



Merck Animal Health Veterinarian Wellbeing Study 2020

January 2020
 **Brakke**
CONSULTING

 **MERCK**
Animal Health

Agenda

- Objectives and methodology
- Key findings
- Wellbeing of Veterinarians
- Mental Health of Veterinarians
- New! Issues examined in depth:
 - Burnout
 - Substance use disorder
 - Suicide ideation, planning and attempts
 - Role of compensation/pay systems
 - Cyberbullying
 - Dimensions of job satisfaction
- Recommending a career in veterinary medicine
- How to improve wellbeing, mental health and job satisfaction

Objectives

- Monitor wellbeing and mental health of US veterinarians
- Benchmark key findings against physicians and US general population where appropriate
- Examine several important issues in depth
- Evaluate potential solutions

Methodology

- AVMA:
 - 20,000 randomly selected email addresses
 - Email letter alerting sample to upcoming study
- Email invitation + 3 reminders
- Incentive: Drawing for 25 \$100 gift cards + \$1,000 grand prize
- Survey open Sep 30-Oct 23, 2019

- Average survey length 20.6 minutes.
- 2,871 usable, completed responses (14.5%)
- Data weighted based on age, gender and region of the US
- Margin of error +/- 1.80% at 95% confidence level
- Research plan, questionnaire received IRB review

Key Findings

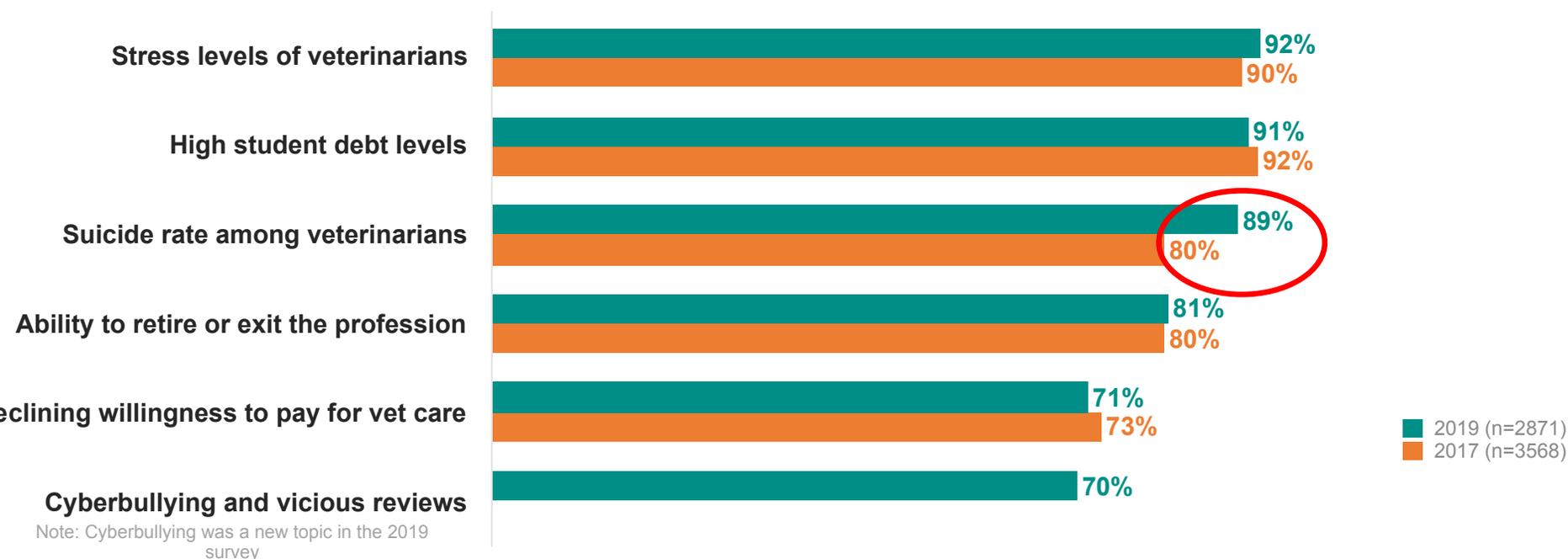
- Veterinarian wellbeing is on average unchanged since 2017
- Veterinarians' use of alcohol is similar to general population
 - Cannabis use lower
- **↑** in serious psychological distress among women veterinarians
- Higher levels of burnout than physicians
 - Despite working fewer hours
- Veterinarians are much more likely to think about suicide than non-veterinarians
 - **2.7X** more likely to attempt suicide
 - Female veterinarians have higher rates of suicide ideation than their male counterparts
 - Male veterinarians are more likely to attempt suicide
- Positive change in attitude towards those with mental illness
 - Treatment gap remains

Key Findings

- Of 14 dimensions of job satisfaction tested, veterinarians rated highest:
 - I'm invested in my work and take pride in doing a good job
 - My work makes a positive contribution to people's lives
- 52% of veterinarians would not recommend a career in the profession, about the same as in 2017
- Study identified several techniques to improve mental health and wellbeing

Leading Concerns of Veterinarians: Stress, Debt and Suicide

Leading Concerns of Veterinarians In 2019 and 2017 (Top 5 Only)



Cyberbullying a serious concern, but not as common as expected.

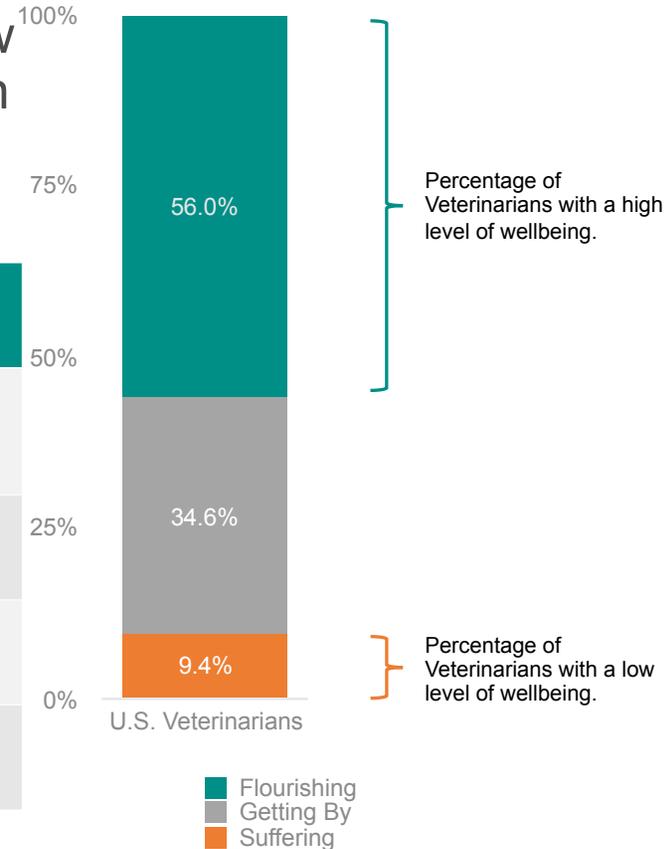


Wellbeing of Veterinarians

Framework for Measuring Wellbeing

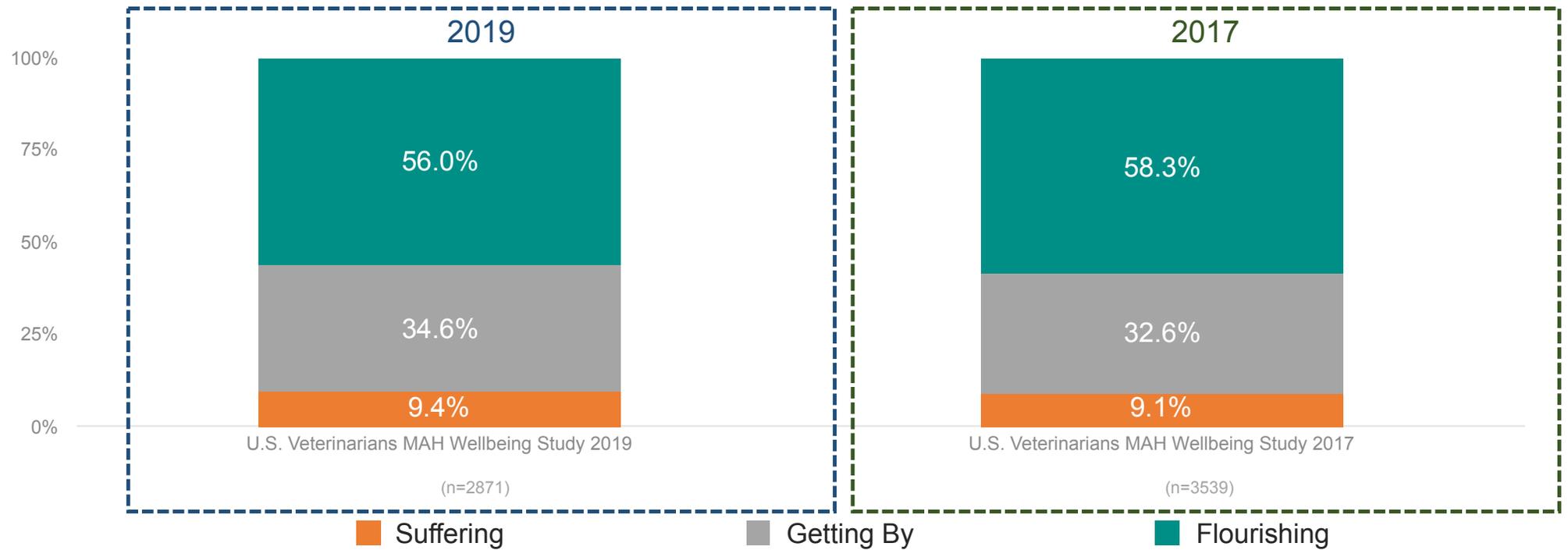
Wellbeing examines the way an individual feels about how satisfied they are with their lives and how it compares with the best possible/worst possible or ideal life.

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



Base: All Respondents (n=2871)

Veterinarian Wellbeing Unchanged Since 2017

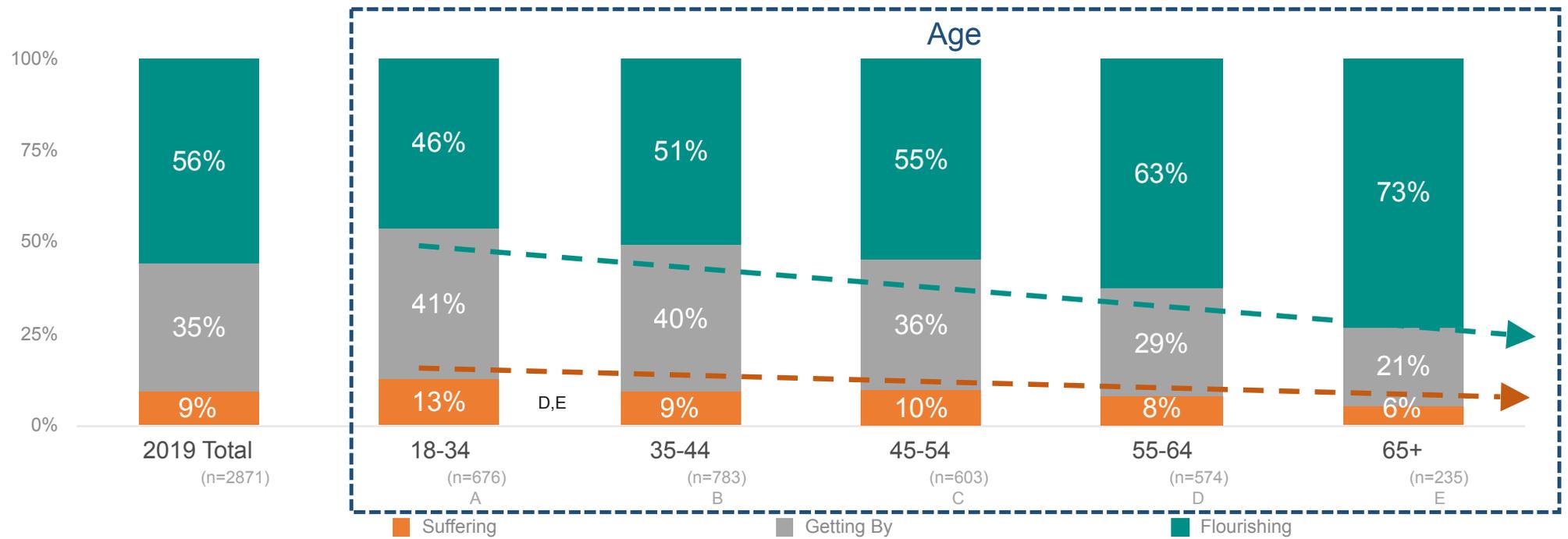


Wellbeing Index
Base: All Respondents

x - Indicates a statistically significant difference between categories

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Wellbeing is Lowest among Younger Veterinarians

