

Improving Wellbeing and Mental Health



Merck Animal Health
2023 Veterinary
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

Goals:

1. Definitively quantify the prevalence of mental illness and stress in the veterinary profession
2. Compare to previous studies and general US population

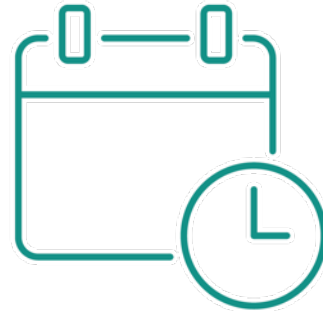
Objectives:

1. Determine levels of mental health, wellbeing, and burnout using standardized tools with a representative sample of veterinarians
2. Identify at-risk segments and contributing factors
3. Suggest organizational and personal remedies and interventions if needed

Six Major Studies

- 2017** Veterinarian Wellbeing Study
- 2019** Veterinarian Wellbeing Study II
- 2021** Veterinarian Wellbeing Study III
Veterinary Team Wellbeing Study
- 2023** Veterinarian Wellbeing Study IV
Veterinary Team Wellbeing Study II

About the Study



4th biennial study



Large scale:
4,700 respondents

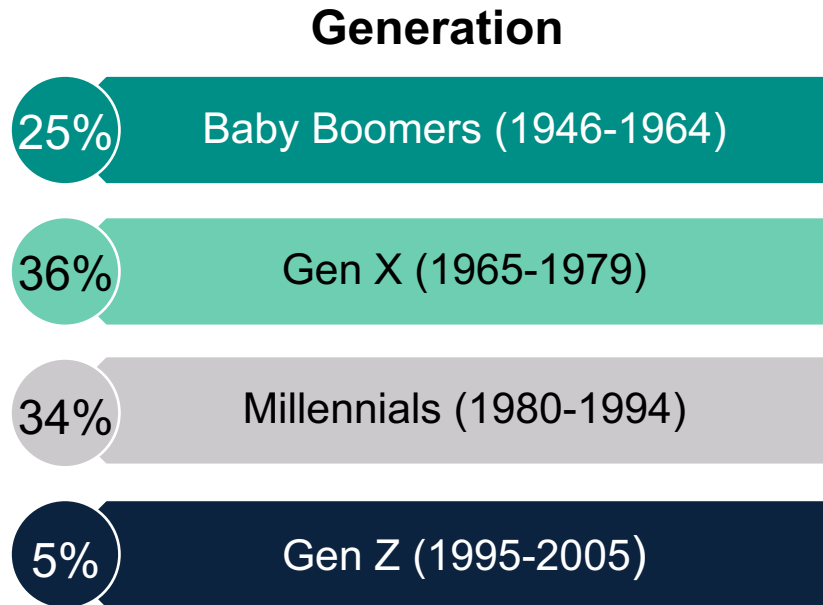
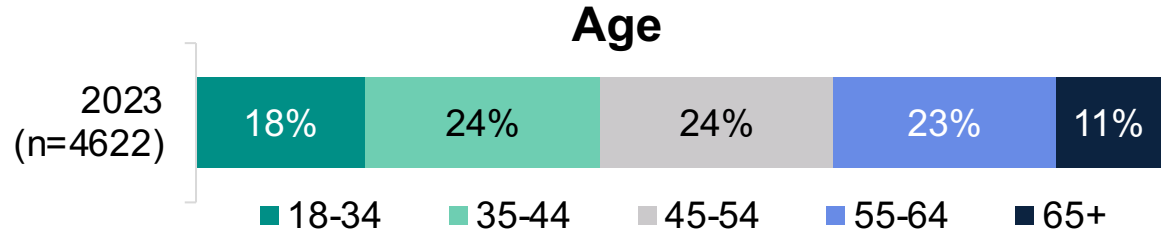


Representative:
Weighted by age, gender,
region of US

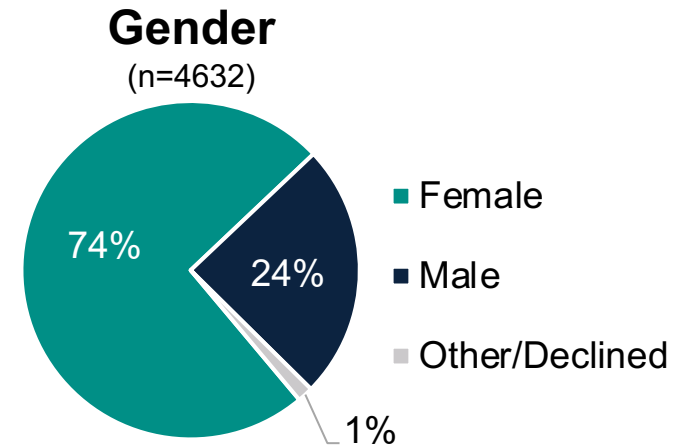
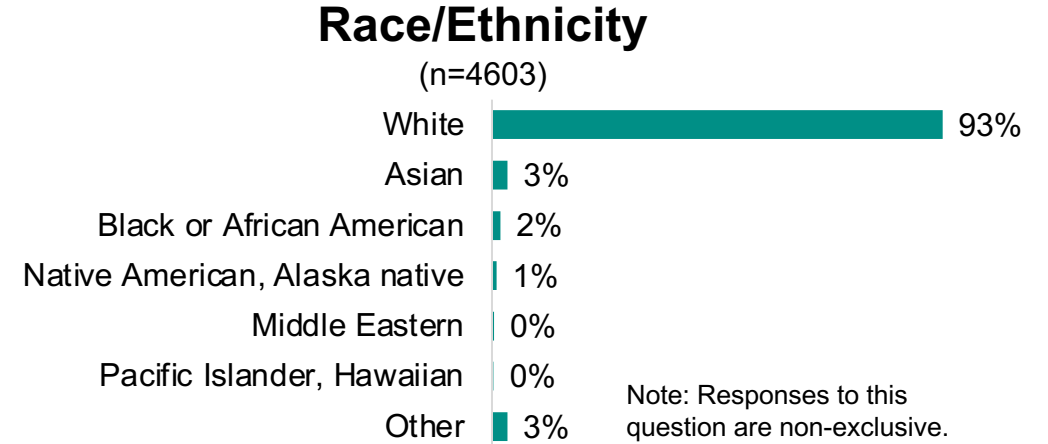


Margin of error at
95% confidence interval
+/- 1.4%

Respondent Profile

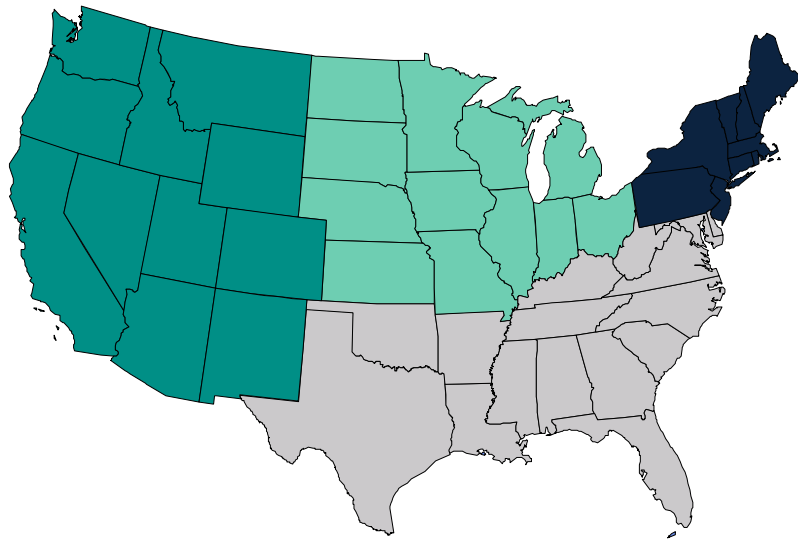


Note: 0.05% were older than Baby Boomers.

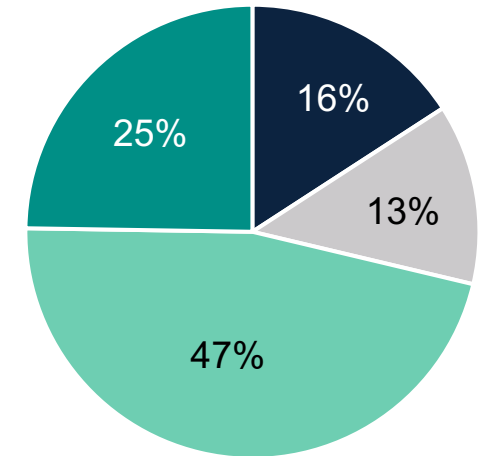


Base: All Respondents (n=4622)

Respondent Profile – Geographical Representation



Region	Percent
Northeast	16%
South	35%
Midwest	26%
West	23%



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

*Note: Data on this slide was unweighted.

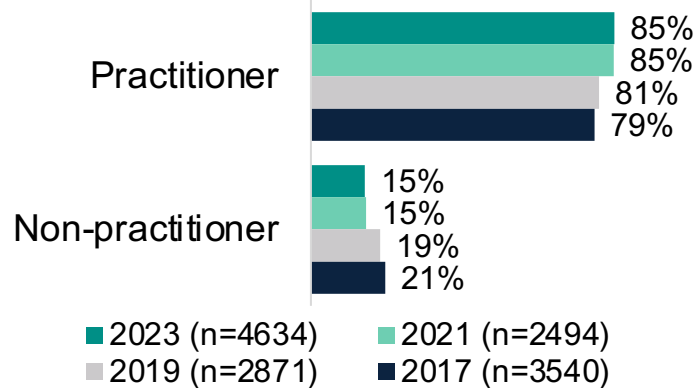
SC5. In what state were you located?

SC6. How would you characterize your practice – as mostly serving urban, suburban, or rural clients?

Base: All Respondents (n=4636)

Respondent Profile – Type of Employment

Type of Veterinarian



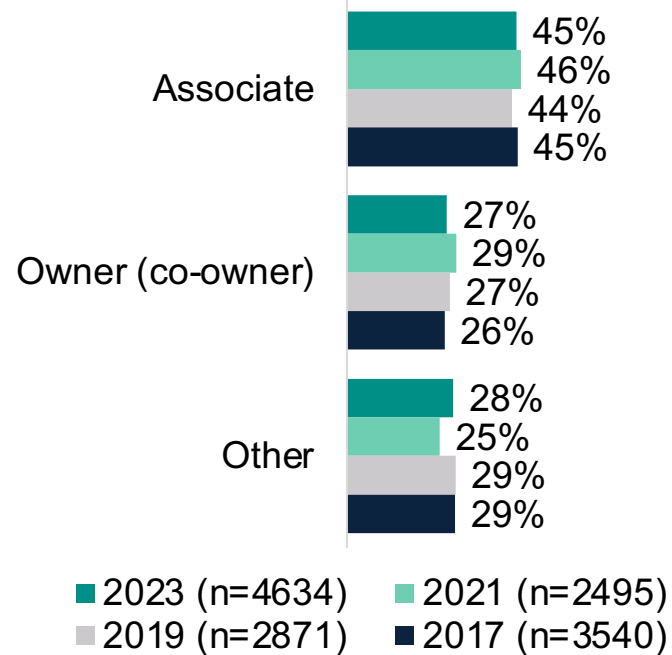
Animals Seen at Practice*

Year	Companion Animal	Food Animal	Mixed	Equine
2023 (n=3799)	74%	2%	5%	4%
2021 (n=2111)	71%	3%	6%	4%
2019 (n=2314)	61%	7%†	7%	3%
2017 (n=2805)	67%	2%	2%	4%

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

Base: Practicing Veterinarians

Type of Employment*



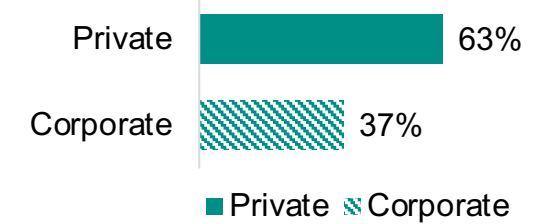
Other Includes:

Relief, Consultants, Medical Directors, Professors, Executives, Industry Roles, Managers, Academic Clinicians, Researchers in addition to some other roles. They are all in small percents and not broken out individually here.

