at the veterinary practice(s), do you work a second job?

Base: All Respondents

Avg. US Credit Card Interest Rate in 2023 is 21.19%

- 47% of credit card holders carry a balance from month to month*

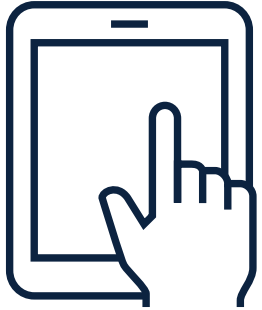
Credit Card Management



QDEM13. Do you pay off your credit card balances in a typical month, or do you carry them over from month to month?

Base: All Respondents

* Source: Bankrate survey 2023



3. Action Steps

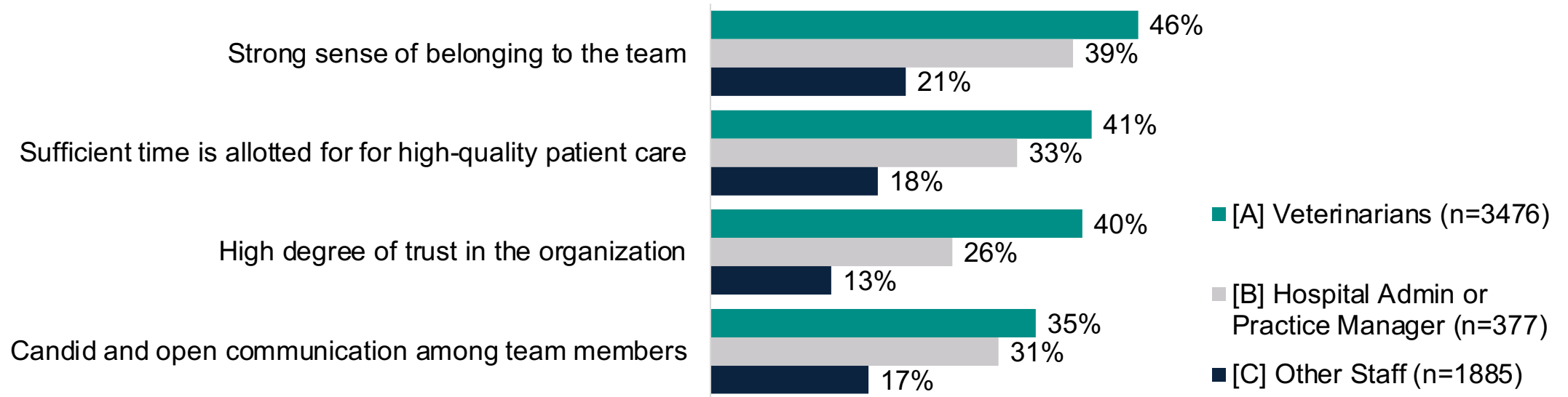


Creating a Positive, More Energized Veterinary Team

1. Create a More Constructive Clinic Culture

- Good clinic culture is a significant contributor to wellbeing, mental health, and reduced turnover
- Out of all staff, veterinarians indicate higher levels of satisfaction in their practices

Respondents Answering “Great Extent”



Showing “Great Extent”

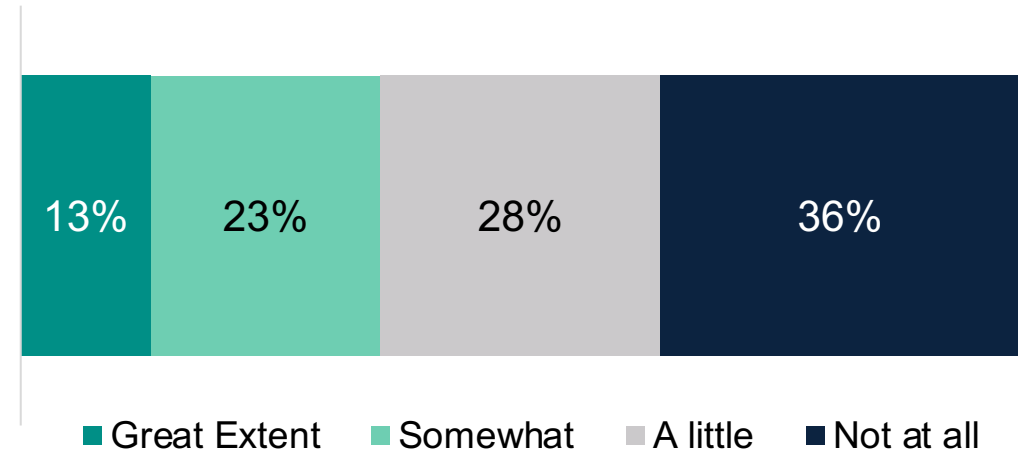
CLINIC3. Please indicate how well each of the following describes your practice.