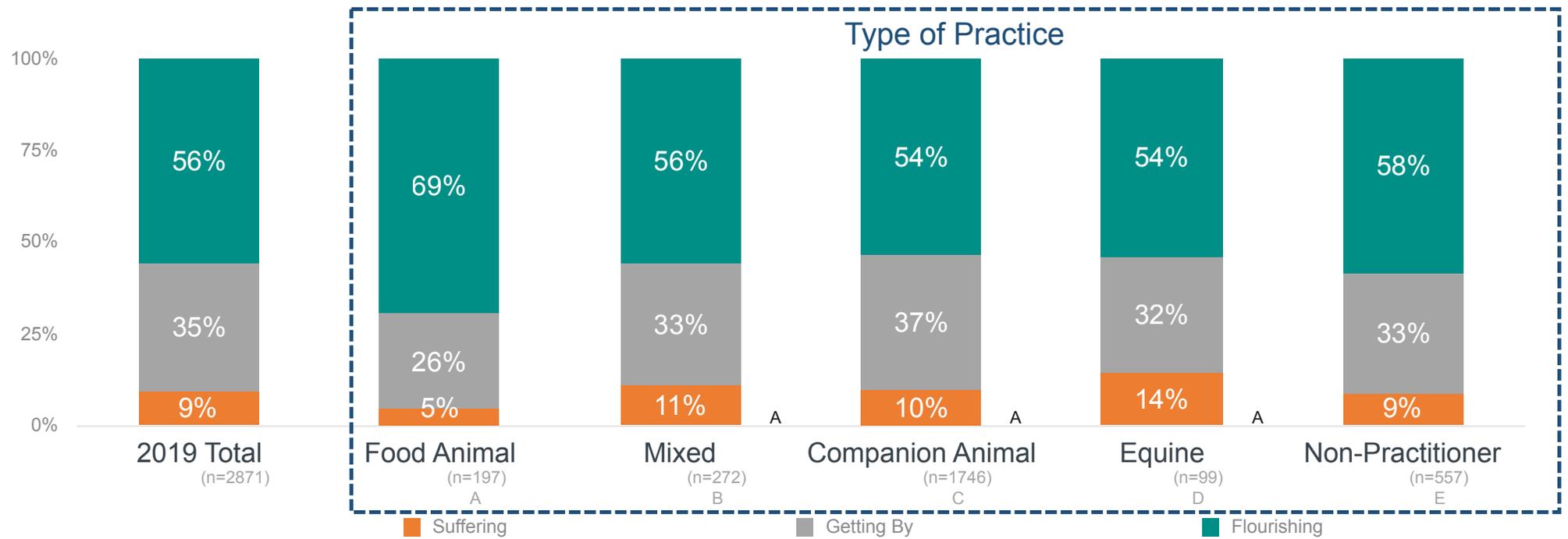


Wellbeing Index
Base: All Respondents

x - Indicates a statistically significant difference between categories

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Wellbeing Similar Across Most Practice Types; Food Animal Higher

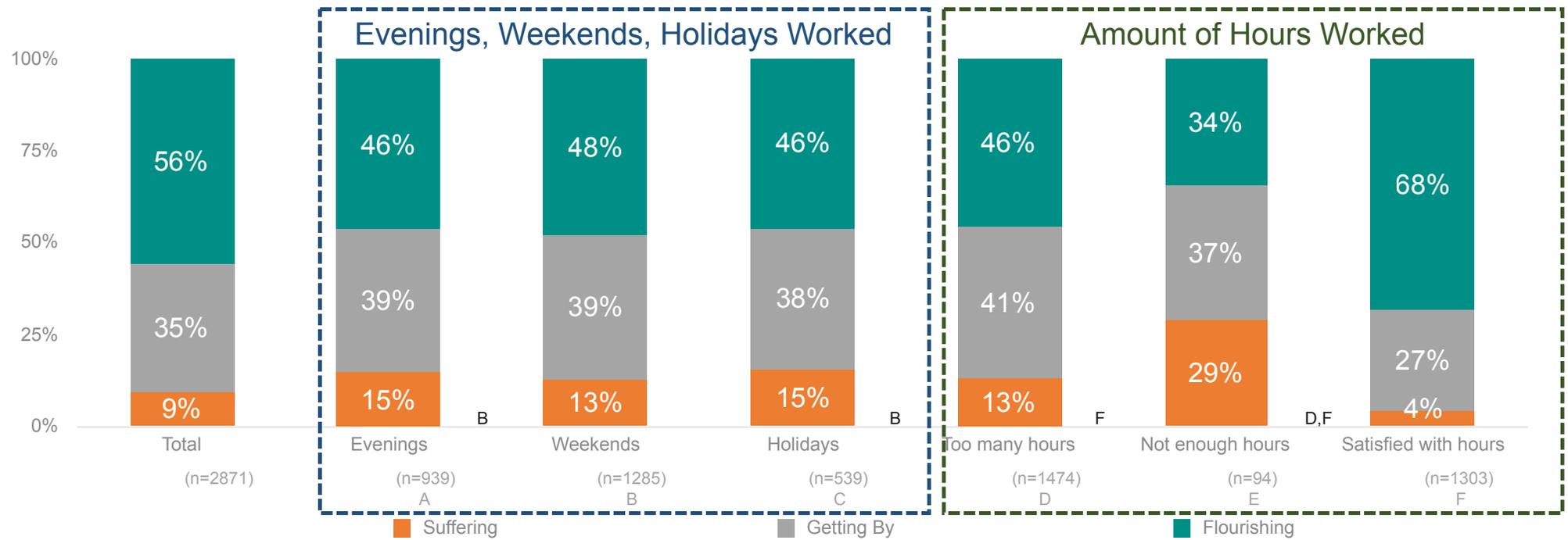


Wellbeing Index
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“Not Working Enough Hours” has Greater Negative Impact than “Working Too Many”



Wellbeing Index
Base: All Respondents

x - Indicates a statistically significant difference between categories

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Predictors of Wellbeing

- Predictors of high wellbeing
 - Enjoy work
 - Work-life Balance
 - Spending time with Friends and Family
 - Invigorating Work Environment
 - Satisfaction with Pay
- Predictors of low wellbeing
 - Personality higher in Neuroticism
 - Individuals with higher levels of neuroticism tend towards more negative emotions and pessimism; they are more vulnerable to stress
 - Higher student debt
 - Younger



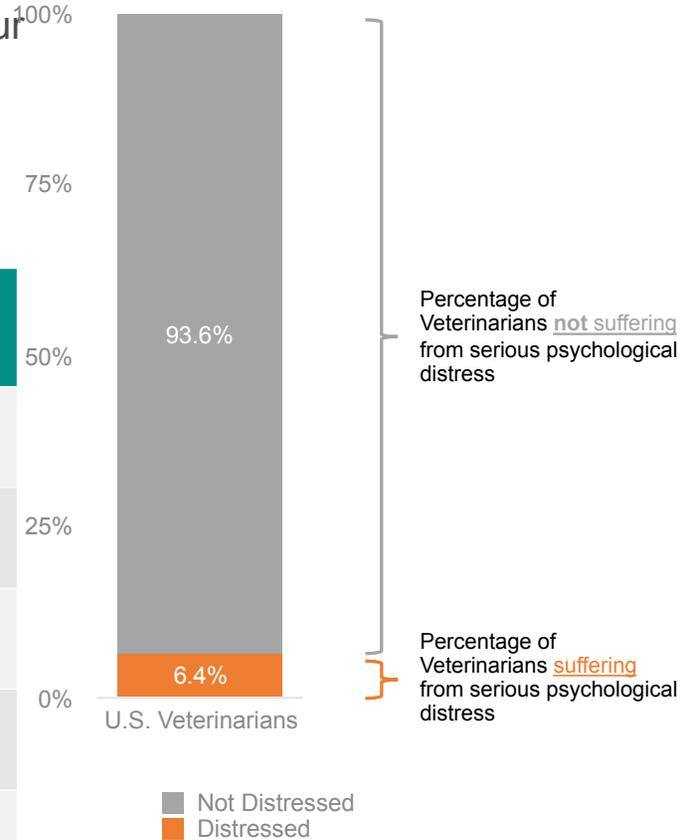
Mental Health of Veterinarians

Framework for Measuring Prevalence of Serious Psychological Distress

Kessler 6 is six-question framework scored from zero (none of the time) to four (all of the time). Scores from the 6 questions summed yielding a minimum score of 0 and a maximum of 24.

An individual scoring 13, or higher, is considered to suffer from serious psychological distress.

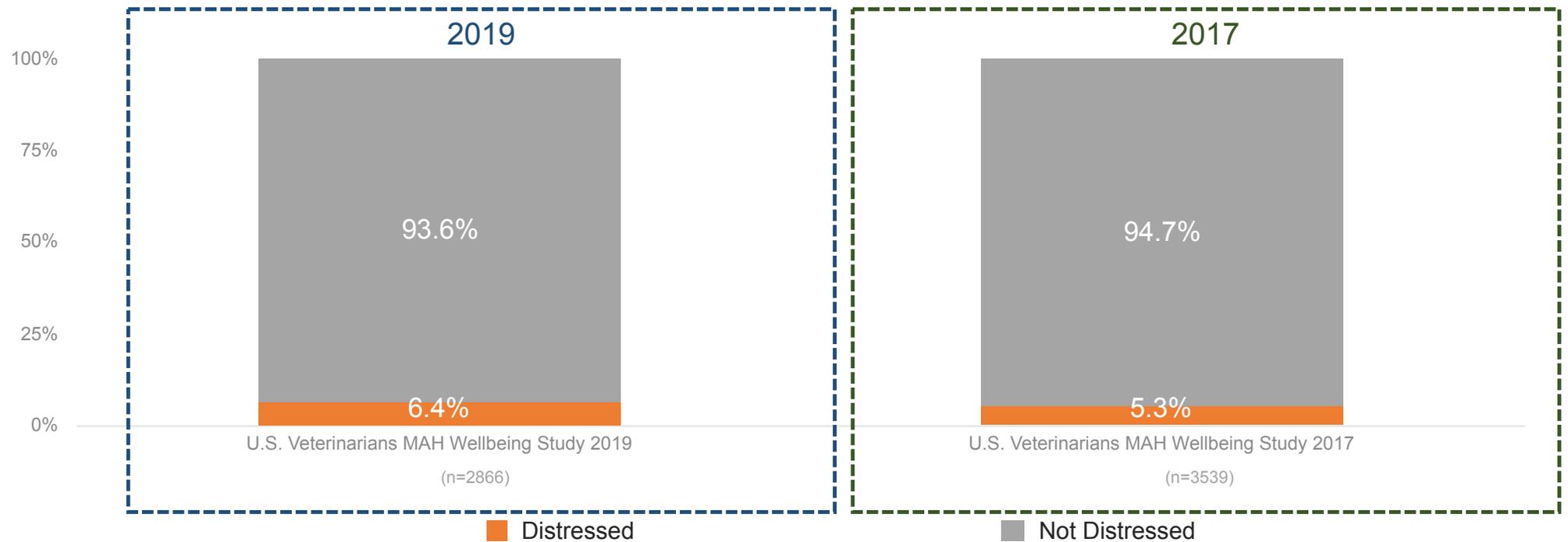
Kessler 6 Question	Kessler 6 Scale and Points System
During the past 30 days, how much of the time did you feel each of the following... [LIST BELOW RANDOMIZED, SHOWN ONE BY ONE] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> nervous hopeless so sad nothing could cheer you up worthless restless or fidgety that everything 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



Base: All Respondents (n=2866)

Prevalence of Serious Psychological Distress Consistent with 2017

Increase from 5.3% to 6.4% not statistically significant.



MH1. Results based on results of Kessler 6.

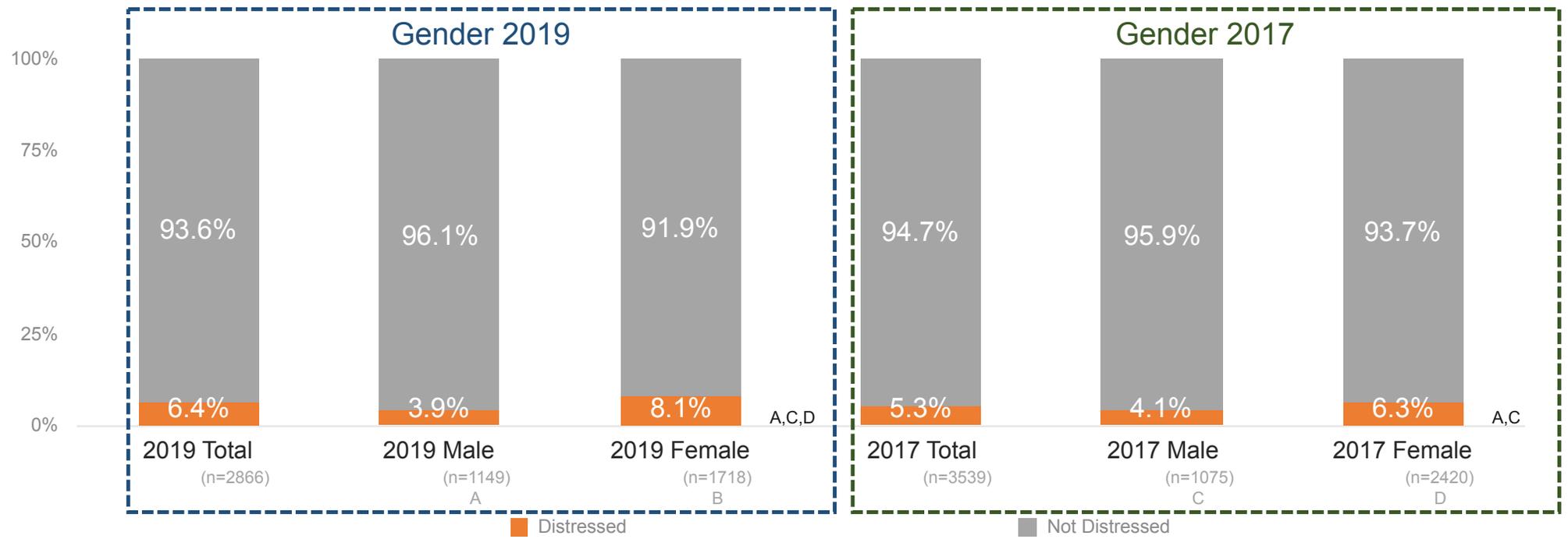
Base: All Respondents

x - Indicates a statistically significant difference between categories

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Women Experience Higher Levels of Serious Psychological Distress than Men

Increase from 6.3% to 8.1% in female veterinarians is statistically significant.