SC2. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

Base: All Respondents

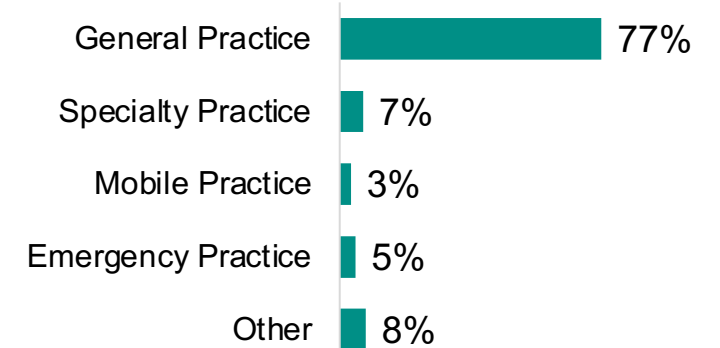
Practice Ownership Type*



SC4A. Please classify the ownership of the practice at which you work.

Base: Practicing Veterinarians (n=3799)

Type of Primary Practice*



SC4. Which of the following best describes your practice?

Base: Practicing Veterinarians (n=3799)



1. Key Findings



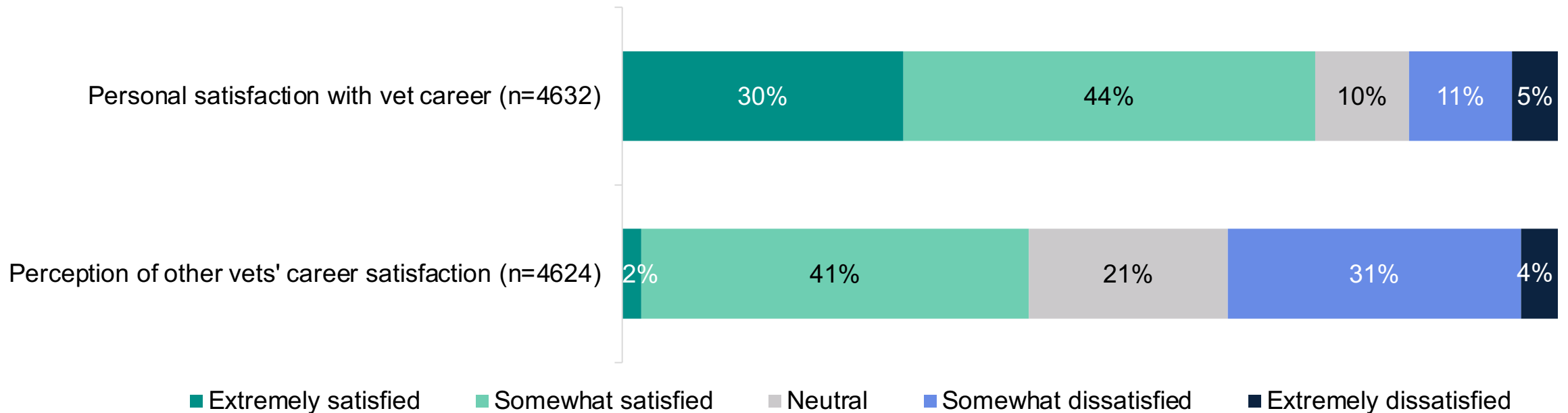


The Reality Is More Positive Than Perception

Many Veterinarians Satisfied With Their Careers, but Perceive Many in Industry as Dissatisfied

74% of respondents indicate they are somewhat or extremely satisfied with their careers

Career Satisfaction



DEM18A. How satisfied are you with your career overall in veterinary medicine?

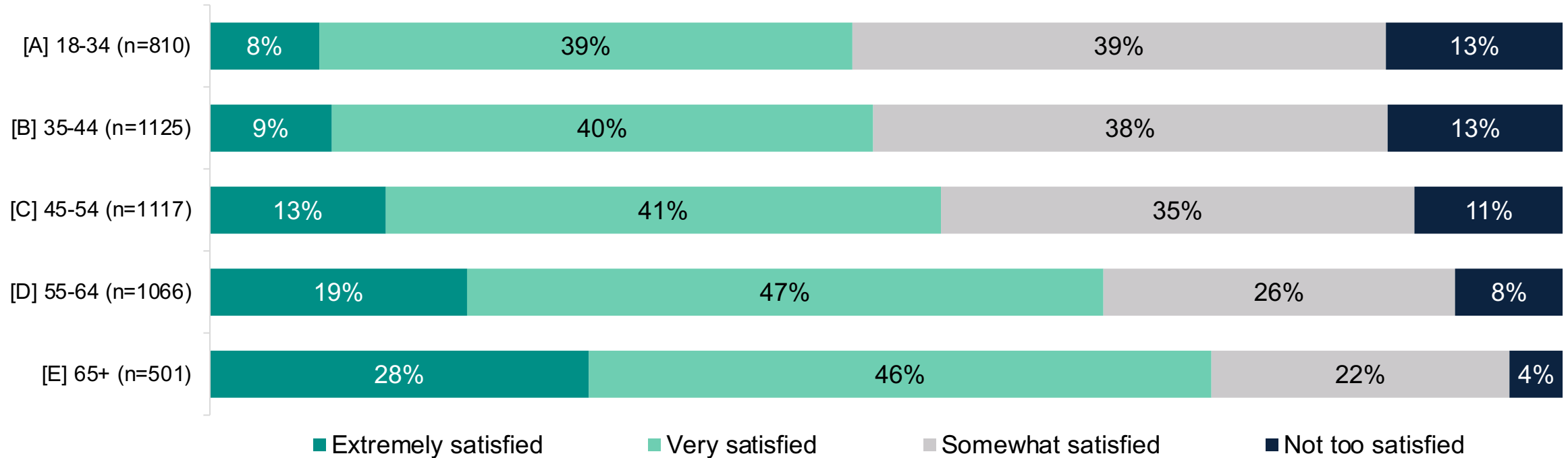
DEM18B. How satisfied do you think veterinarians, in general, are with their careers in veterinary medicine?

Base: All Respondents

Job Satisfaction Improves With Age

More than 50% of veterinarians over 45 are very/extremely satisfied with their jobs

Age

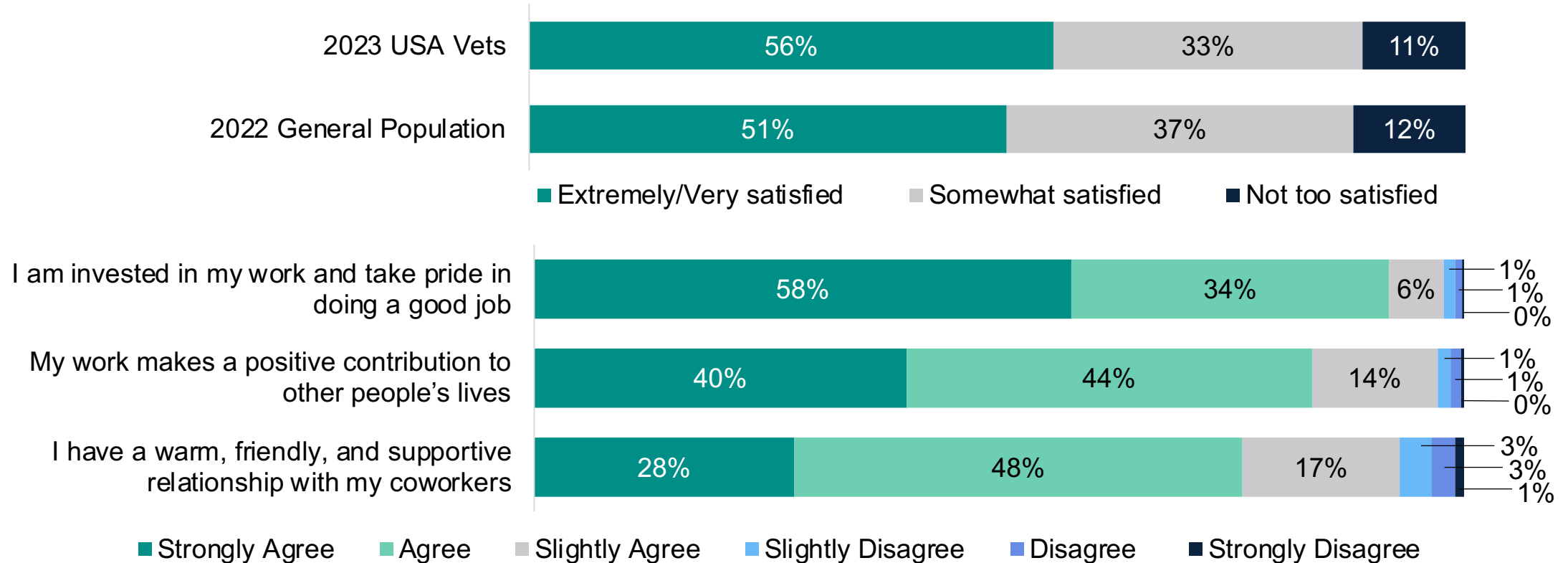


WB6. Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?

Base: All Respondents

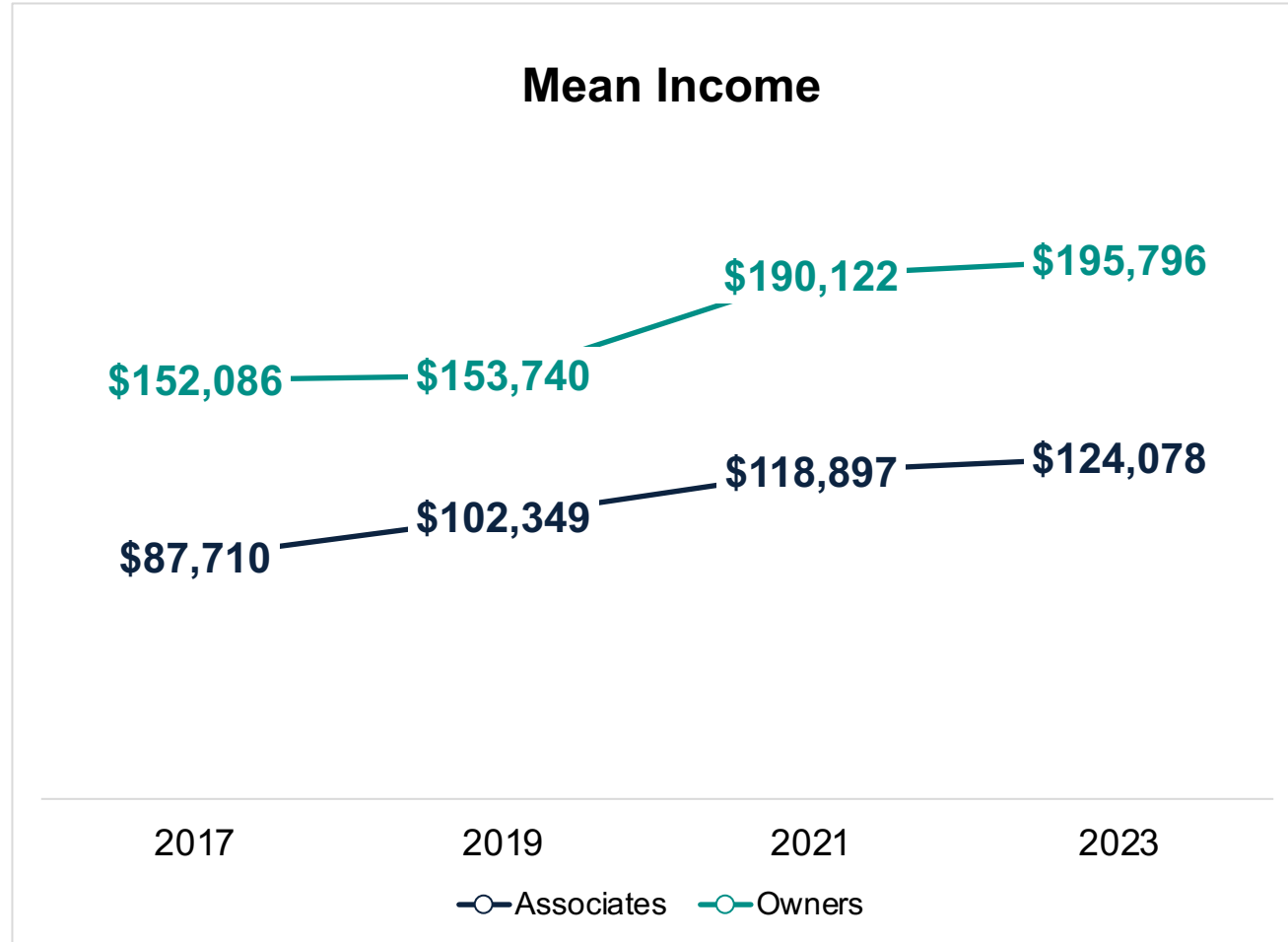
Vets Have Higher Job Satisfaction Than General Population