Base: All Respondents

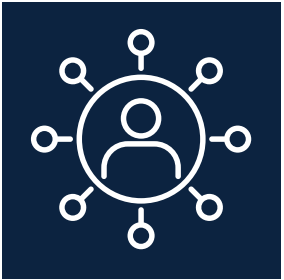
2. Improve Psychological Safety

1. Healthy, frequent discussion removes feelings of isolation
2. Create opportunities for safely discussing mental health
3. Use team meetings to highlight wellbeing resources offered to your employees
4. Discussing challenges and highlighting positives from the past week can help alleviate stress in your team

Our practice openly discusses wellbeing and mental health in team meetings



3. Create Opportunities for Advancement



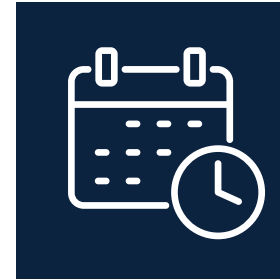
Utilize personnel
to the best of
their capabilities
and training



Provide learning
opportunities to
grow skills of team
members



Create a career
path with growth
and compensation
opportunities



Provide schedule
flexibility

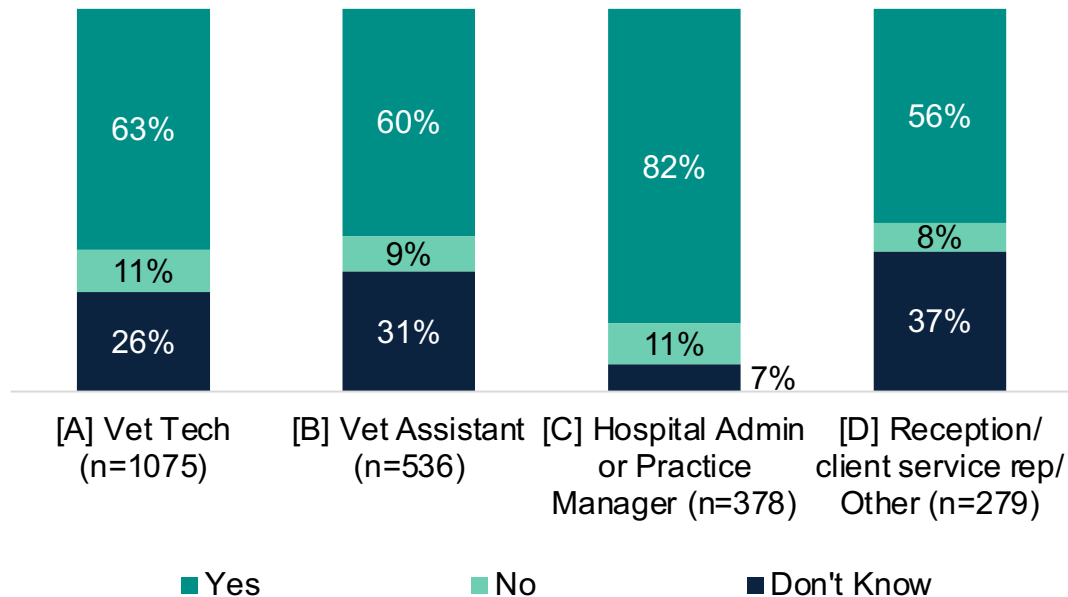