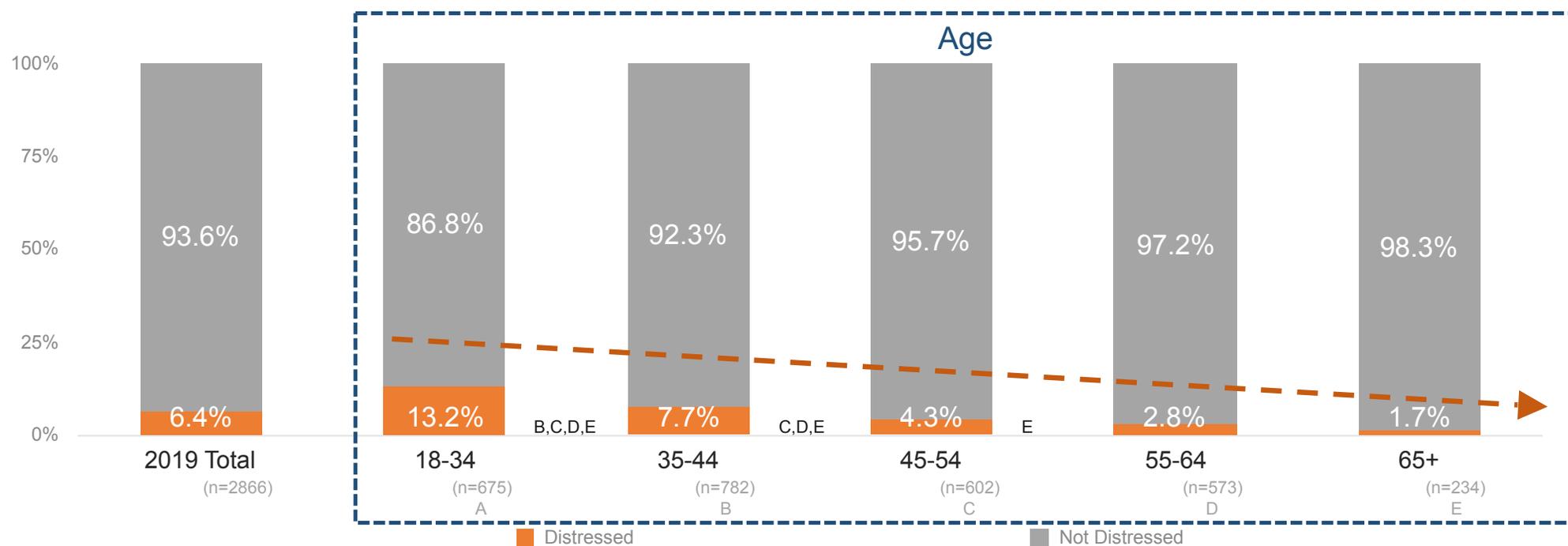


MH1. Results based on results of Kessler 6.
Base: All Respondents

x - Indicates a statistically significant difference between categories

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Younger Veterinarians Much More Likely to Suffer from Serious Psychological Distress



MH1. Results based on results of Kessler 6.

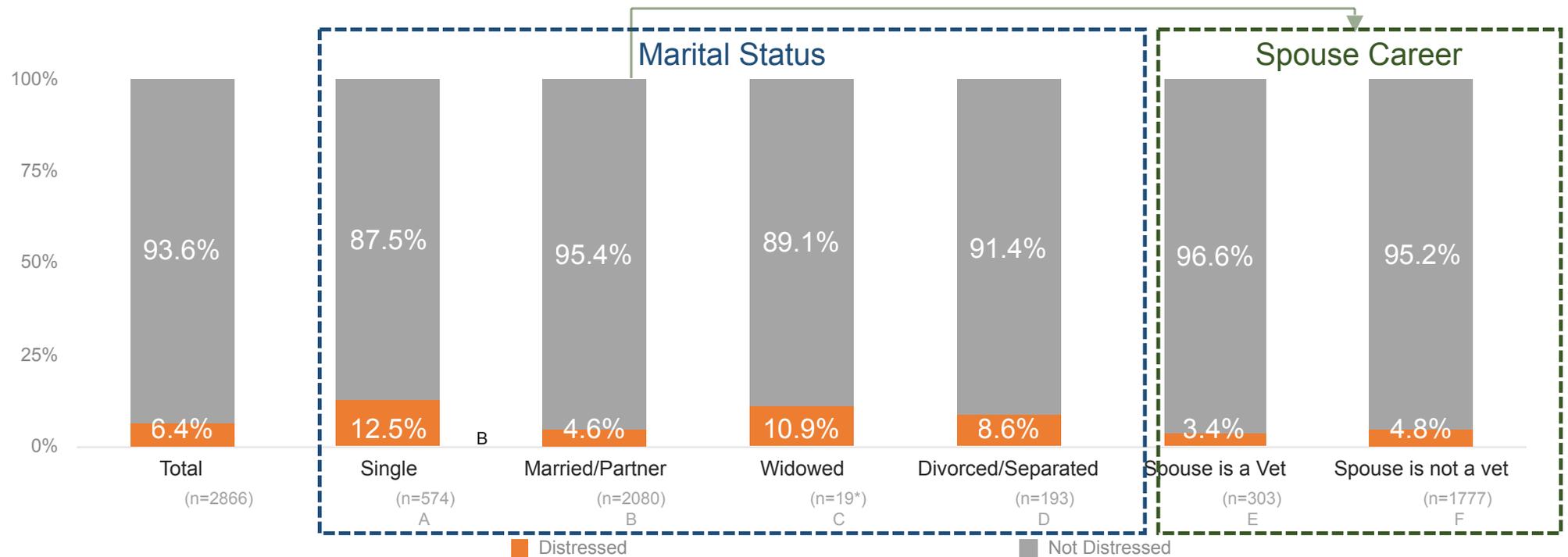
Base: All Respondents

x - Indicates a statistically significant difference between categories

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Psychological Distress is Lower Among Veterinarians with a Partner

Marriage to another veterinarian does not affect prevalence of distress.



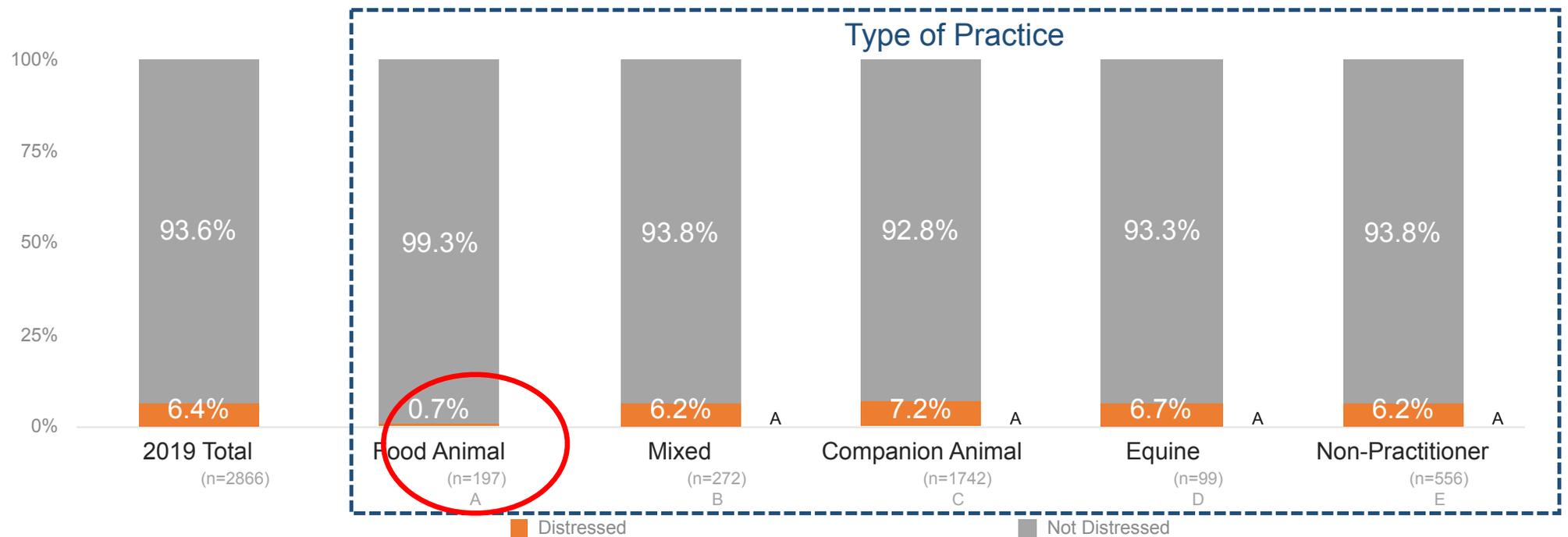
MH1. Results based on results of Kessler 6.

Base: All Respondents

* - Indicates a statistically significant difference between categories

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Serious Psychological Distress Rare Among Food Animal Veterinarians



MH1. Results based on results of Kessler 6.

Base: All Respondents

x - Indicates a statistically significant difference between categories

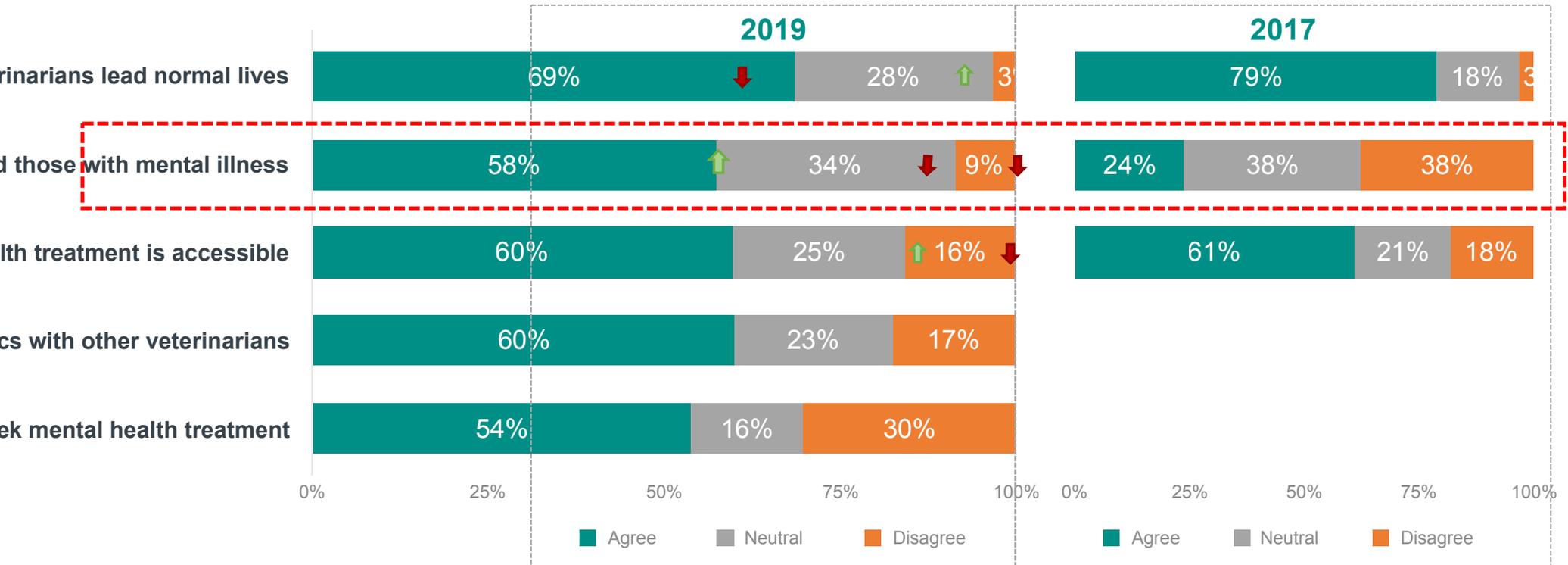
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Characteristics of Food Animal Veterinarians

Food Animal Veterinarians are Significantly Less Likely to Suffer from Serious Psychological Distress and Report Much Higher Levels of Wellbeing.

- 72% are male, but no gender difference
- Highest concentration of baby boomers
- Highest level of satisfaction with amount of leisure time
- Most likely to:
 - be married
 - be satisfied with number of hours worked
 - recommend being a veterinarian to friends and/or family members
- Lower than average practice revenues
- Lowest student debt

Significant Improvement in Perceived Attitude Towards Those With Mental Illness, From 24% To 57%, Perhaps Indicating Less Stigma



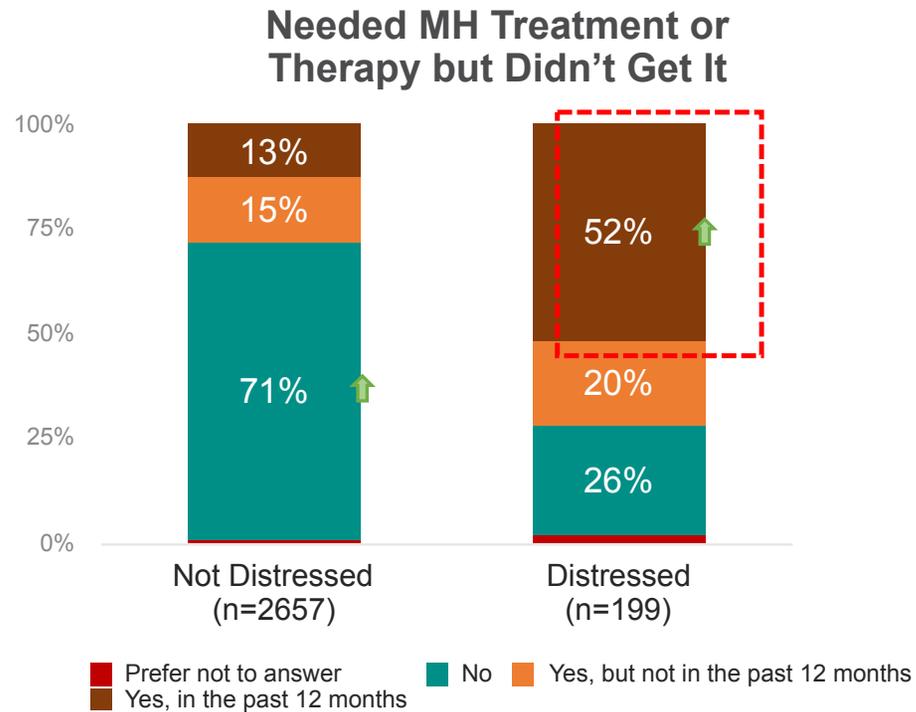
MH9. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements using the scale provided.