92% of respondents say they take pride in their work



WB6. Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?
Base: All Respondents

Incomes Increasing

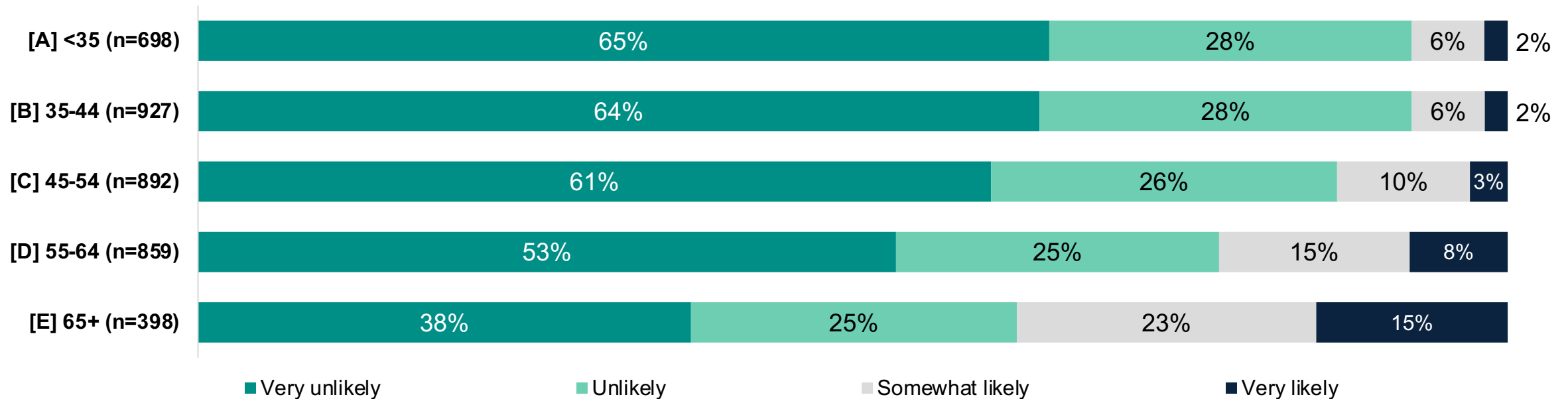


Base: All Respondents

Most Likely Reason for Leaving the Profession? Retirement

- Retirement is likely the key reason for leaving
- Less than 2.5% of veterinarians under the age of 55 are very likely to leave the profession within the next two years

Likelihood to Leave the Overall Veterinary Field



DEM20. How likely were you to leave veterinary medicine within two years?

Base: Practicing Veterinarians only

Positive Findings Indicate Thriving Profession

- 92% surveyed are invested and take pride in their work
- 74% satisfied with their career
- Work-life balance improves as work hours decrease
- Incomes going up
- Positive attitude toward career





2. Detailed Findings





Wellbeing, Burnout, and Mental Health

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



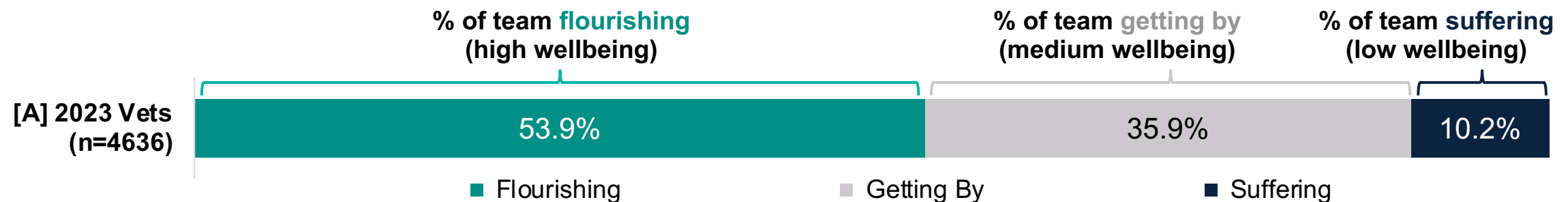
Mental health

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

Veterinarian Wellbeing Consistent With Non-Vets

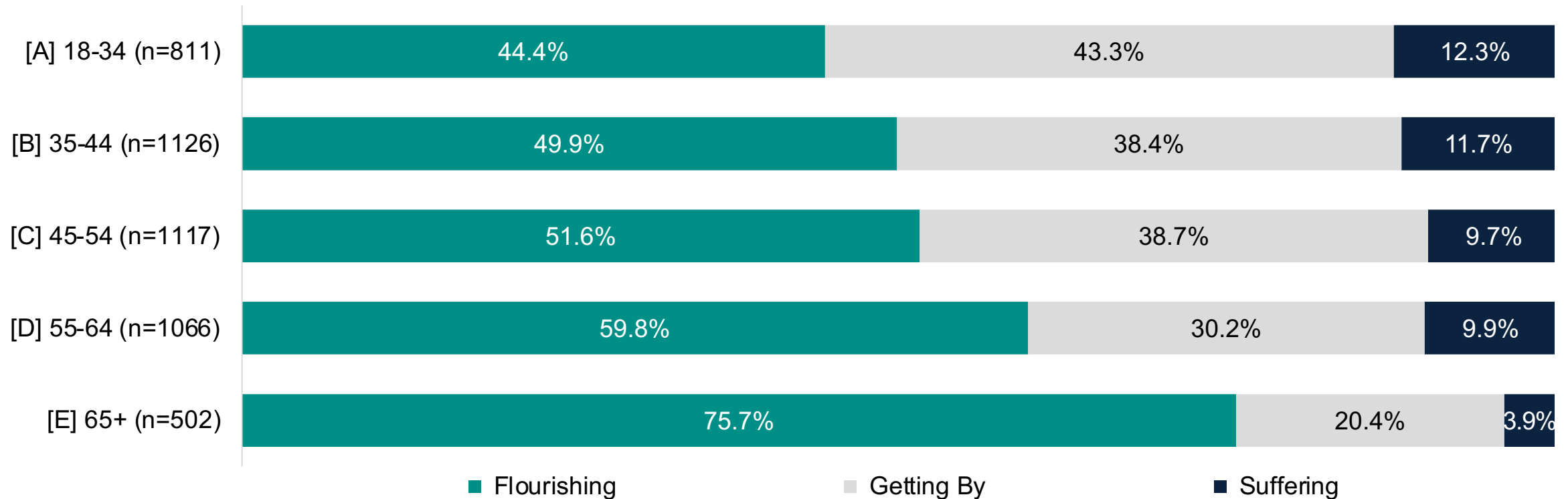
More than 53% of respondents say they have a high level of wellbeing and are flourishing.

Wellbeing Question	Wellbeing Scale and Points System
Examination of wellbeing uses a series of three questions:	Responses were indexed on a 11-point scale
1. How satisfied were you with your life as a whole?	Flourishing - 7-10
2. On a 10-step ladder, on which step do you feel you personally stand at the present time (0 = worst; 10 = best possible)	Getting By - 4-6.99
3. On a 5-point scale, indicate agreement or disagreement with: “In most cases my life was close to ideal”	Suffering - 0-3.99



More Experience Means Higher Wellbeing

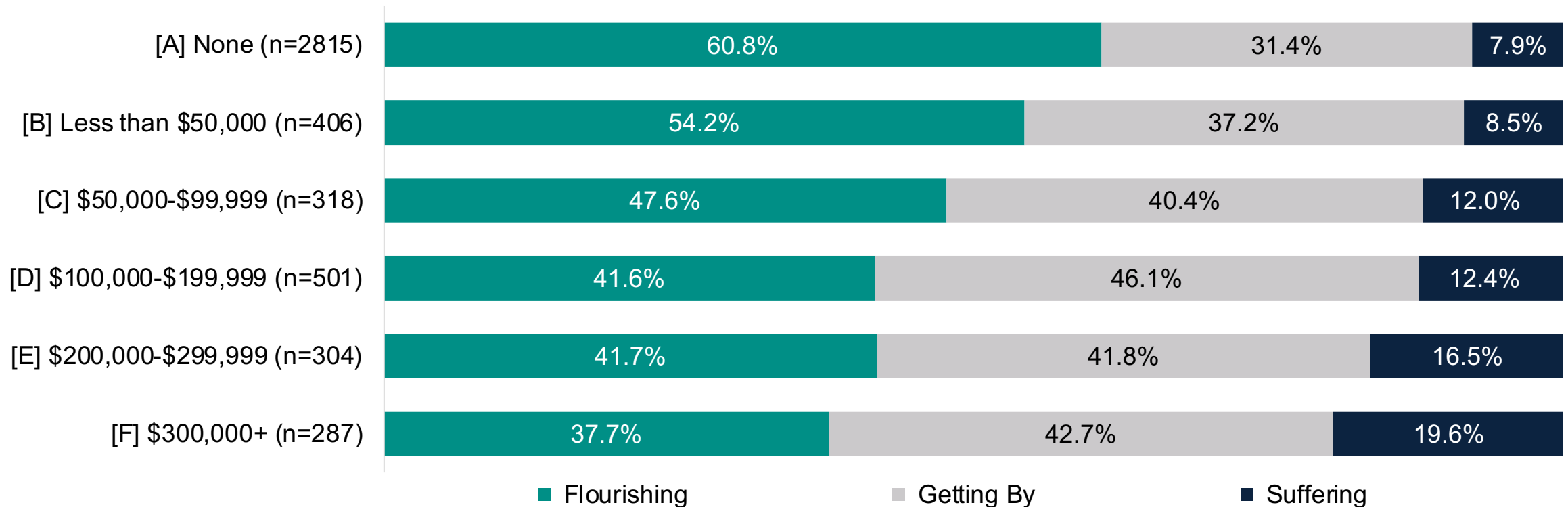
More than 50% of veterinarians over 45 are flourishing in their careers