Promote autonomy
in the workplace

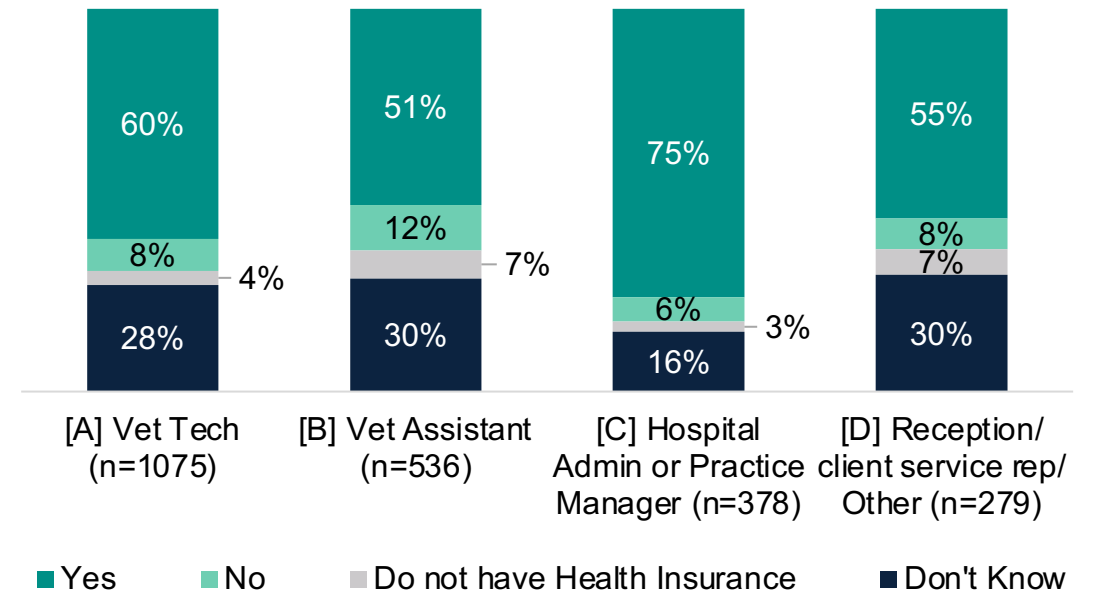
4. Employee Assistance Program and Insurance Coverage

Hospital administrators/practice managers are the most likely to have an Employee Assistance Program for mental health needs and health insurance to cover mental health treatment.

Practice has an Employee Assistance Program



Health Insurance Covers Mental Health Counseling or Treatment



MH13. Does your practice or employer offer an Employee Assistance Program (a program that helps assist employees with personal problems and/or work-related problems that may impact their job performance, physical or mental health, or emotional wellbeing)?

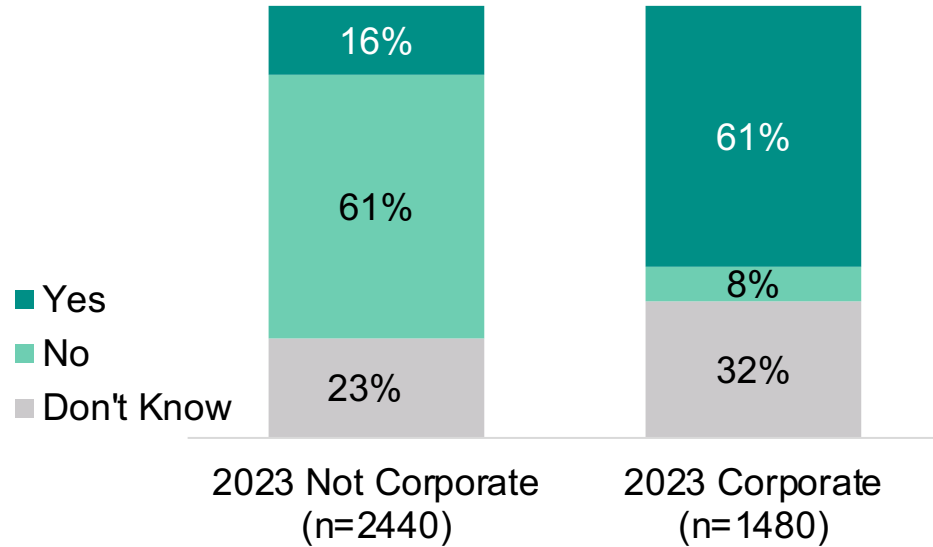
MH14. Does your health insurance provide coverage for mental health counseling or other treatment?