Base: All Respondents [2019 (n=2871), 2017 (n=3540)]

↑↓ Indicates a statistically significant difference between 2019 and 2017

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Half of Those Distressed in Last Year Did Not Receive Treatment



MH2-8A. Have you ever...?

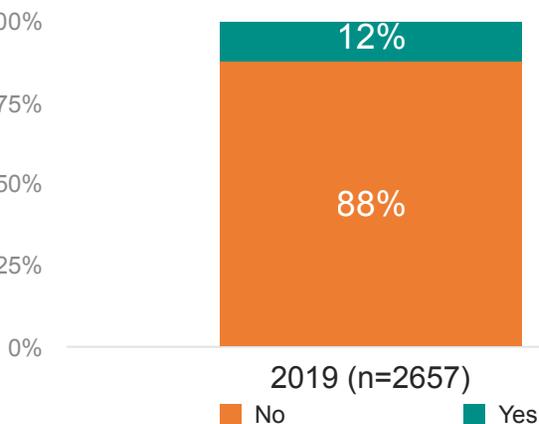
Base: All Respondents [Not-distressed Veterinarians (n=2657), Distressed Veterinarians (n=199)]

↑ - Indicates a statistically significant difference between distressed and not distressed veterinarians
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Few Accessing Organizational Resources

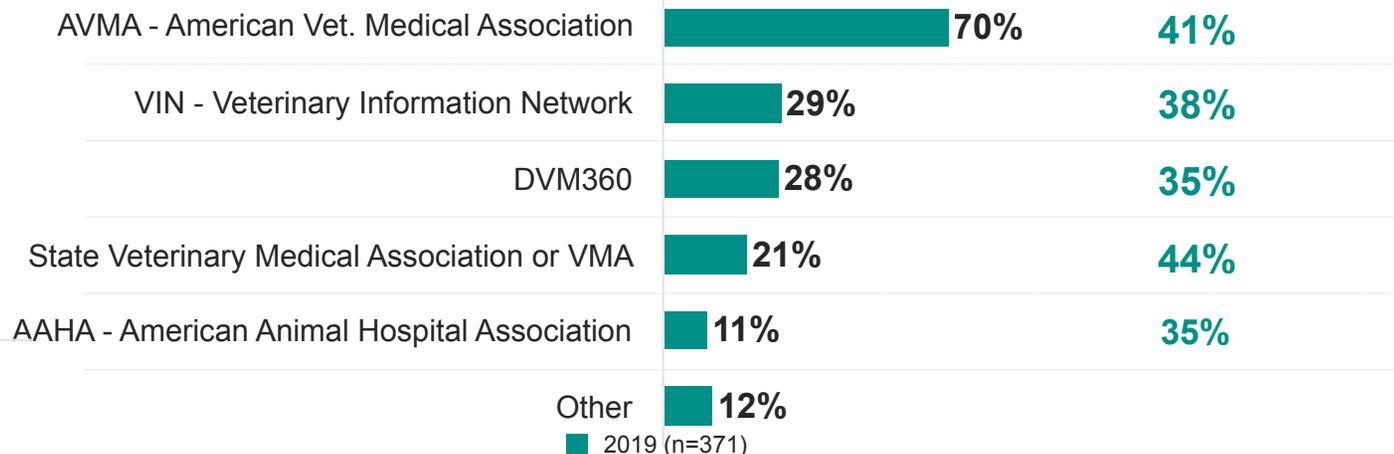
Only 16% of those suffering from serious psychological distress have accessed; Usefulness scores relatively low

Accessed MH or WB Literature



Which Ones

Found Useful



MH11. Some national and state veterinary organizations have literature, websites and other resources available regarding well-being and mental health. Have you ever accessed any of those resources?

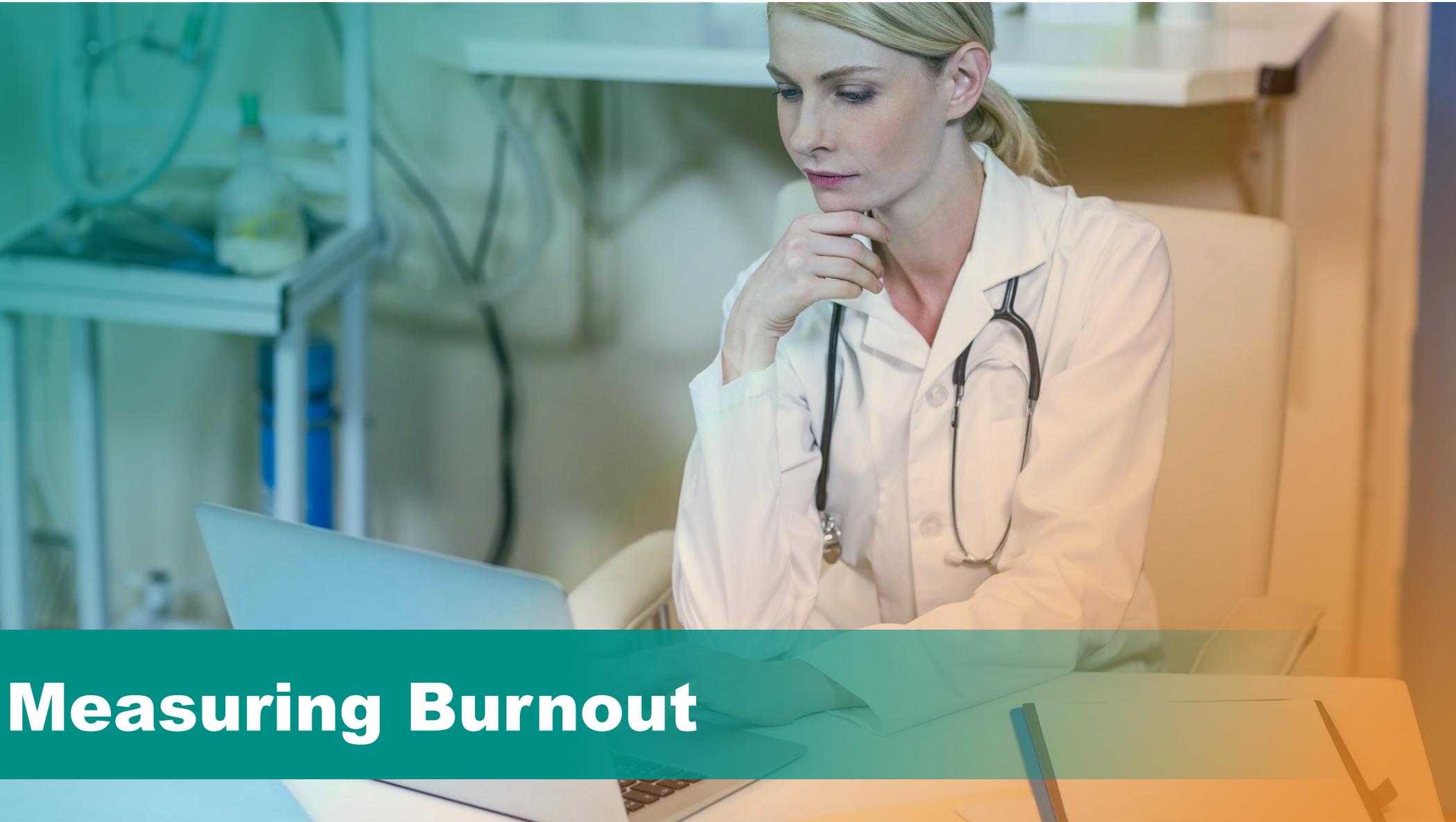
MH11B. Which ones?

MH12. How useful to you personally were the resources you used from each organization listed below?

Base: 2019 Responses (n=2868)

Predictors of Serious Psychological Distress

- Predictors of serious psychological distress
 - Personality high in Neuroticism
 - Higher Debt
- Predictors of positive mental health
 - Work Enjoyment
 - Work-life Balance
 - Spending time with friends and family
 - Older
 - Having a family
 - Satisfaction with pay



Measuring Burnout

Benchmark: Mayo Clinic Physician Burnout and Wellbeing Scale

Research conducted by Mayo Clinic evaluated burnout and satisfaction with work-life integration among physicians and other US workers.



Results representative of non-retired physicians and employed general population Americans between the ages of 29 to 65.

Merck Animal Health Veterinarian Wellbeing Study benchmarked:

- Hours worked
- Satisfaction with work-life balance
- Suicidal ideation and burnout among veterinarians
- Physicians and employed US adults

Measuring Burnout

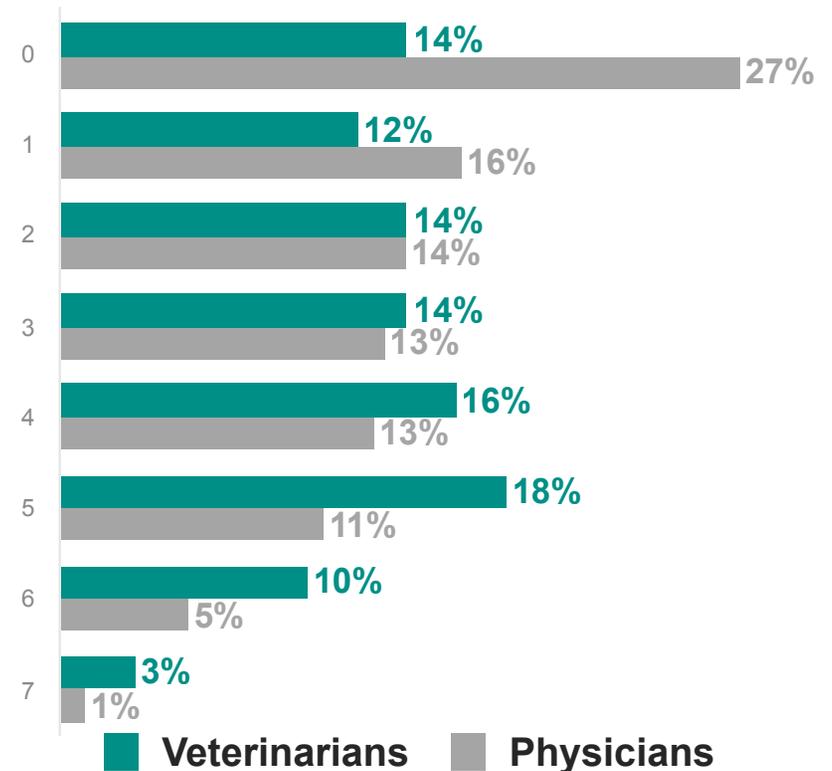
Burnout is calculated based on the average number of statements where a respondent selected “Yes”.

Thinking back over the past month . . .

- Have you felt burned out from your work?
- Have you worried that your work is hardening you emotionally?
- Have you often been bothered by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?
- Have you fallen asleep while stopped in traffic or driving?
- Have you felt that all things you had to do were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?
- Have you been bothered by emotional problems (such as feeling anxious, depressed, or irritable)?
- Has your physical health interfered with your ability to do your daily work at home and/or away from home

Base: All Respondents

Distribution of Burnout Scores



Veterinarians Score Higher in Burnout Than Physicians

Veterinarians and physicians report similar satisfaction with work-life balance and levels of suicidal ideation.