Wellbeing Index
Base: All Respondents

Student Debt Affects Wellbeing

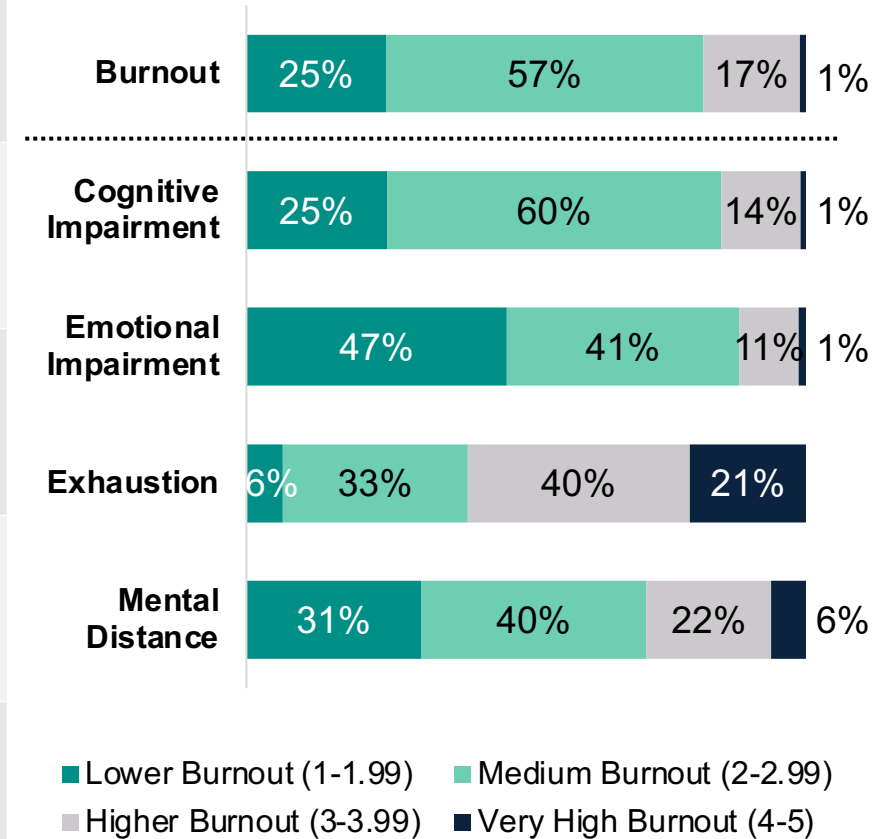
More than 60% of respondents with no student debt say they are flourishing



Wellbeing Index
Base: All Respondents

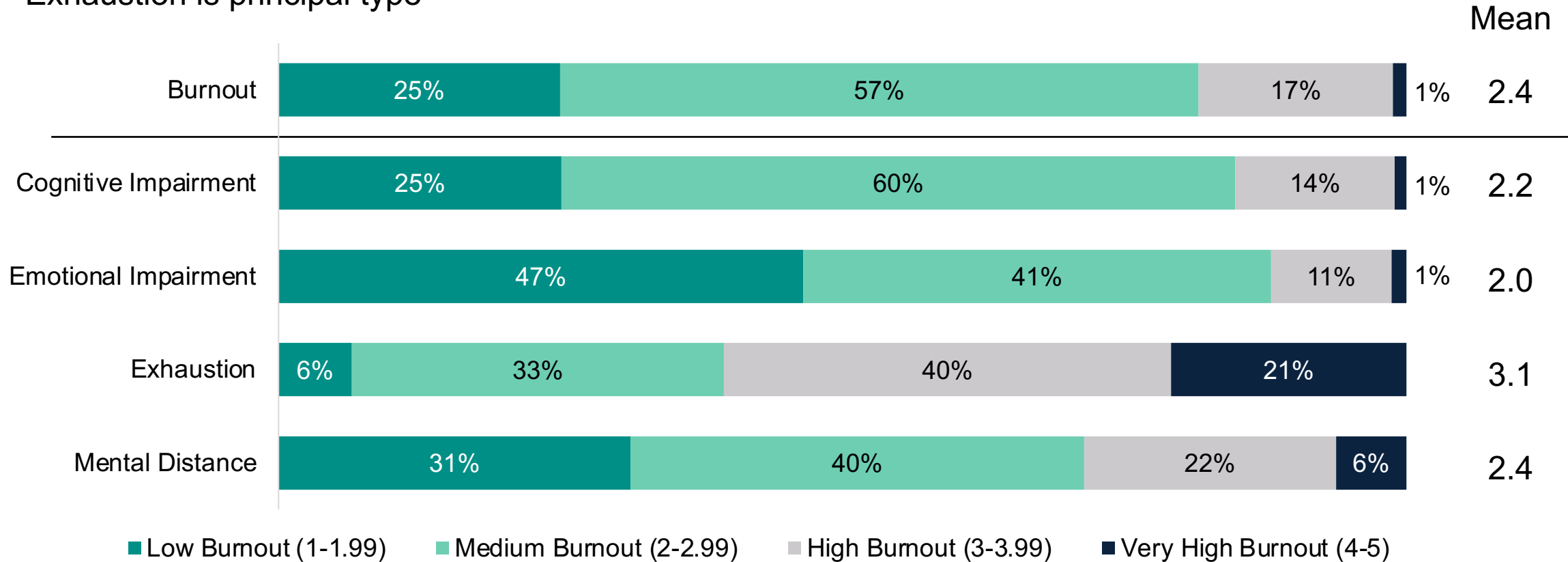
A New Comprehensive Tool to Measure Burnout

BAT-12 Questions	Responses
<p>The following statements are related to your work situation and how you experience it. Please state how often each statement applies to you.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (Exhaustion) At work, I feel mentally exhausted. (Exhaustion) After a day at work, I find it hard to recover my energy. (Exhaustion) At work, I feel physically exhausted. (Mental Distance) I struggle to find any enthusiasm for my work. (Mental Distance) I feel a strong aversion toward my job. (Mental Distance) I'm cynical about what my work means to others. (Cognitive Impairment) At work, I have trouble staying focused. (Cognitive Impairment) When I'm working, I have trouble concentrating. (Cognitive Impairment) I make mistakes in my work because I have my mind on other things. (Emotional Impairment) At work, I feel unable to control my emotions. (Emotional Impairment) I do not recognize myself in the way I react emotionally at work. (Emotional Impairment) At work, I may overreact unintentionally. 	5 – Always
	4 – Often
	3 – Sometimes
	2 – Rarely
	1 – Never



Most Veterinarians Experience Low to Medium Burnout

Exhaustion is principal type

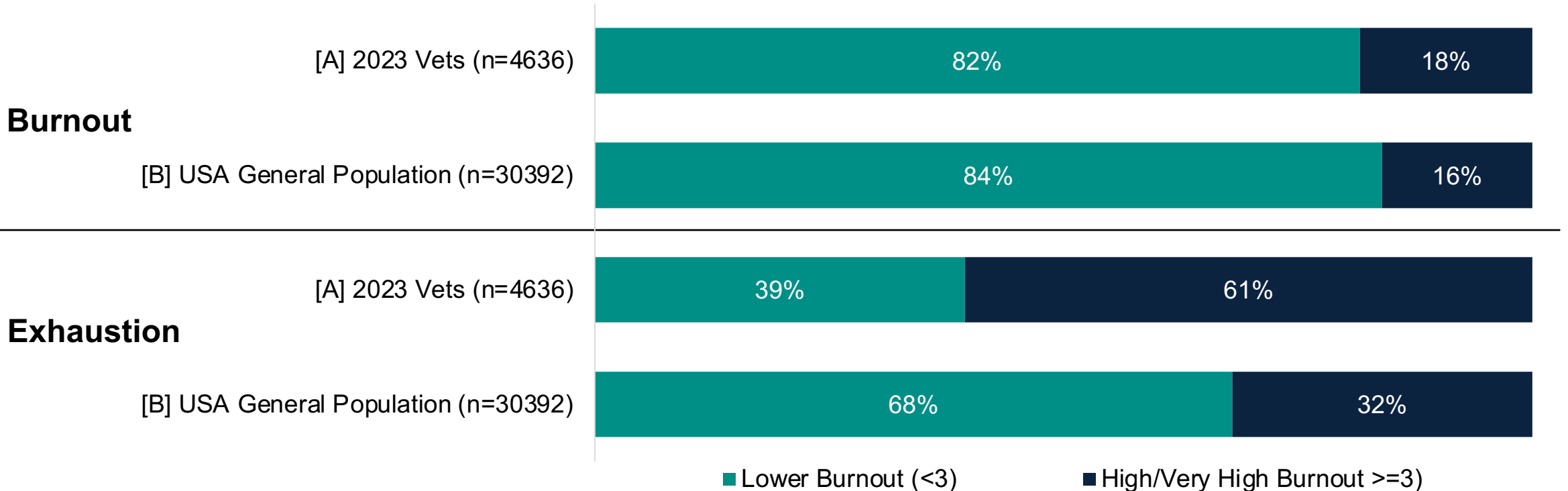


QBO1. The following statements are related to your work situation and how you experience it. Please state how often each statement applies to you.

Base: All Respondents

Overall Burnout in Veterinarians Similar to General Population

Veterinarians experience a similar level of burnout as the general population, but higher levels of exhaustion.

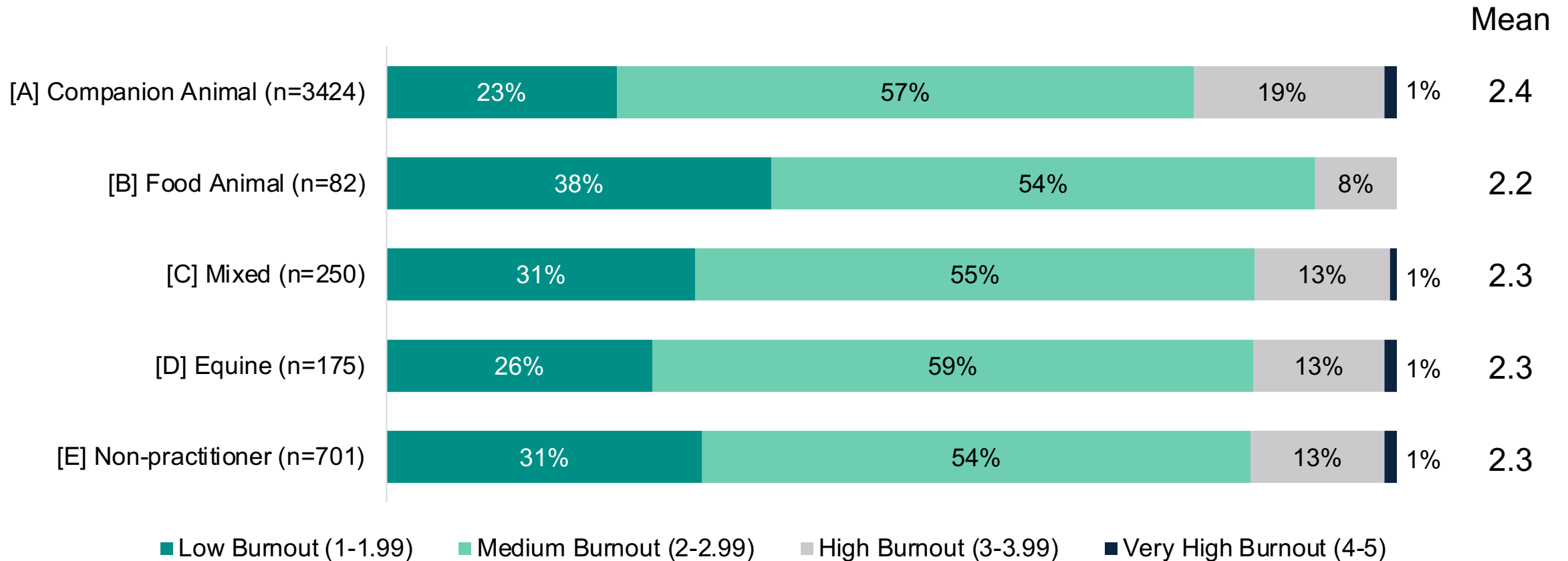


*General population data are from the 2023 McKinsey Health Institute Employee Holistic Health Survey.