Base: All Respondents

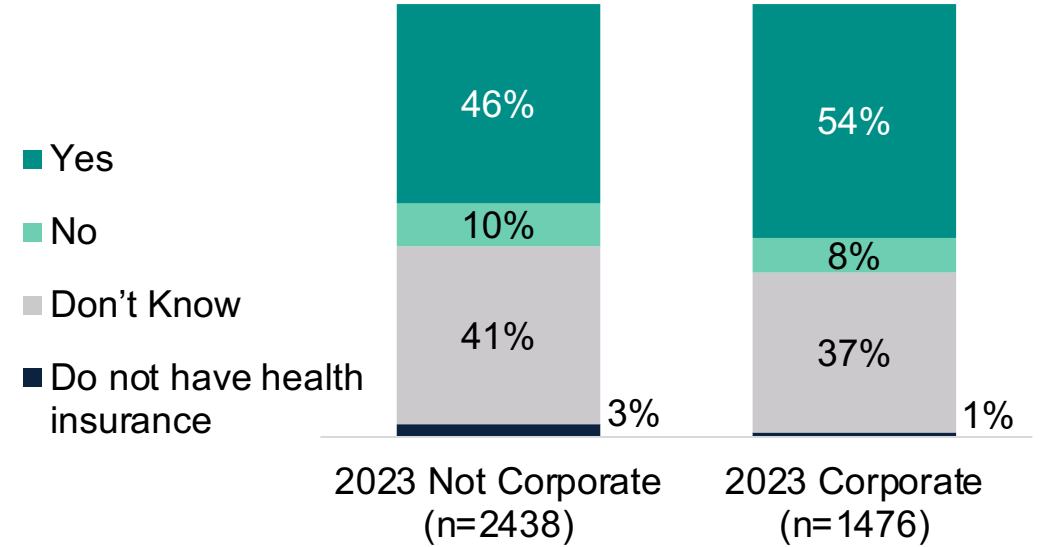
Corporate Practices More Likely to Provide Coverage, EAP

61% of corporate practices offer an Employee Assistance Program.

Employee Assistance Program



Mental Health Coverage



MH13. Does your practice or employer offer an Employee Assistance Program (a program that helps assist employees with personal problems and/or work-related problems that may impact their job performance, physical or mental health, or emotional wellbeing)

MH14. Does your health insurance provide coverage for mental health counseling or other treatment?

Base: All Respondents

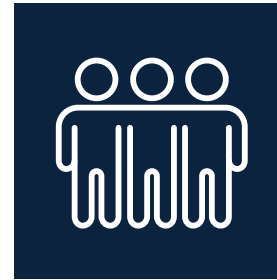
5. Provide Access to Resources Useful to Team



Mental health experts
such as veterinary
social workers



Financial advisors



External peer
support groups



Continuing education
on professional skills

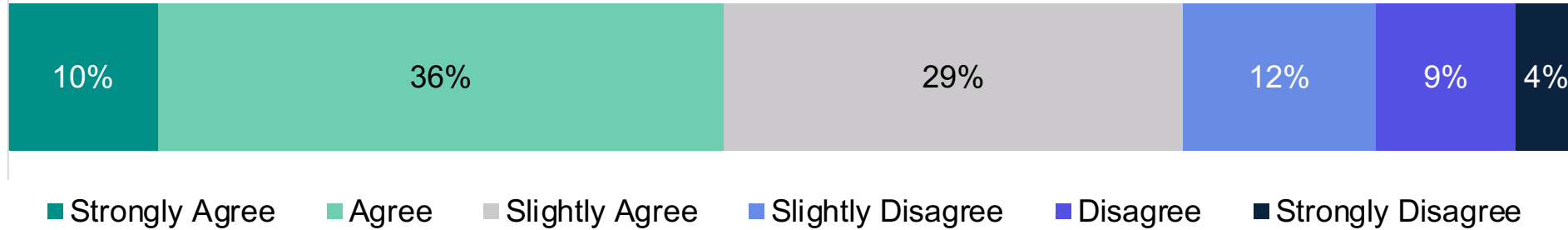


How Team Members Can Reduce Stress and Improve Quality of Life

1. Healthy Coping Methods Reduce Distress

“I have a healthy method for dealing with stress in my life”