Veterinarians experience higher levels of burnout

<u>Satisfied with Work-Life Balance</u>	Veterinarians	Physicians	US Population
Strongly Agree / Agree	39.5%	40%	61%

	Veterinarians	Physicians	US Population
Suicidal Ideation in past 12 months	7.5%	7.2%	4%

	Veterinarians	Physicians	US Population
Burnout (0-7 scale)	3.1	2.24	2

Base: All Respondents

Not a Function of Hours Worked

<u>Average Weekly Workload</u>	Veterinarians	Physicians	US Population
< 40 Hours	25.2%	14.6%	26.3%
40-49 Hours	33.9%	20.5%	54.2%
50-59 Hours	24.1%	26%	13.3%
60-69 Hours	11.9%	22.7%	4.5%
70-79 Hours	2.8%	8.3%	1%
80+ Hours	2.2%	7.9%	0.6%

Base: All Respondents

Attributes Associated with High Burnout

Demographics associated with veterinarians scoring 6 or 7 out for 7, representing statistically significant differences are:

- Female
- Single
- Married, not to a veterinarian
- No children
- Consistently work >46 hours a week
- Work more evenings, weekends, and holidays
- On call more hours than they would like
- Millennials
- Have debt
- Paid by Salary
- Personality scoring higher in Neuroticism
- Food Animal veterinarians are less likely to feel burned out than any other category

A photograph of a veterinarian in a white lab coat examining a brown tabby cat. The veterinarian is using a stethoscope to listen to the cat's chest. The cat is looking directly at the camera. The background is a soft-focus clinical setting. A teal banner is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

Substance Use Disorder

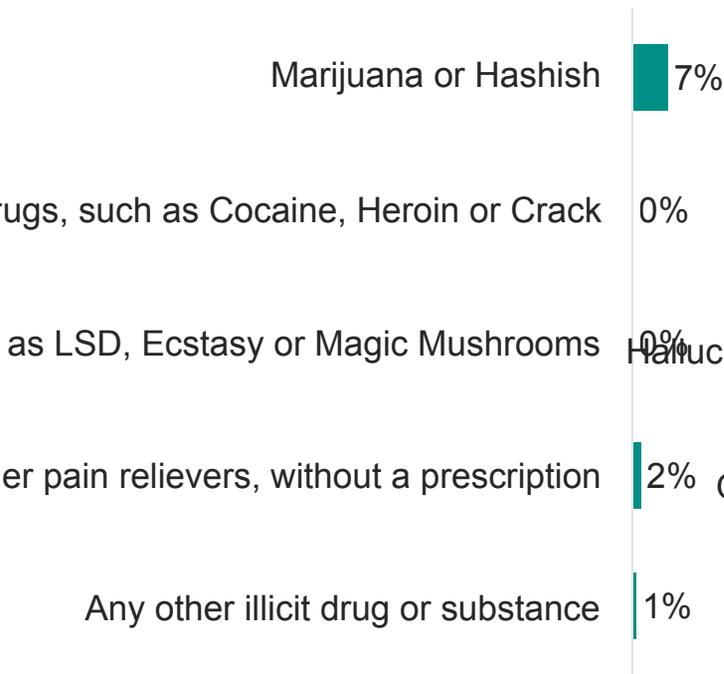
Benchmark Study: National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)



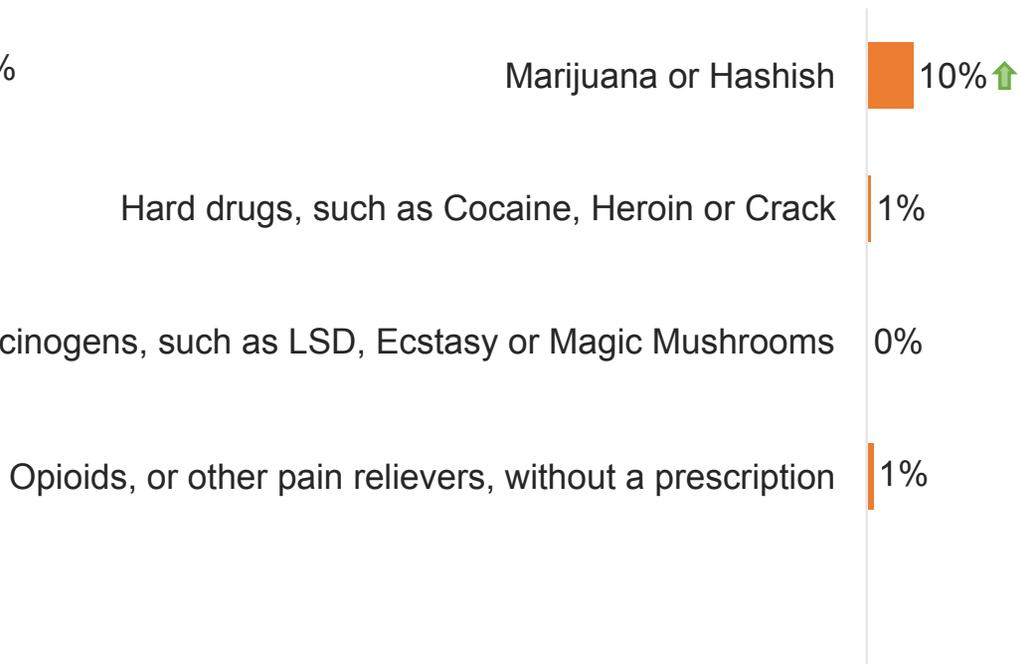
- Conducted annually since 1971
- Provides information on tobacco, alcohol, and drug use, mental health and other health-related issues in the United States.
- 70,000 people interviewed
- Information from NSDUH supports prevention and treatment programs, monitors substance use trends, and informs public health policy
- NSDUH allows for meaningful comparisons between veterinarians and the general public.
- Comparison cohort: Employed Adults, 25+

Alcohol Use Similar to Other US Adults; Cannabis Use Slightly Lower

Veterinarians



National Survey on Drug Use and Health Benchmark (Employed Adults)



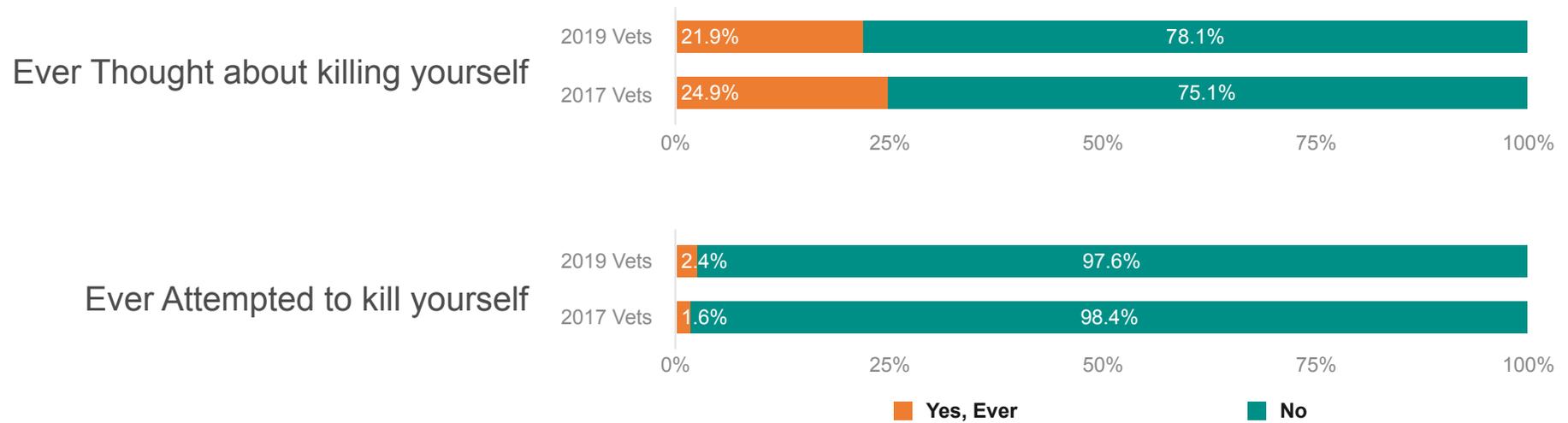
↑ Indicates a statistically significant difference

SA3. In the last 30 days have you used...
Base: All Respondents (n=2871)

Source: 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

Suicidal Ideation, Planning and Attempts

Prevalence of Suicidal Thoughts and Attempts Similar to 2017 Study



MH6. The next few questions are about thoughts of suicide. At any time have you seriously thought about trying to kill yourself?

MH8. Have you ever tried to kill yourself?

Base: All Respondents [2019 (n=2871), 2017 (n=3527)]

↑ Indicates a statistically significant difference

Suicide Ideation, Planning and Attempts Higher in Veterinarians than in the General Population

In Last 12 months . . .

	Veterinarians	NSDUH (Employed Adults, 25+)
Thought about killing yourself	7,455 per 100,000	3,600 per 100,000
Planned to kill yourself	1,463 per 100,000	882 per 100,000
Attempted to kill yourself	174 per 100,000	64 per 100,000

MH6. The next few questions are about thoughts of suicide. At any time have you seriously thought about trying to kill yourself?

MH7. Have you ever made plans to kill yourself?

MH8. Have you ever tried to kill yourself?

Base: All Respondents

↑ Indicates a statistically significant difference

Suicidal Thoughts, Veterinarians v. Non-Vets

All

	No	Yes	Percent
NSDUH	7398	252	3.6%
Veterinarians	2614	225	7.5%

*Past 12 Months

By Age

<u>% Yes</u>	26-34	35-49	50-64	65+
NSDUH	5.2%	2.6%	1.8%	1.5%
Veterinarians	11.1%	8.9%	4.3%	2.7%

*Past 12 Months

By Gender

<u>% Yes</u>	Male	Female
NSDUH	3.3%	3.3%
Veterinarians	5.5%	9.0%

*Past 12 Months

Important Predictors of Planning Suicide

- Key predictor of suicidal thoughts is serious psychological distress (Kessler 6 Index)
- Serious psychological distress is associated with neuroticism, high debt, and long work hours
 - More typical of younger veterinarians
 - More typical of female veterinarians

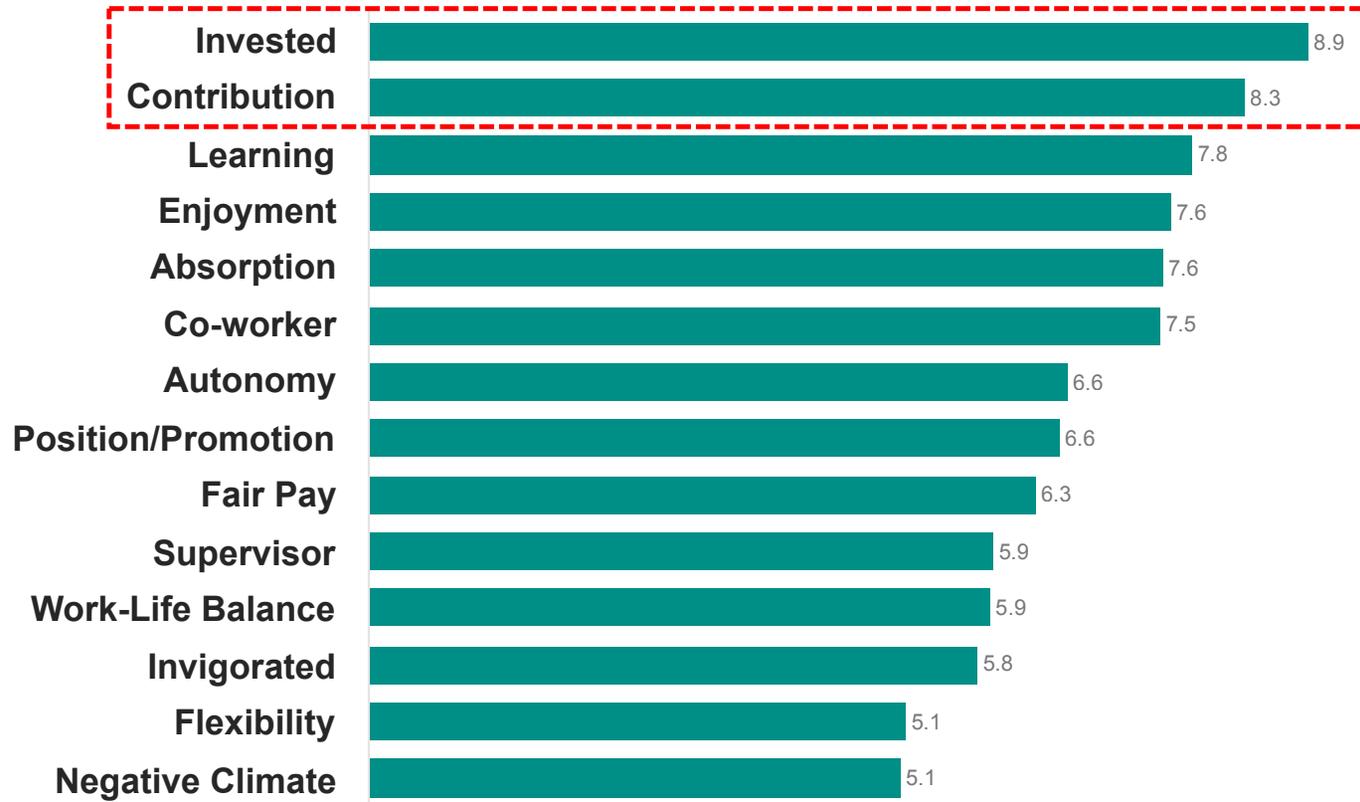
A woman in a white lab coat is looking through a microscope in a laboratory setting. In the background, a man with a beard is holding a brown cat. The image has a teal and orange color gradient overlay.