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

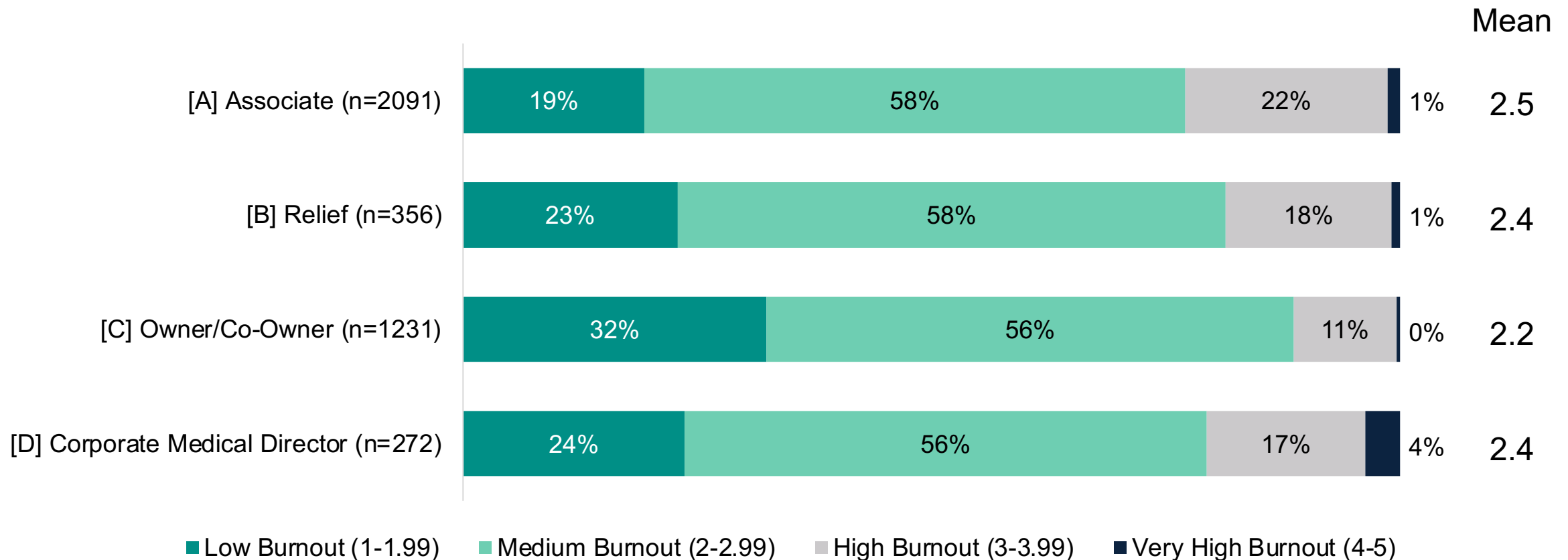
Food Animal Vets Experience Less Burnout



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

Some Variation by Role in Practice

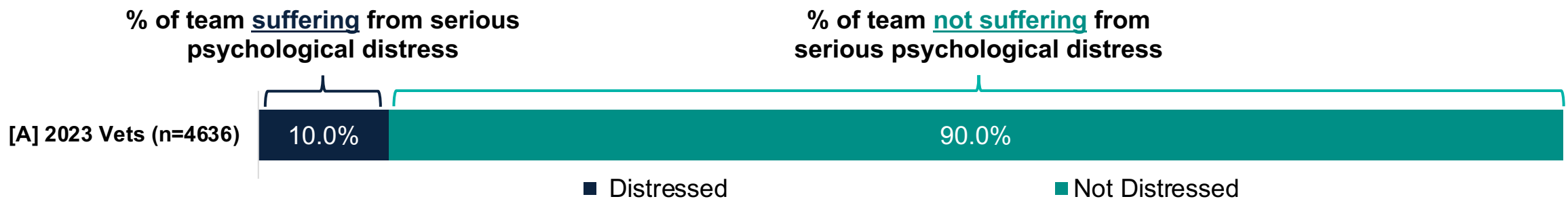


QBO1. The following statements are related to your work situation and how you experience it. Please state how often each statement applies to you.

Base: All Respondents

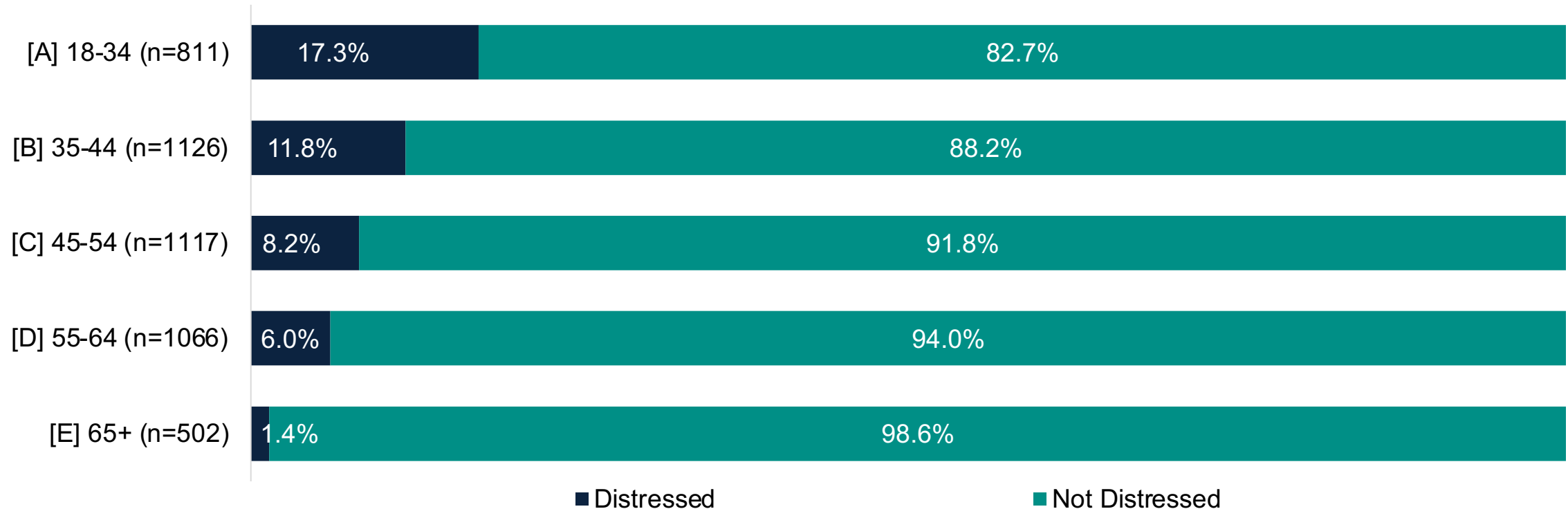
Serious Psychological Distress Measured by Kessler 6

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 Affects More Younger Vets

- 90% in the profession are not distressed
- Opportunity to offer more support for younger professionals



MH1. Results based on results of Kessler 6.

Base: All Respondents

Big Picture: Veterinarians Are People Too



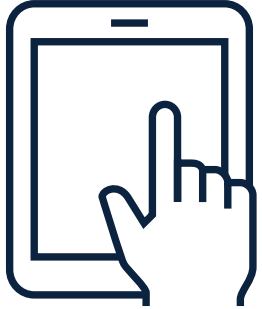
Many wellbeing and mental health measures were similar to non-veterinarians



Mid-to-late career professionals are happier, less stressed, and less burned out



Early career veterinarians are more vulnerable



3. Action Steps



Focus on Prevention, Not Just Diagnosis

Personal

- Work-life balance
- Active social life
- Positive Coping Mechanism
- Financial advisors

Practice

- Reduce stigma through discussion
- Foster healthy culture
- EAP
- Health insurance coverage

Progress: 2017-2023

Increase in Those Seeking Treatment

13% → 25%



Mental Health Insurance Coverage

44% → 52%



Employee Assistance Programs

21% → 38%

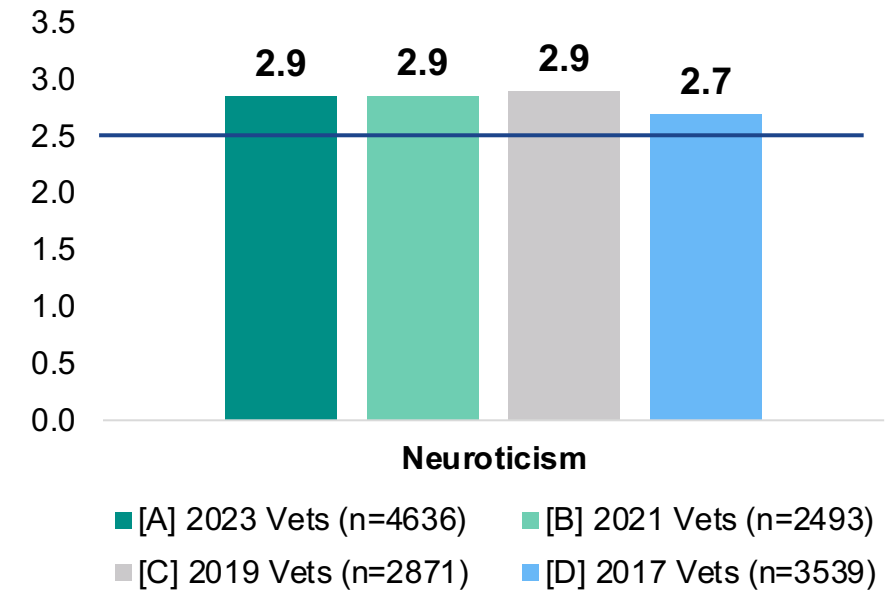
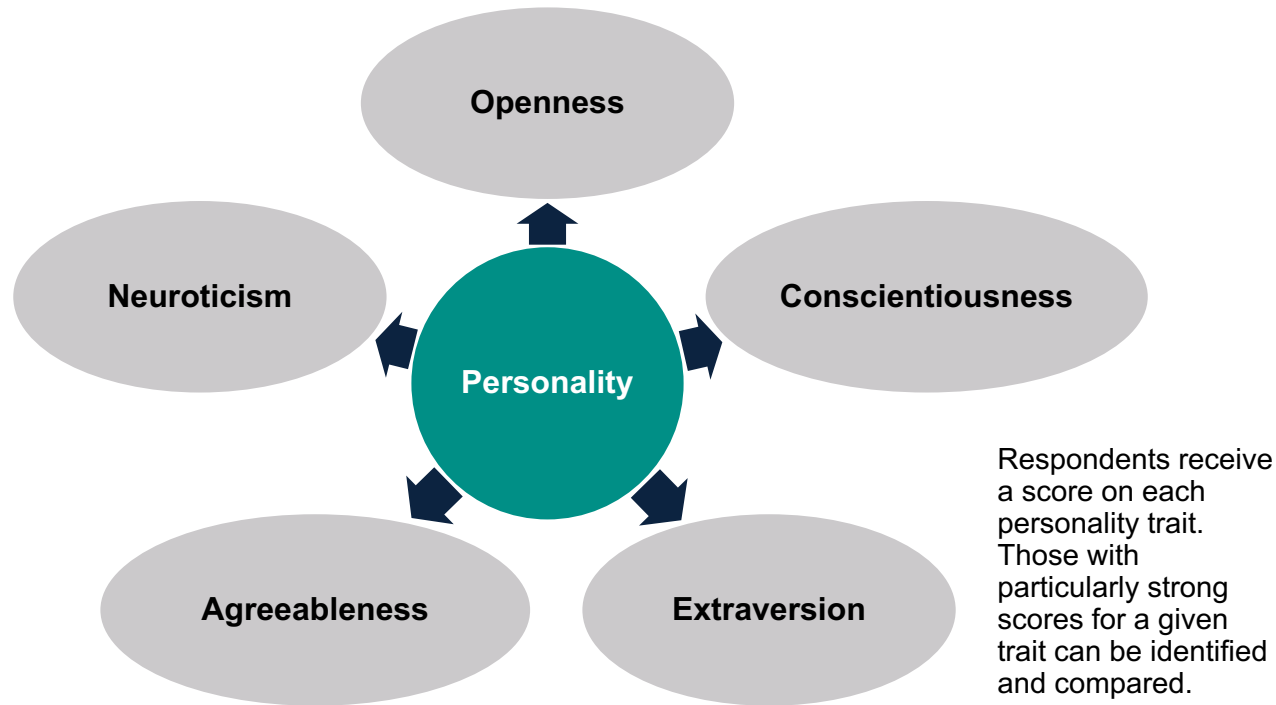