[A] 2023 Vets
(n=4636)



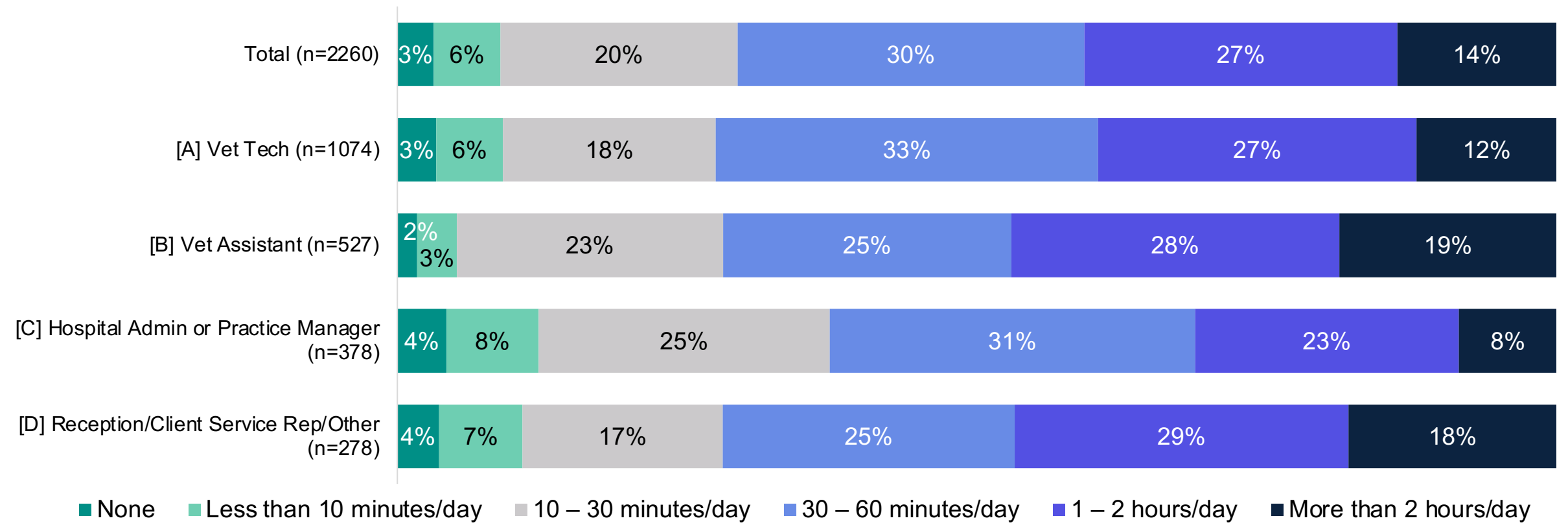
Effective	Not Effective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I take comfort in the belief that problems will work themselves out. I accept the situation without getting caught up in the emotions. I distract myself with TV, computer games, etc,... I take care of problems that cause stress. I make changes to my life to reduce stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I try to forget about it and hope it would go away.

MH15 Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: I have a healthy method for dealing with stress in my life.