Dimensions of Job Satisfaction

Study Examined 14 Dimensions of Job Satisfaction

1. (Invested) I am invested in my work and take pride in doing a good job
2. (Contribution) My work makes a positive contribution to other people's lives
3. (Autonomy) I decide how I structure my work and how the work gets done
4. (Flexibility) I have flexible work hours and can determine the amount of work I do
5. (Fair Pay) I think that I am paid fairly and adequately for my work
6. (Enjoyment) I am enjoying the work that I do
7. (Position/Promotion) I am satisfied with my position and promotion opportunities
8. (Supervisor) My supervisor treats me with respect and values my work
9. (Co-worker) I have a warm, friendly and supportive relationship with my co-workers
10. (Work-life Balance) I have a good balance between my work-life and my personal life
11. (Absorption) I am often intensely focused on my work and time goes by quickly
12. (Learning) I often learn something new at work
13. (Negative Climate) A co-worker or supervisor is creating a negative work environment
14. (Invigorated) I feel invigorated after working with clients

Being Invested in Their Work and Making a Contribution Valued Most



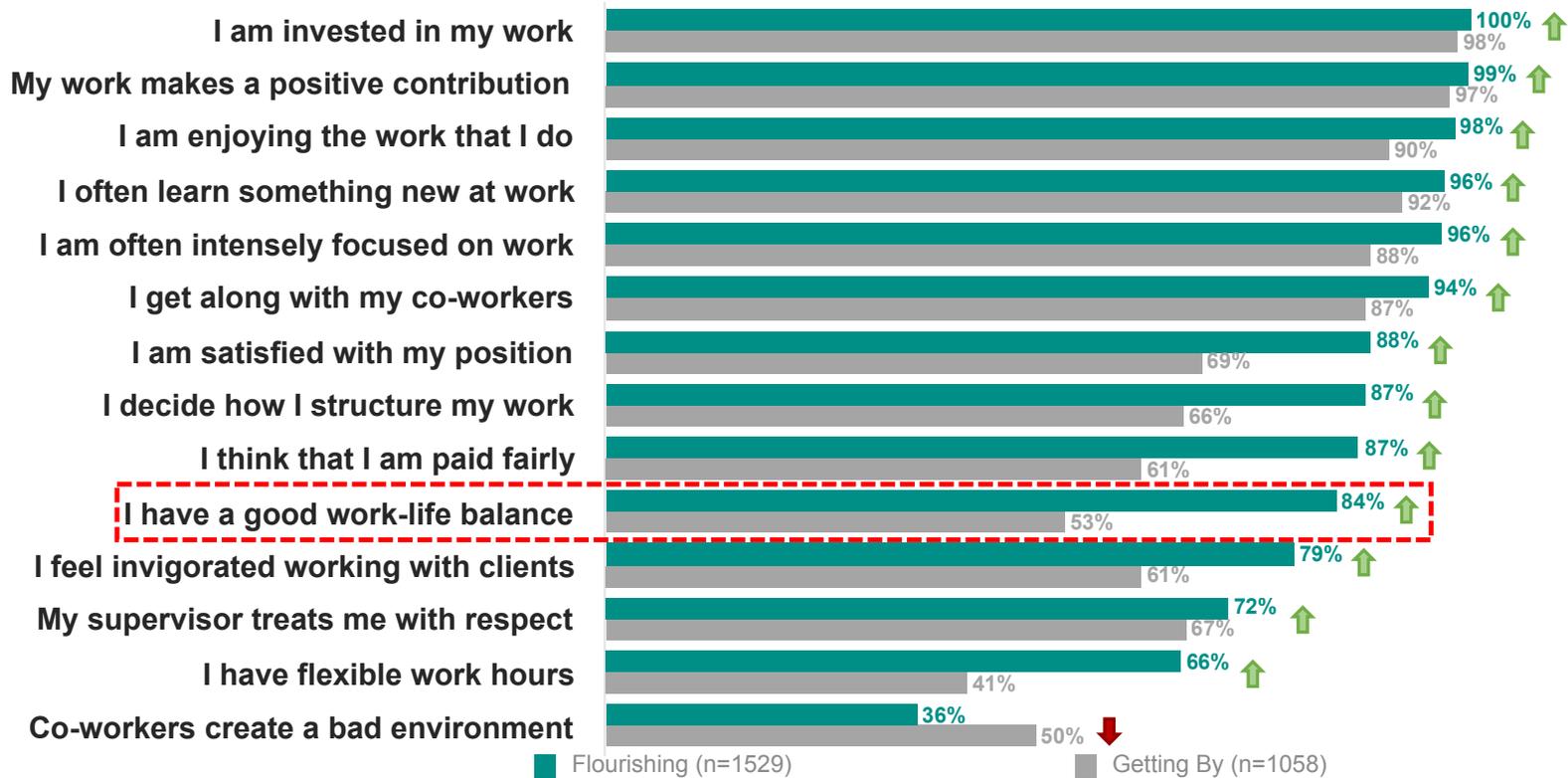
WB6. Please indicate the degree to which you agree, or disagree, with the statements below

Base: All Respondents (n=2871)

Drivers of Job Satisfaction

- Good work-life balance
 - Biggest differentiator between distressed/not distressed
 - Biggest differentiator of wellbeing
- Enjoying the work
- Being paid fairly
- Having a supportive relationship with co-workers

Work-Life Balance Also a Wellbeing Differentiator

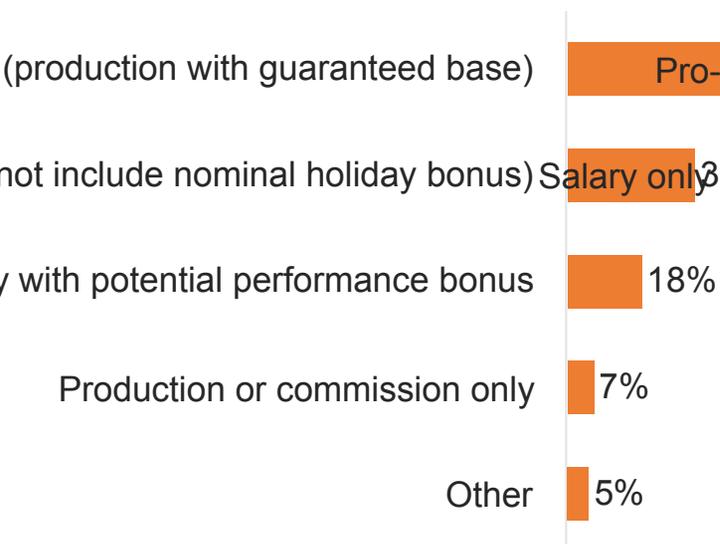


WB6. Please indicate the degree to which you agree, or disagree, with the statements below
 Base: All Respondents [Veterinarians Flourishing (n=1529), Veterinarians Getting By (n=1058)]

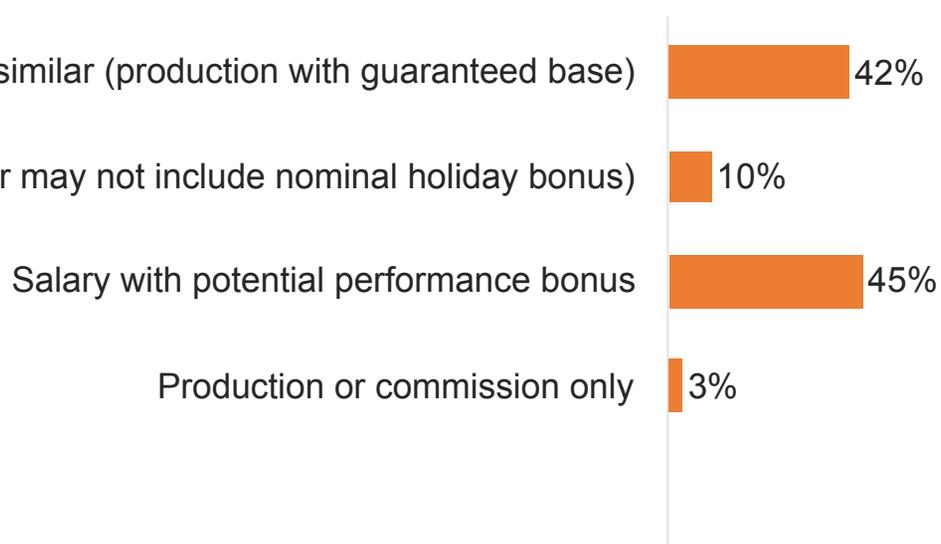
↑↓ Indicates a statistically significant difference from flourishing veterinarians
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Compensation System Not Significant Factor in Job Satisfaction, Wellbeing or Psychological Distress

Current Compensation Type



Preferred Compensation Type

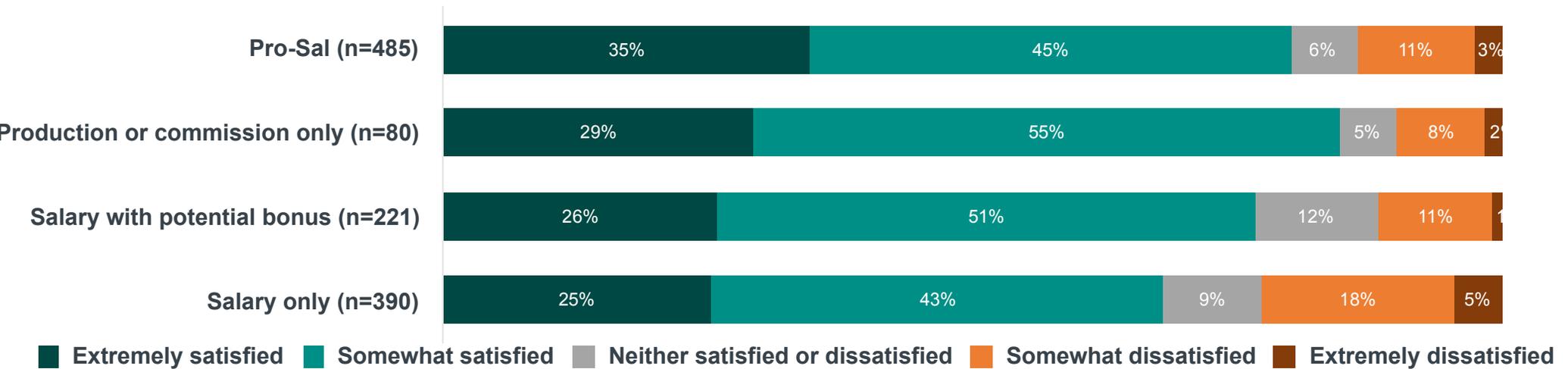


CLINIC2. On what type of system is your compensation based?

CLINIC4. What type of compensation system would you most prefer?

Base: Employed Associates or Medical Directors

Satisfaction with Various Compensation Systems Similar



Note: *- Signifies Small Bases

CLINIC3. How satisfied are you with this system of compensation...

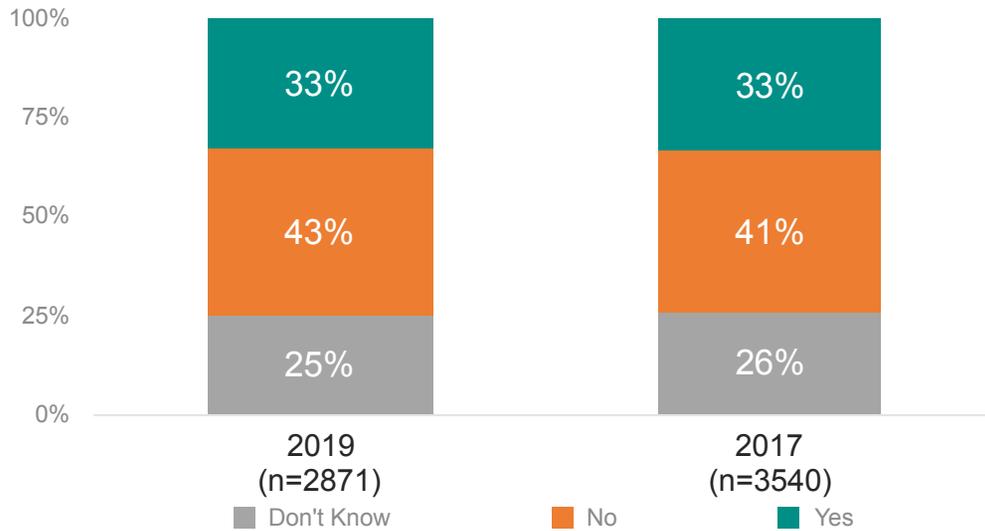
Base: Employed Associates or Medical Directors

A photograph of a male veterinarian in a dark green jacket and a patterned tie, looking down at a clipboard while examining a brown cow in a barn. The cow has a white bandage on its forehead. The background shows a row of metal stalls with red and green lights. The image has a teal and orange color gradient overlay.

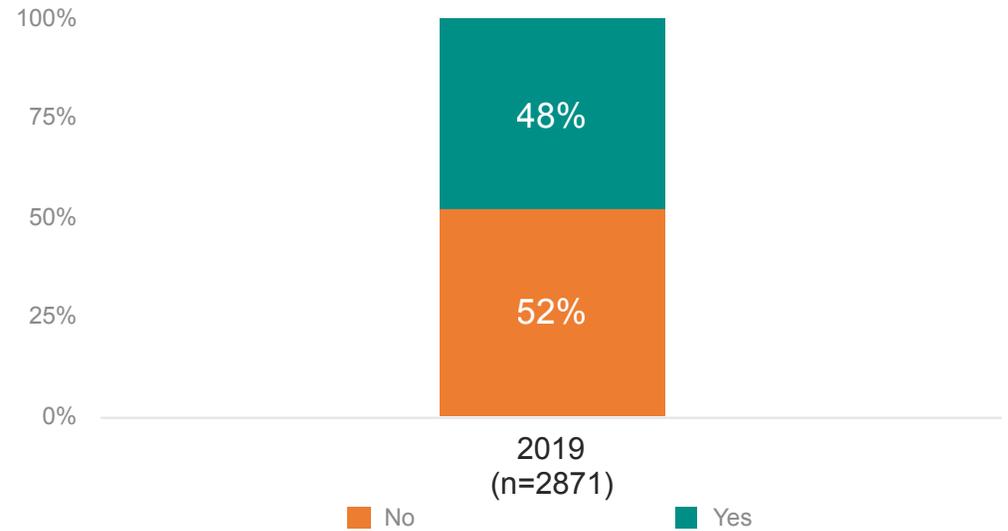
Recommending a Career in Veterinary Medicine

Likelihood to Recommend a Career in Veterinary Medicine Unchanged Since 2017

Would Recommend being a Veterinarian



When 'Don't Know' is Not an Option



CLINIC12. Would you recommend a career in veterinary medicine to a friend or family member?