How to Manage Wellbeing, Burnout, and Distress

Recognizing Impact of Personality and Debt

- No. 1 predictor of low wellbeing, high burnout, and serious psychological distress is neuroticism
- Experiences high levels of stress, anxiety, and dramatic shifts in mood
- Student debt also a significant contributor



Predictors of High Wellbeing, Low Burnout, and Less Distress



Work-life balance

- Spending time with family and friends
- Healthy activities, ie, exercise, reading, travel, etc.



Effective coping mechanisms

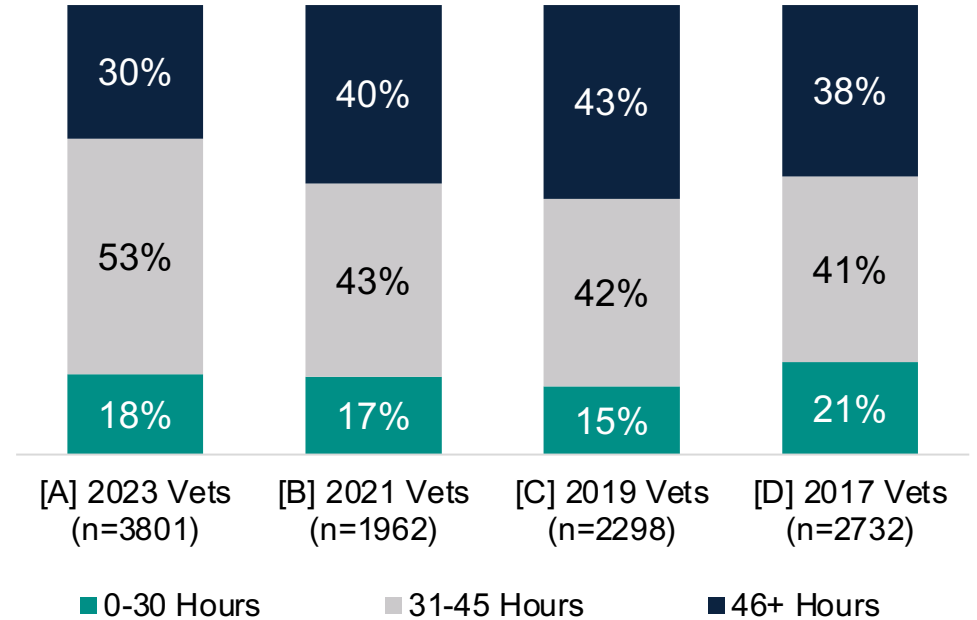


Clinic culture

Work Schedules Improving

- Fewer veterinarians worked extended hours in 2023 compared with other years
- In 2023, the percentage of veterinarians working on evenings, weekends, and holidays went down, following the overall trend for hours being worked

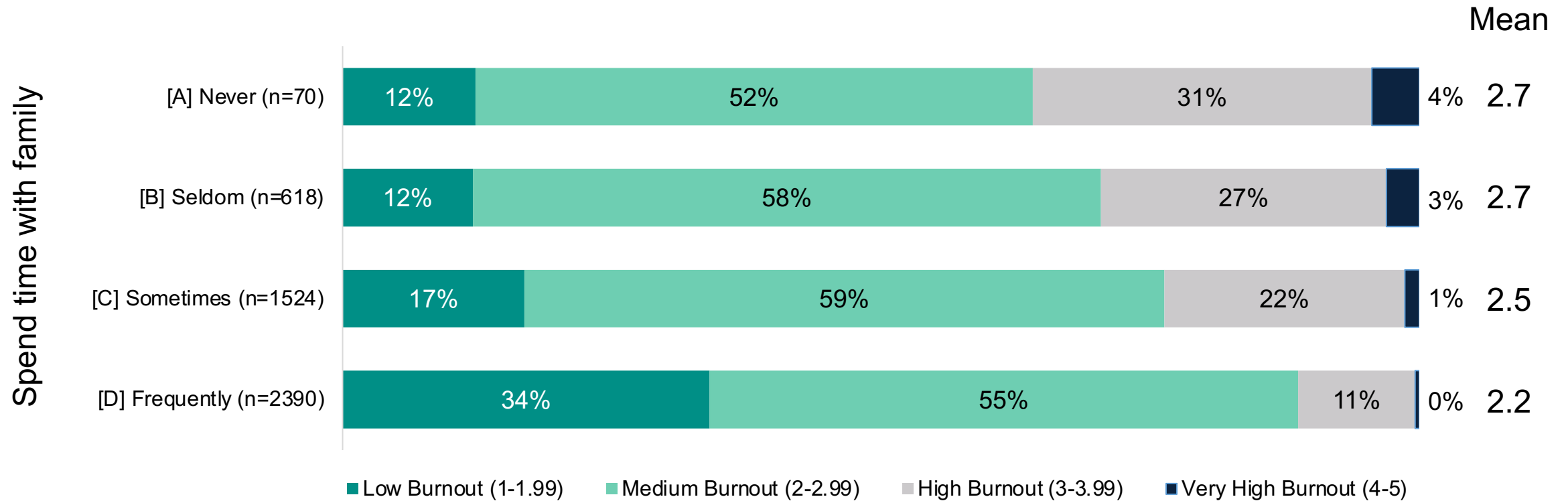
Hours Worked Per Week



Median	40	43	45	43
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DEM6A. Approximately how many hours per week do you work in veterinary practice?
Base: All Respondents

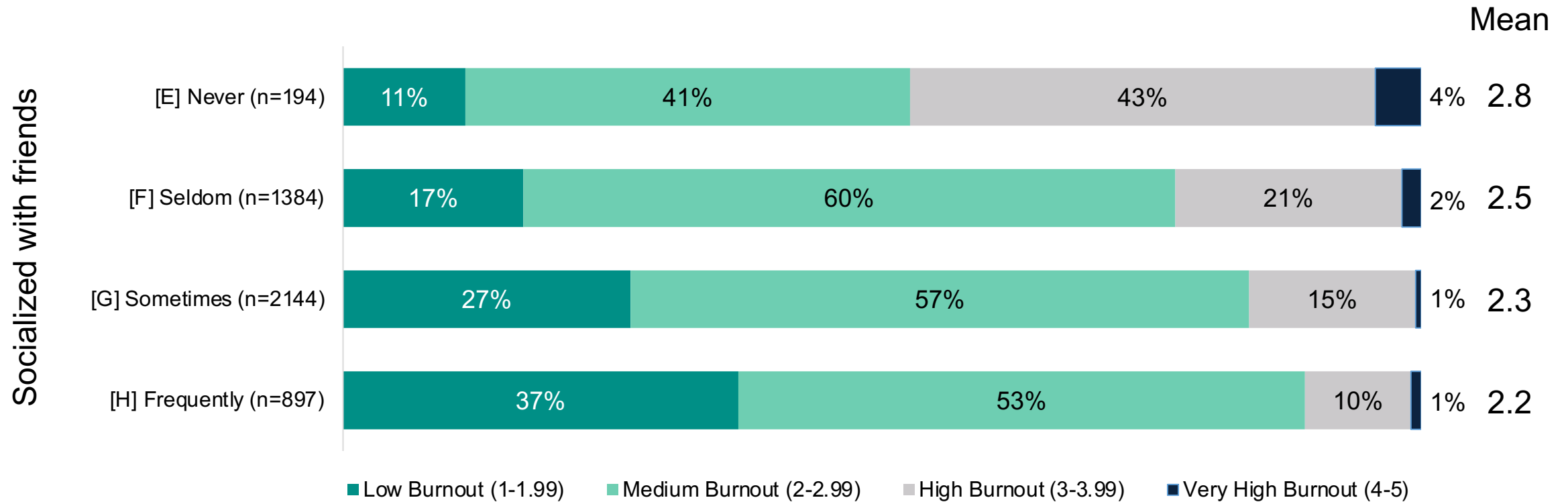
Those With Lower Burnout Spend More Time With Family



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

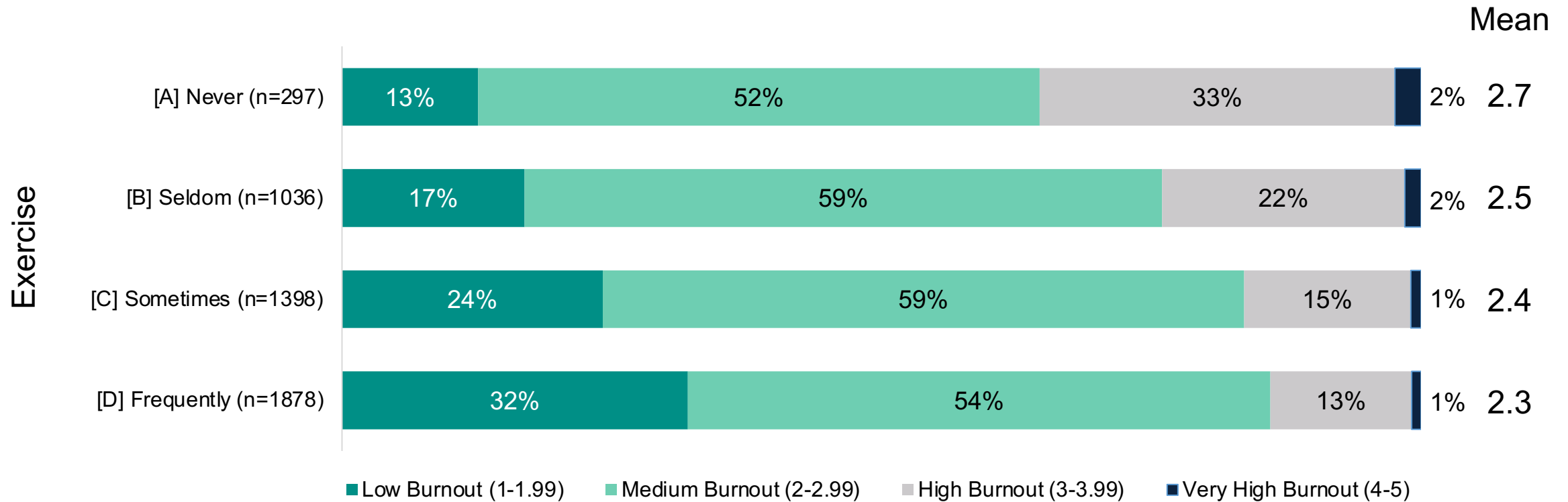
Those With Lower Burnout Spend More Time With Friends