Base: All Respondents

2. Avoid Excessive Time on Social Media

More than one hour per day associated with serious psychological distress

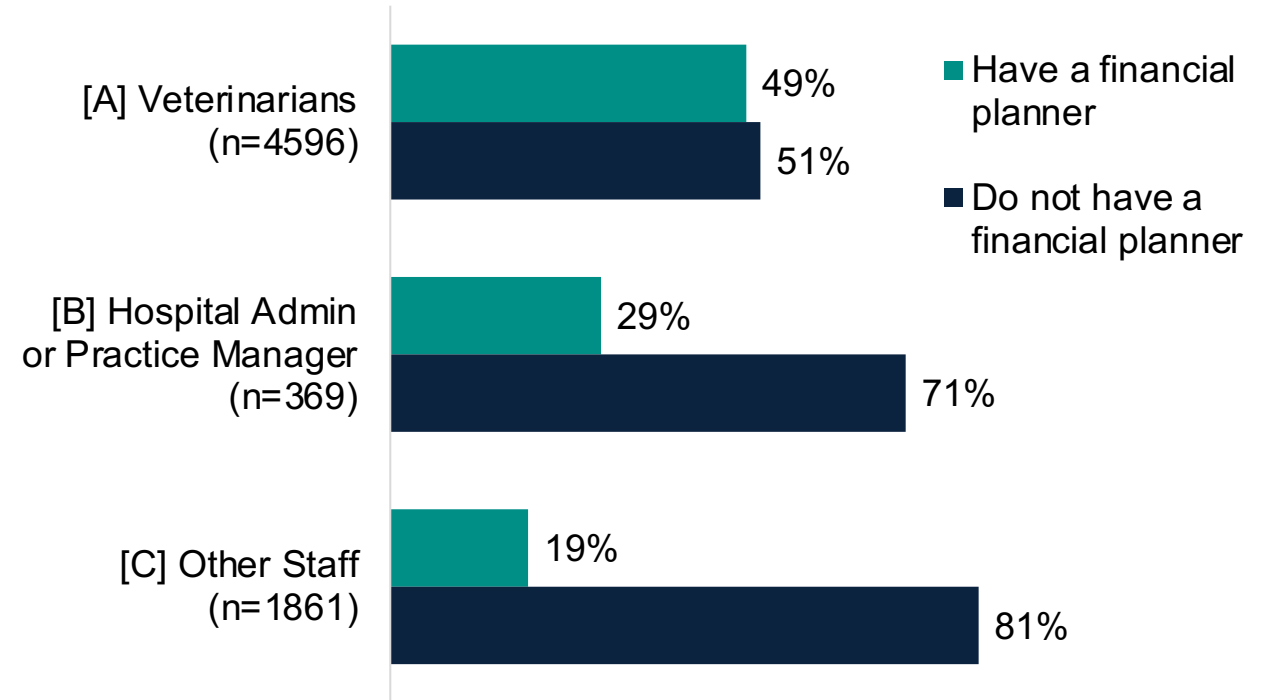


DEM10. Approximately how many hours per day, if any, do you spend on social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)?
 Base: All Respondents

3. Engage a Financial Advisor

- A financial advisor can help
 - Reduce credit card debt
 - Manage student debt
 - Stretch your budget
- Resource:
 - National Association of Personal Financial Advisors
<https://www.napfa.org/find-an-advisor>