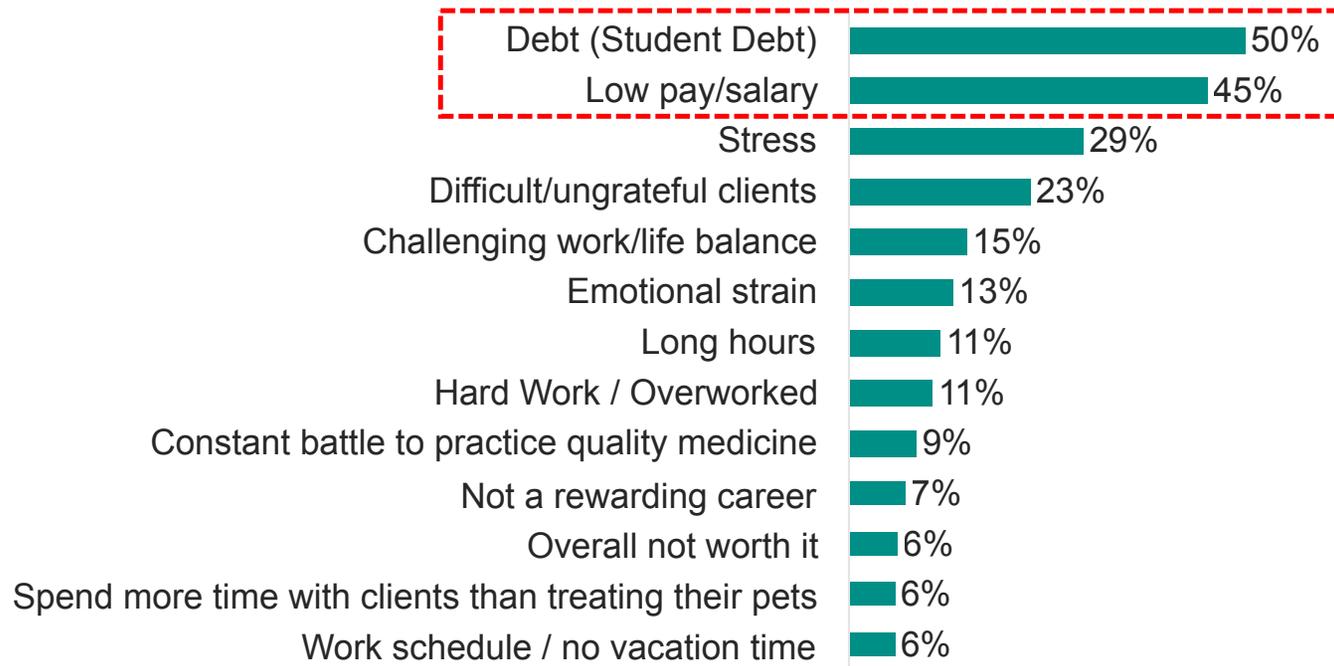
CLINIC14. You indicated you were not sure if you would recommend a career in veterinary medicine to a friend or family member. If pressed to give a yes or no answer, would you recommend a career in veterinary medicine?

Base: All Respondents (n=2871)

↑ Indicates a statistically significant increase between not-distressed and distressed veterinarians

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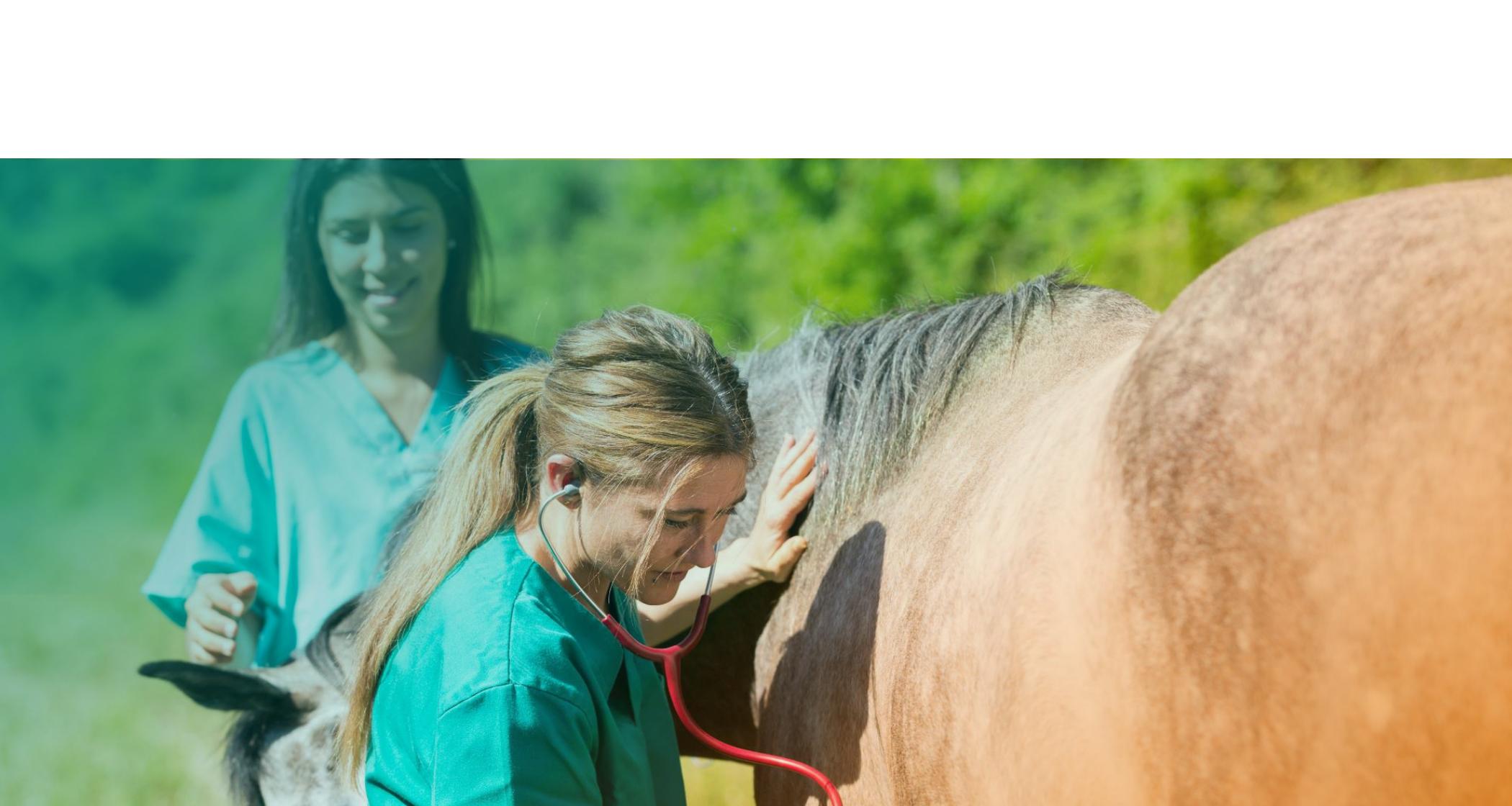
Leading Reasons for Not Recommending: High Student Debt, Low Pay, Stress



* Only showing mentions >5%

CLINIC13. You indicated you would not recommend a career in veterinary medicine to a friend or family member, what are the main reasons why?

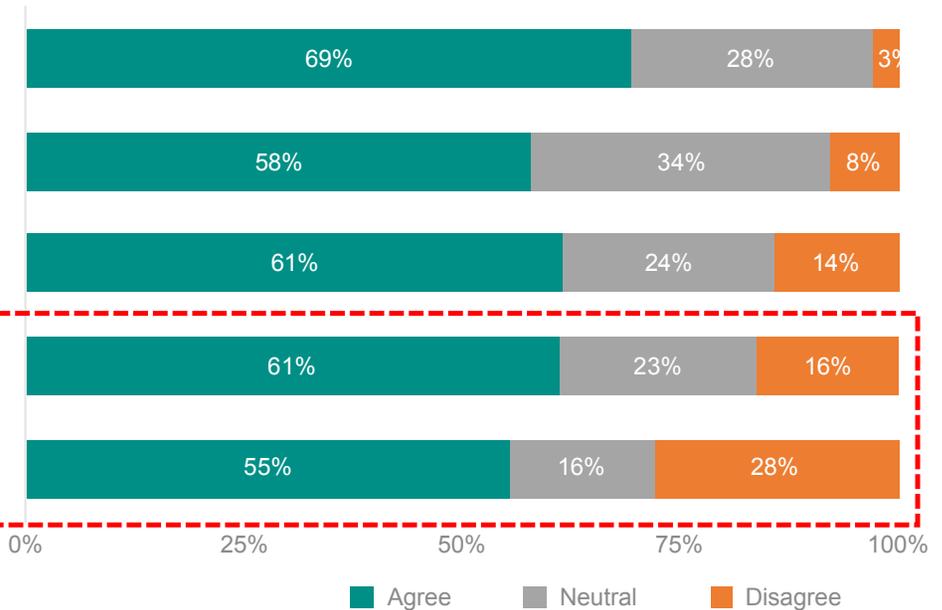
Base: Respondents who Would Not Recommend a Career in Veterinary Medicine (n=1273)



How to Improve Wellbeing, Mental Health and Job Satisfaction

Talk About It

- Every practice should discuss stress and mental health frequently and encourage people to seek help if needed. Mental health treatment helps veterinarians lead normal lives
- Facts show veterinary medicine is an emotionally distressing profession. Veterinarians are caring for those with mental illness
- Feelings of burnout are common. Mental health treatment is accessible
- I feel comfortable discussing mental health topics with other veterinarians. Easy to feel: "I'm the only one"
- Discussion gives people permission to acknowledge their feelings; remove stigma. needed, "I would be comfortable taking time off to seek mental health treatment"



MH9. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements using the scale provided.

Base: All Respondents [Not-distressed Veterinarians (n=2657), Distressed Veterinarians (n=199)]

↑↓ Indicates a statistically significant difference between 2019 and 2017

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What can you do as an individual?

- Determine insurance coverage for mental health
- Take advantage of Employee Assistance Programs if one exists
- Utilize tele-behavioral health solutions to make access to mental healthcare more flexible, inexpensive, and time efficient
 - E-counseling.com
 - 7cups.com
- Take Kessler 6 testing (www.vetwellbeing.com)
- Complete the Workplace Wellbeing Certificate Program (www.axon.avma.org)

What can employers do? Improve Access and Awareness to Help

- Consider an Employee Assistance Program program if one doesn't already exist
 - VHMA and Alera Veterinary offer an affordable EAP
- Engage tele-behavioral health solutions to make access to mental healthcare more flexible, inexpensive, and time efficient
 - E-counseling.com
 - 7cups.com
- Encourage Kessler 6 testing (www.vetwellbeing.com)
- Encourage/ incentivize employees to take Workplace Wellbeing Certificate Program (www.axon.avma.org)
- Invite mental health professionals and financial planners to speak at practice meetings regularly

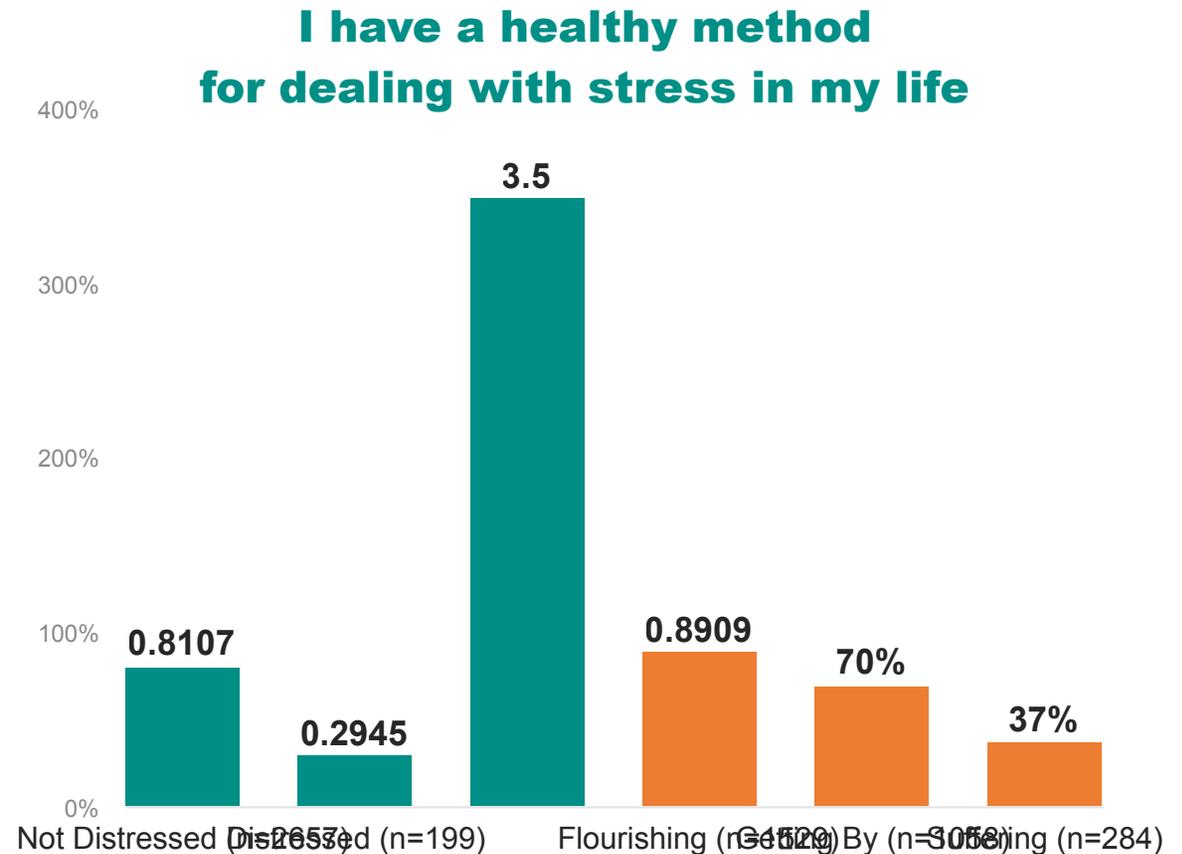
In times of Crisis

- Dial 9-1-1 if you suspect someone may be a danger to themselves or others.
- Dial 9-8-8, new suicide prevention hotline (in development) or 1-800-273-TALK
 - Post NSPL poster in break room
- Type “mobile crisis” into search engine for assistance with mental health crisis in virtually every community
- Text “Hello” to 741741 for access to a trained crisis counselor