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

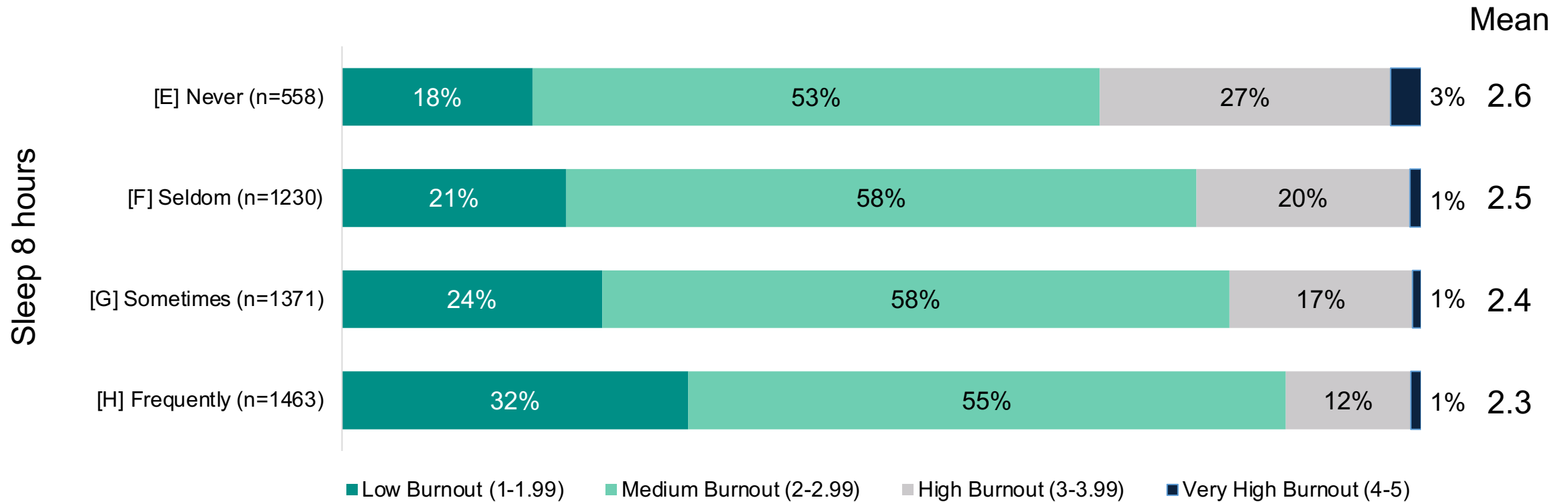
Those Lower in Burnout Exercise More Often



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

Those Who Sleep 8 Hours Per Night Have Lower Burnout



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

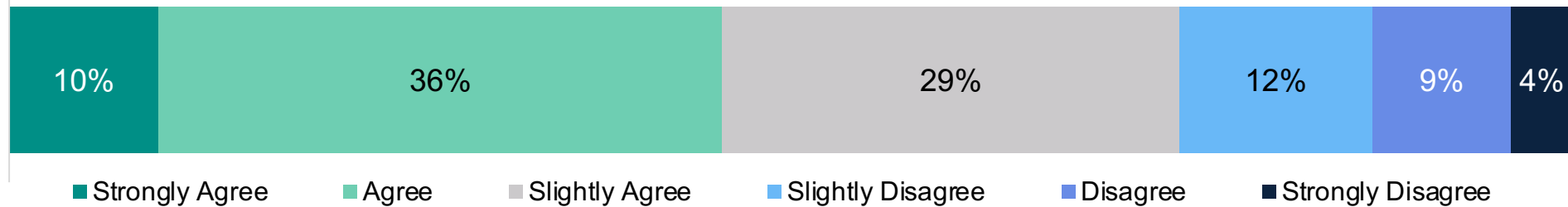
Base: All Respondents

Healthy Coping Methods Reduce Distress

75% of respondents agree that having healthy coping strategies helps alleviate anxiety

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

[A] 2023 Vets
(n=4636)



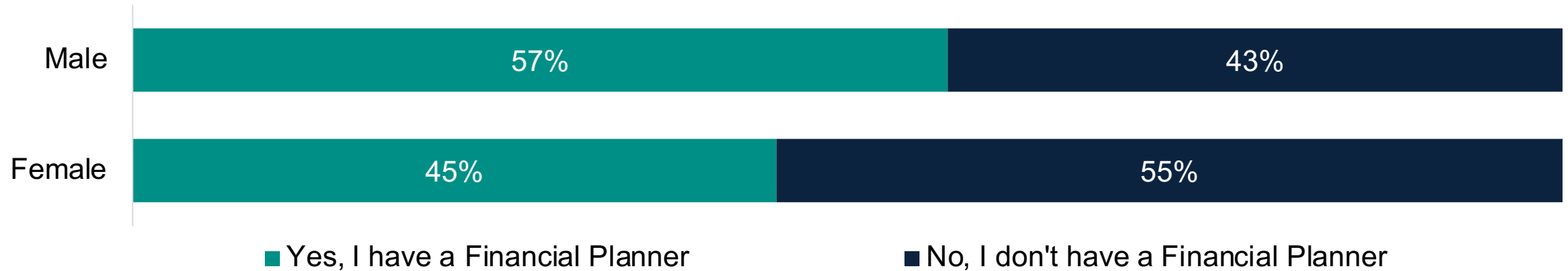
Effective	Not Effective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I take comfort in the belief that problems will work themselves out. I accept the situation without getting caught up in the emotions. I distract myself with TV, computer games,... I take care of problems that cause stress. I make changes to 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

Financial Planners Help Deal With Debt

Do you have a personal financial planner/advisor?

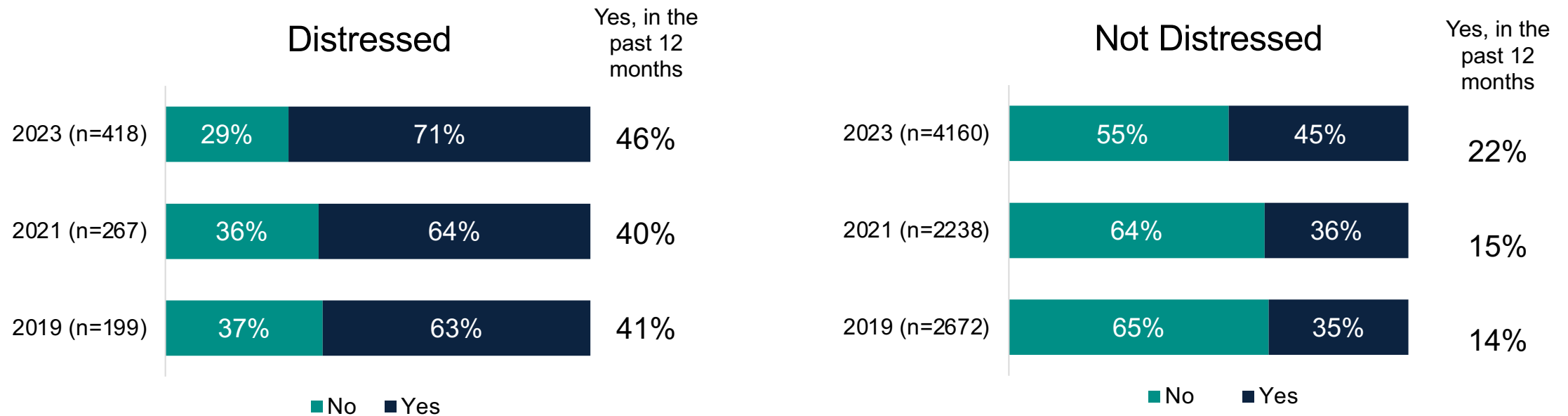


DEM15. Do you have a personal financial planner/advisor?

Base: All Respondents

Good News: More and More Vets Receiving Counseling

Received Outpatient Treatment or Counseling

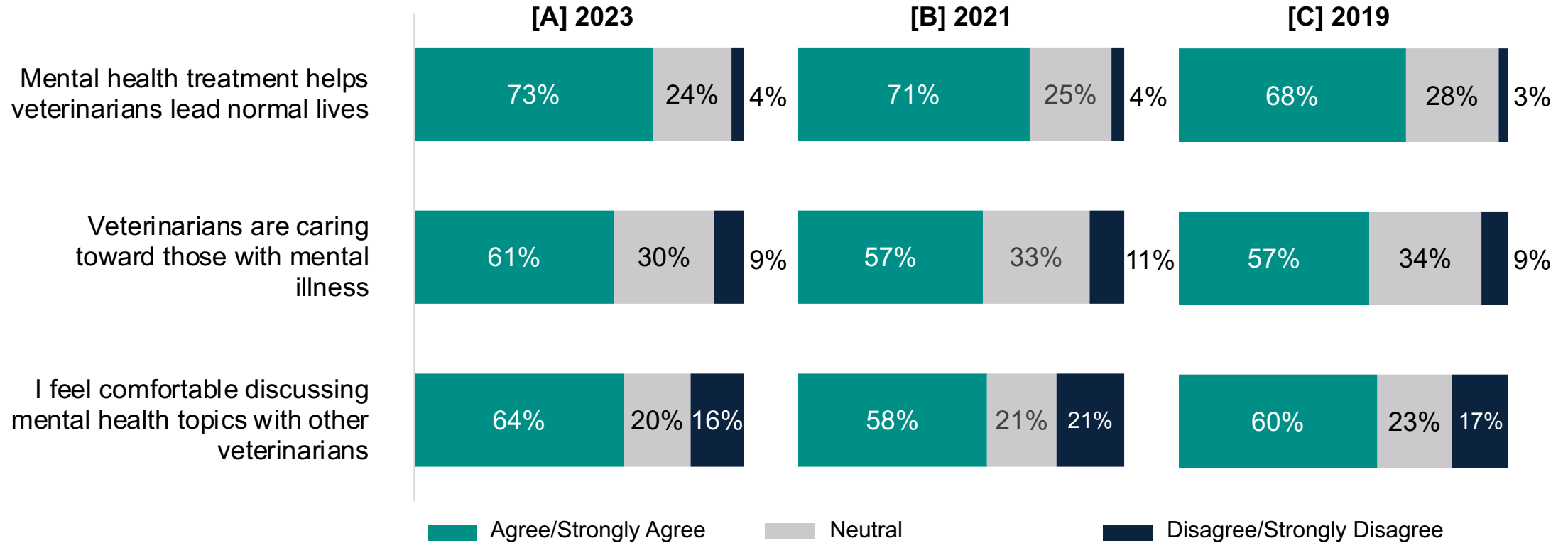


Note: There was a question change from 2019 to 2021 allowing respondents to select yes before the past 12 months and yes in the past 12 months, which was not possible in 2019.

MH3. Have you ever received any outpatient treatment or counseling for any problem you were having with your emotions, anxiety, stress, depression, or mental health? Please do not include treatment for alcohol or drug use.

Base: All Respondents

Attitudes About Mental Health Improving



MH4. Have you ever received treatment or counseling for emotional or mental health problems using a service available electronically such as telephone or Internet, sometimes called tele-behavioral health services?