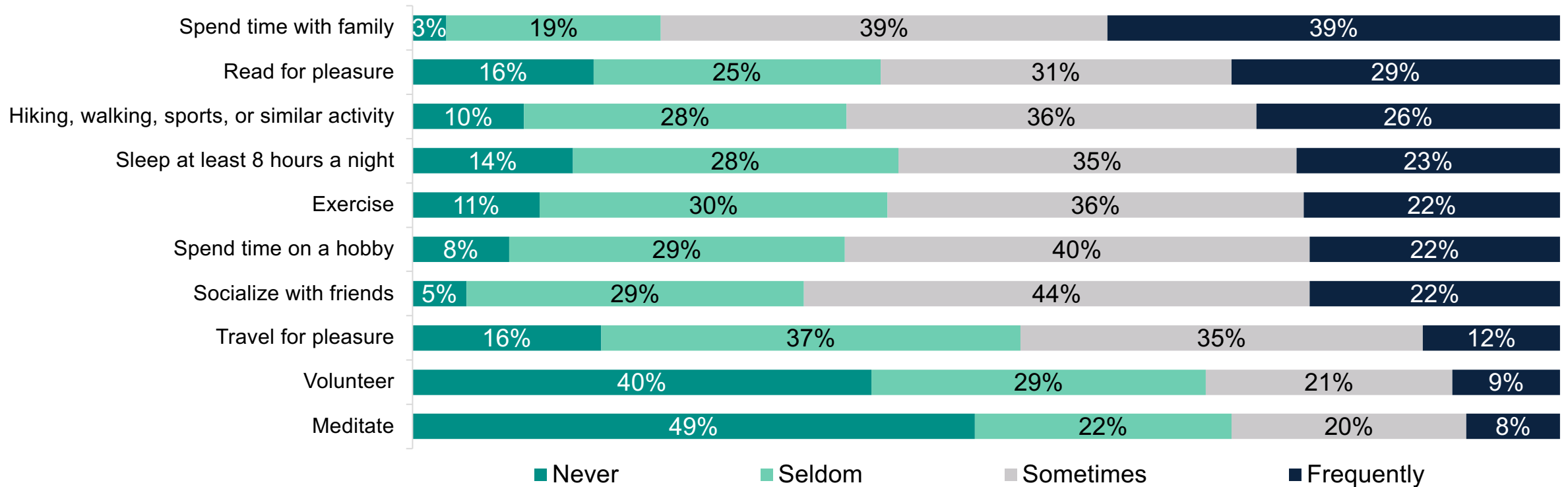
Financial Planner



4. Manage Work-Life Balance Effectively

Socializing with friends and family especially important

How often do you do the following...



P3. Approximately how often do you do each of the following, if at all...

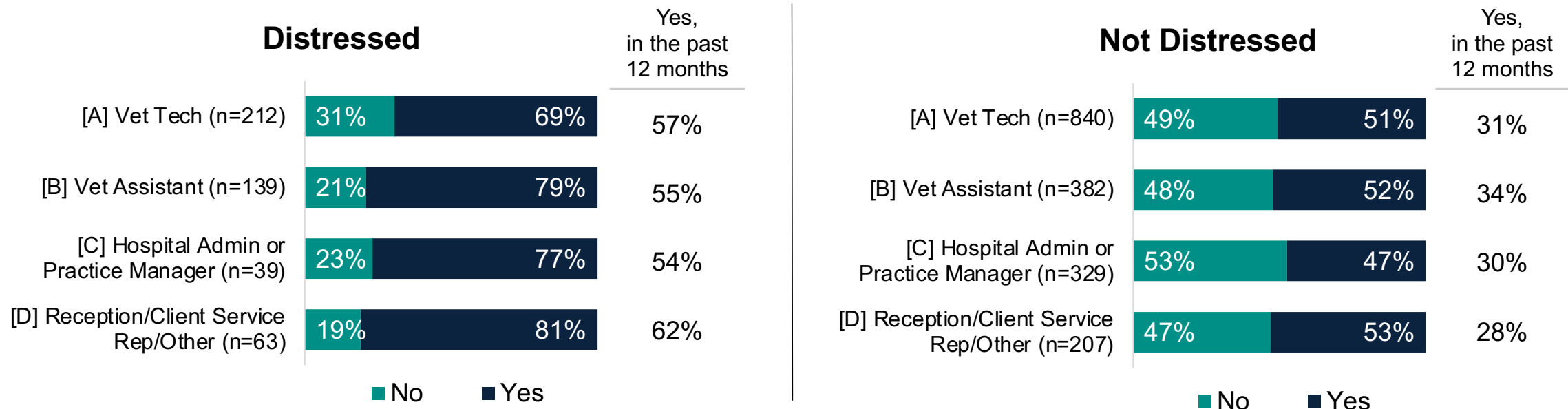
Base: All Respondents

5. Seek Counseling When Needed

Tele-behavioral health widely available,
easily accessible

Resources: <https://www.betterhelp.com>
<https://www.talkspace.com>

Needed Mental Health Treatment or Therapy but Didn't Get It



MH5. Was there ever a time when you wanted mental health treatment or counseling for yourself but didn't get it?

Base: All Respondents



4. Conclusions/Q&A

Conclusions

1. Veterinary team members find their work meaningful and important
2. Most are satisfied with their job
3. Wellbeing and mental health are lower than the general population; burnout is higher
4. Personality plays a role, as does poor financial health
5. The research shows that there are many things individuals and practices can do to improve wellbeing and reduce burnout





Q&A