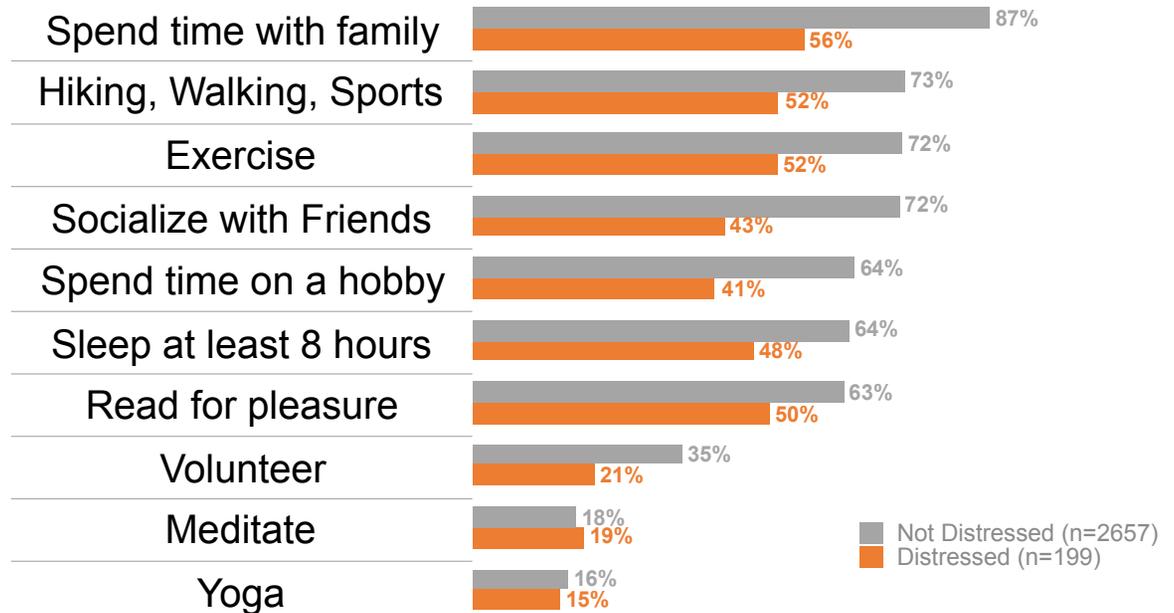
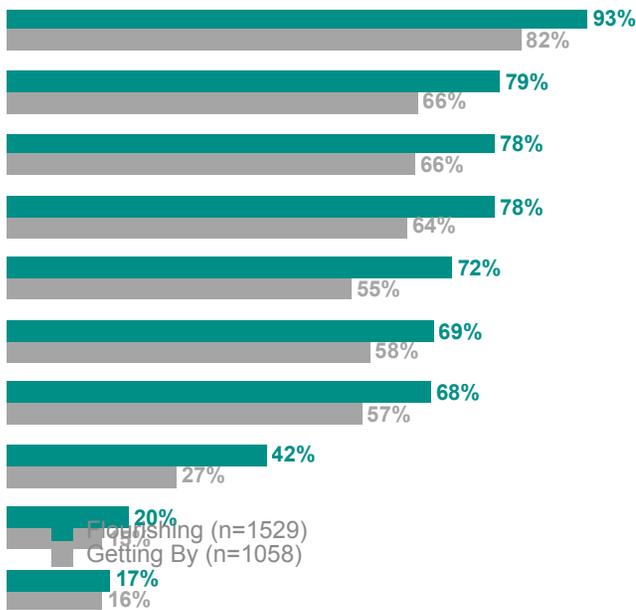
Have a Stress Management Plan

- A stress management plan is a major differentiator
 - Between those without serious psychological distress and those with
 - Between Flourishing and Getting By veterinarians
- Don't leave school without it!
- For a list of techniques, visit vetwellbeing.com



Balance Work and Healthy Activities

- Reduces burnout
- Improves wellbeing
- Reduces serious psychological distress



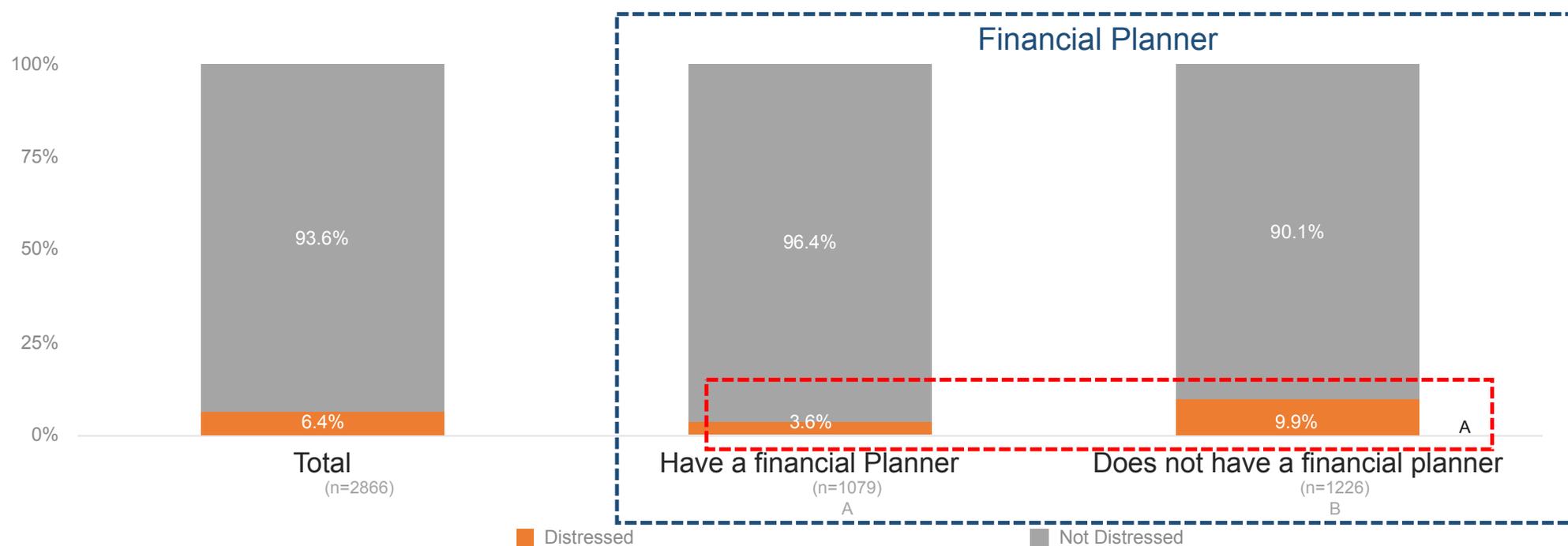
Balance Work and Healthy Activities

Study after study shows that good social relationships are the strongest, most consistent predictor there is of a happy life, even going so far as to call them a “necessary condition for happiness,” meaning that humans can’t actually be happy without them. This is a finding that cuts across race, age, gender, income and social class so overwhelmingly that it dwarfs any other factor.

Ruth Whippman, author of "The Pursuit of Happiness" and "America the Anxious"; in NY Times

Engage a Financial Planner

Significantly reduces the risk of serious psychological distress



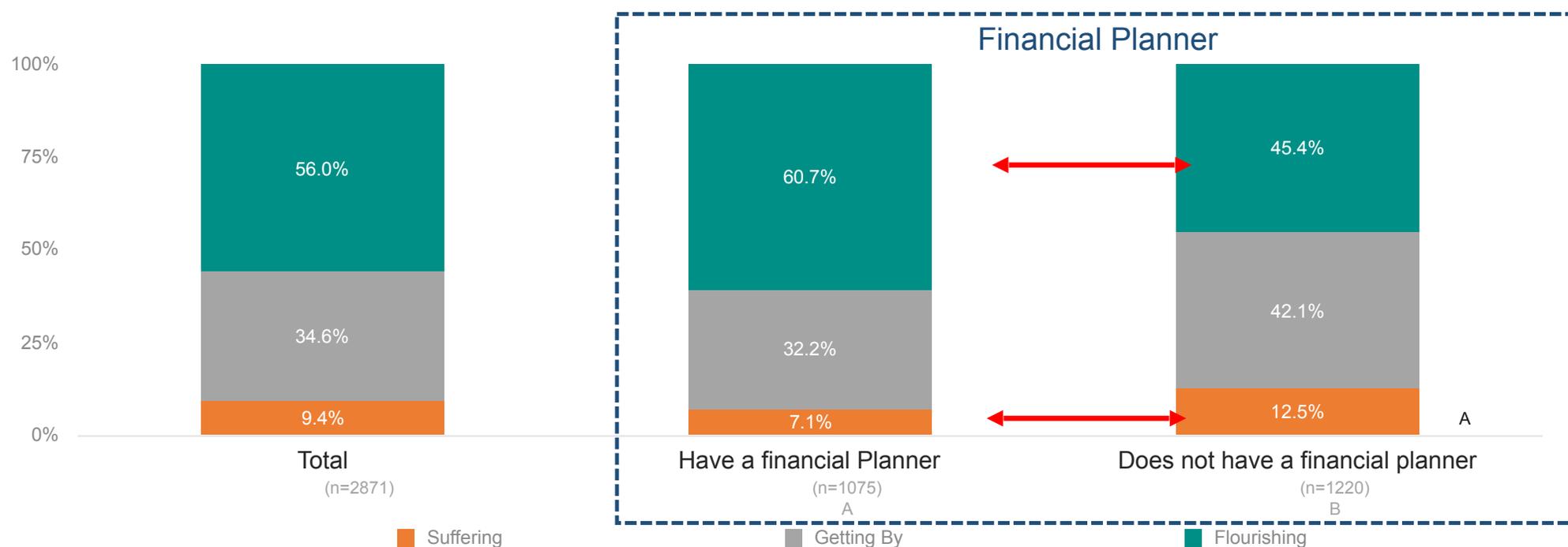
MH1. Results based on results of Kessler 6.

Base: All Respondents

x - Indicates a statistically significant difference between categories

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Financial Planning Has a Positive Impact on Wellbeing



Wellbeing Index
Base: All Respondents

x - Indicates a statistically significant difference between categories

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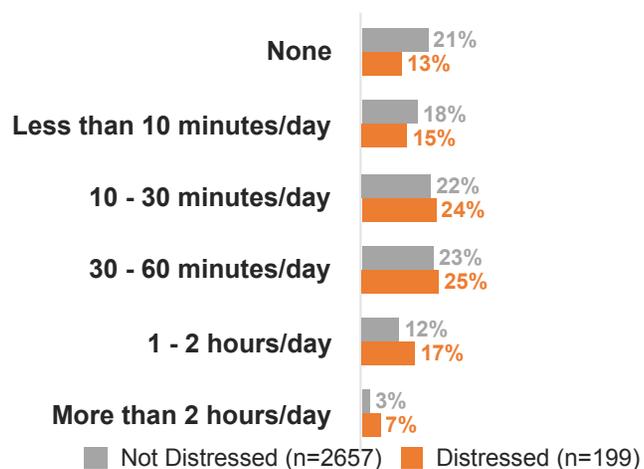
Financial Planning & Counseling Resources

- Student debt help: VIN Foundation Student Debt Center
 - vinfoundation.org/resources/student-debt-center/
- Financial Planning: National Association of Personal Financial Advisors
 - NAPFA.org
 - Fee-based financial planners
- Pro bono financial counseling
 - NAPFA Foundation (napfafoundation.org)
 - Financial Planning Association (onefpa.org/advocacy/Pages/Pro_Bono_Financial_Planning.aspx)
 - National Foundation for Credit Counseling (nfcc.org)

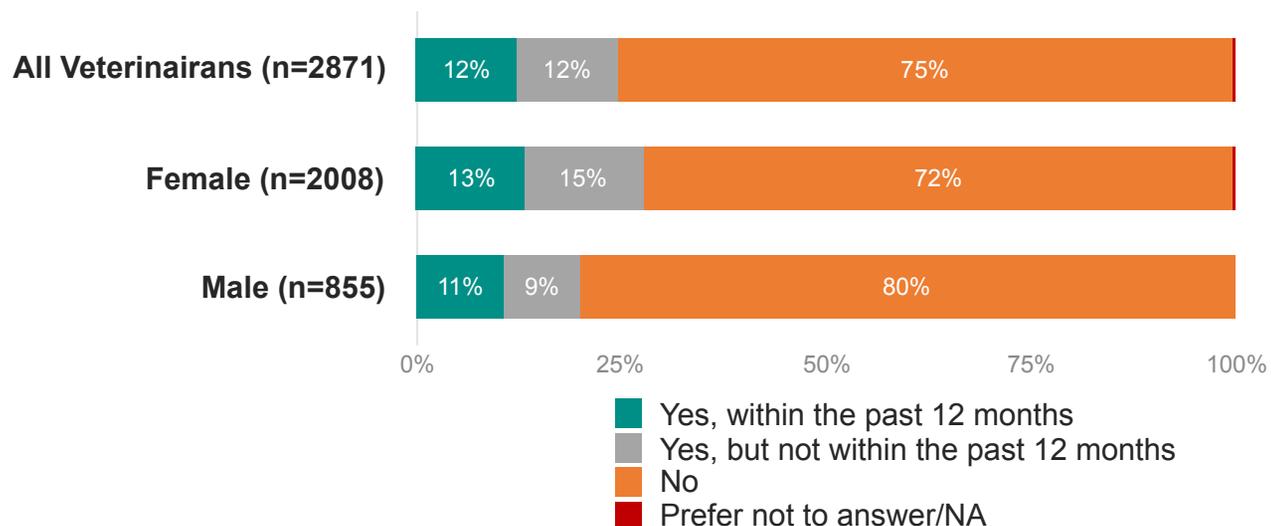
Limit time on Social Media

- More time negatively associated with mental health and high wellbeing
- Social media isn't socializing
 - It's spending time alone with your computer
- The more time on social media, the greater exposure to cyberbullying

Time on Social Media Distressed v. Not Distressed



Prevalence of Cyberbullying



Questions

For more information:

www.vetwellbeing.com



Thank You!