Base: All Respondents

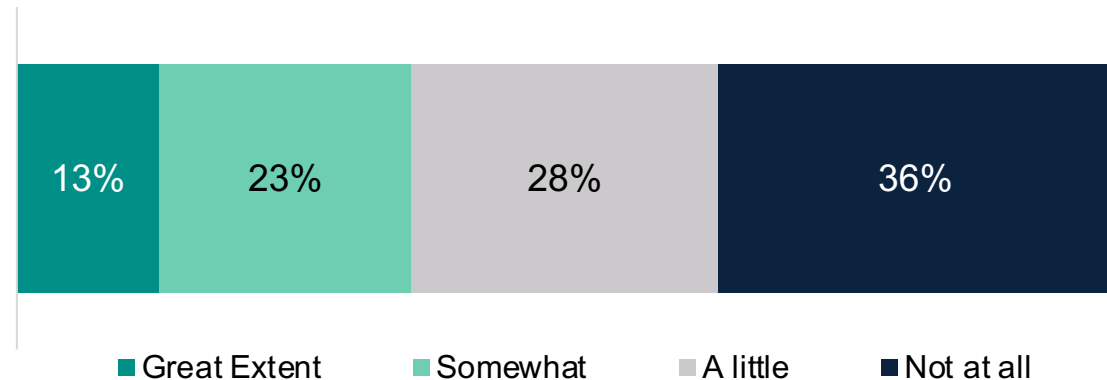


Employers Play Major Role in Mental Health

1. 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



2. Create a Positive and Healthy Culture

92% of veterinarians report a sense of belonging to their teams



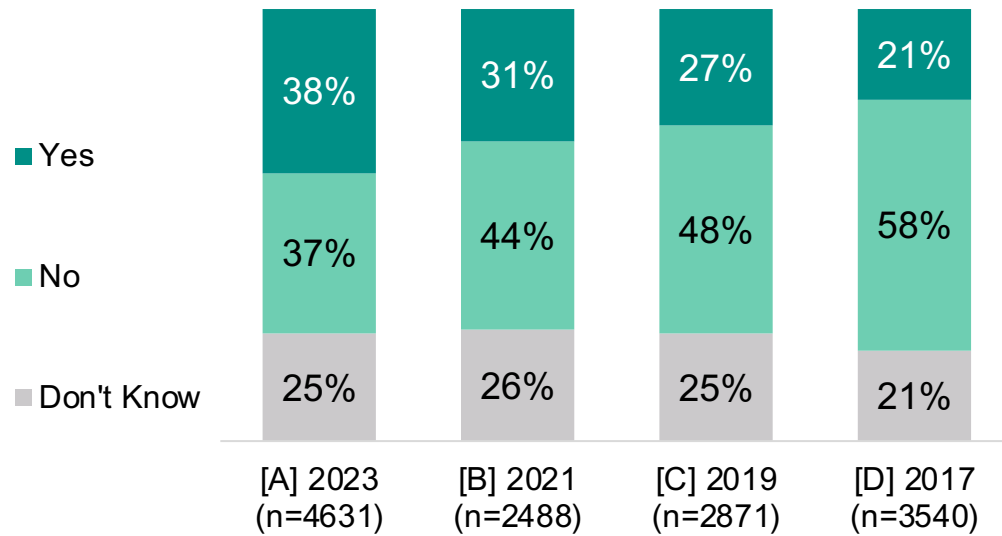
CLINIC3. Please indicate how well each of the following describes your practice.

Base: Practicing Veterinarians

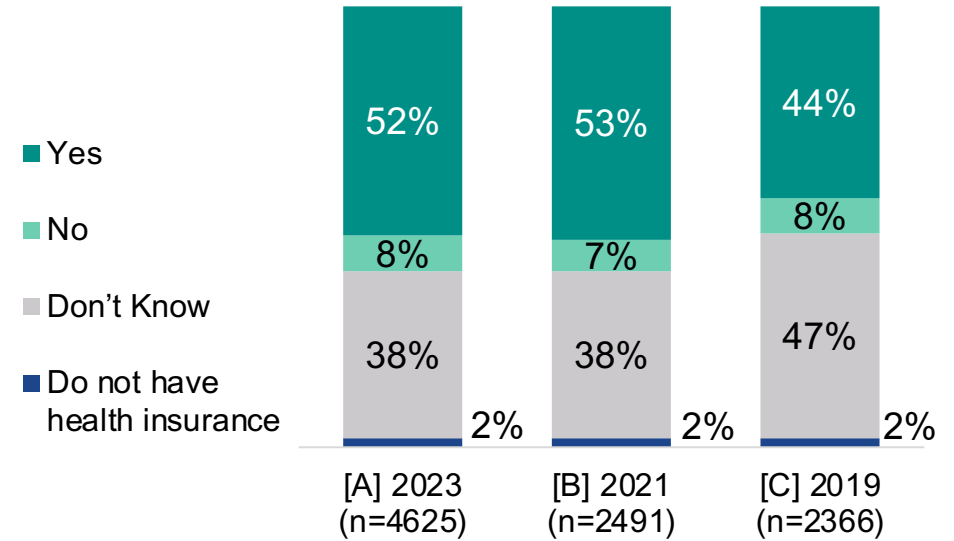
3. Provide Employee Assistance Program and Mental Health Coverage

There has been a significant increase in employers/practices offering plans and health care coverage that helps support employee mental health and emotional wellbeing

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)?

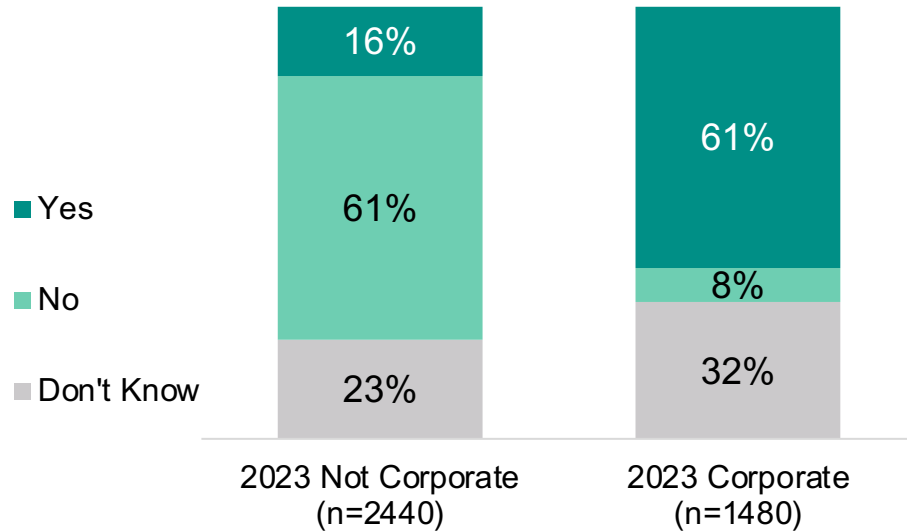
MH14. Does your health insurance provide coverage for mental health counseling or other treatment?

Base: All Respondents

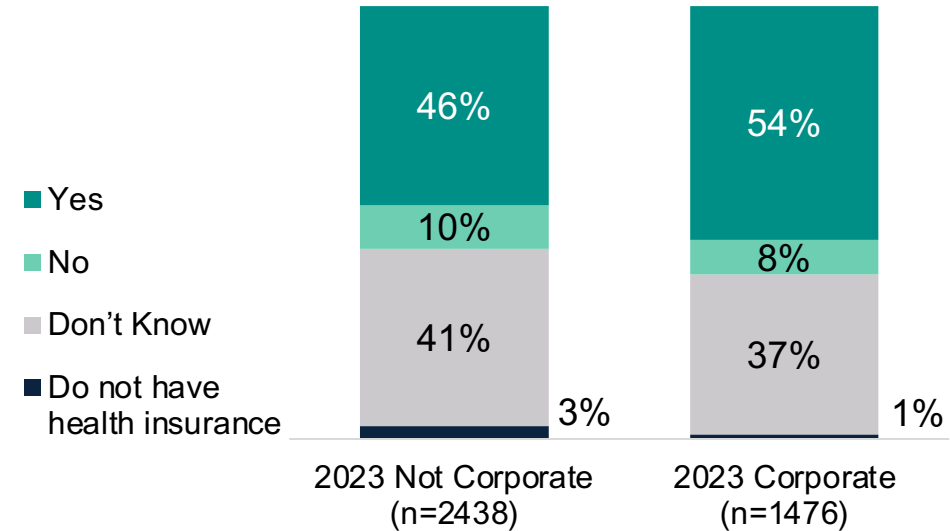
Corporate Practices More Likely to Provide Coverage, EAP

61% of corporate practices offer Employee Assistance Programs

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



4. Conclusions/Q&A

Conclusions

1. Positive findings indicate many are thriving within the veterinary profession
2. Veterinarians as a community are not atypical of the general population
3. Young veterinarians are the most vulnerable
4. There are specific action steps individuals and employers can take to improve wellbeing, lower burnout, and reduce distress
5. There is little to no risk of a significant exodus from the profession

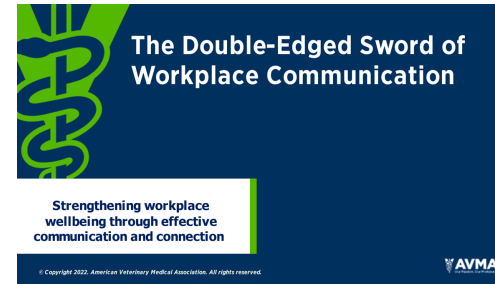


Merck Animal Health Helping Build a Library of Resources

Over \$12 million invested in veterinary programs and scholarships since 2017

- Creating a healthy workplace
 - Workplace Wellbeing 1: Setting the Foundation
 - Workplace Wellbeing 2: Self and Social Awareness
- Healthy Strategies for Veterinary Wellbeing
- AAHA Healthy Workplace Culture Initiative
- VHMA
 - Workforce Crisis Initiative
 - Through our investment the [ODD Toolkit](#) was produced as a free resource to help practices.
- NOMV
 - Founding Sponsor of CLEAR Blueprint
- Founding sponsor of MentorVet
 - MentorVet Leap
 - MentorVet Tech
 - MentorVet Connect

www.avma.org/resources-tools/wellbeing
www.vetwellbeing.com



Industry and Financial Resources

- AVMA
www.avma.org/resources-tools/wellbeing
- NOMV
www.nomv.org
- MentorVet
www.mentorvet.net
- AAHA Veterinary Practice Team Wellbeing
www.aaha.org/culture
- PrideVMC
pridevmc.org
- Healthy strategies for veterinary wellbeing at vetwellbeing.com
www.merck-animal-health-usa.com/offload-downloads/mah-healthy-strategies-infographic
- Learn more about your personality
www.verywellmind.com/the-big-five-personality-dimensions-2795422
- AAVMC
www.aavmc.org/programs/wellbeing
- My Veterinary Life Wellbeing self assessment
myvetlife.avma.org/rising-professional/your-wellbeing/wellbeing-self-assessment
- Veterinary Mental Health Initiative
www.shanti.org/programs-services/veterinary-mental-health-initiative
- UT Veterinary Social Work
vetsocialwork.utk.edu
- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
www.ummhealth.org/umass-memorial-medical-center/services-treatments/center-for-mindfulness/mindfulness-programs/mbsr-8-week-online-live
- AVMA Managing Personal Finances Resources
www.avma.org/resources-tools/personal-finance

Student debt help

- VIN Foundation Student Debt Center
vinfoundation.org/resources/student-debt-center

Fee-based financial planners

- Financial Planning: National Association of Personal Financial Advisors
napfa.org

Pro bono financial counseling

- NAPFA Foundation
napfa.org/napfa-foundation
- Financial Planning Association
onefpa.org/advocacy/Pages/Pro_Bono_Financial_Planning.aspx
- National Foundation for Credit Counseling
nfcc.org



Q&A