

HLB Ireland 2025/26 Veterinary Practice Report

Survey Results
and Sector Insights



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This report is designed to inform.

We hope it also inspires.



Foreword

I am pleased to introduce HLB Ireland's sixth annual report on veterinary practices in Ireland.

The veterinary profession in Ireland is in the midst of meaningful transformation. What was once a predominantly sole-practitioner, generalist model is evolving into more structured, multi-partner and increasingly specialised practices. Throughout this shift, veterinary professionals continue to demonstrate resilience, ingenuity and an unwavering dedication to the animals in their care.

At the same time, the sector is navigating important challenges, from staffing and recruitment to evolving client expectations, financial pressures and succession planning. These are not just hurdles but opportunities for innovation, stronger practice structures and more sustainable growth. They reflect a profession that is actively responding to change and reshaping its future with purpose. This year's research surfaced four key themes.

This report draws on the views of 104 veterinary professionals from across Ireland. While it does not claim to be exhaustive, the insights are robust and grounded in lived experience. The data reveals emerging trends, ongoing challenges and new opportunities, from practice structure and workforce issues to pricing, succession and technology.

At HLB Ireland, we are proud to support veterinary professionals not just as accountants, but as trusted advisers.

A sincere thank you to everyone who took part in this year's research and for generously sharing your insights and experiences. I hope you find this report both valuable and thought-provoking as you plan ahead.

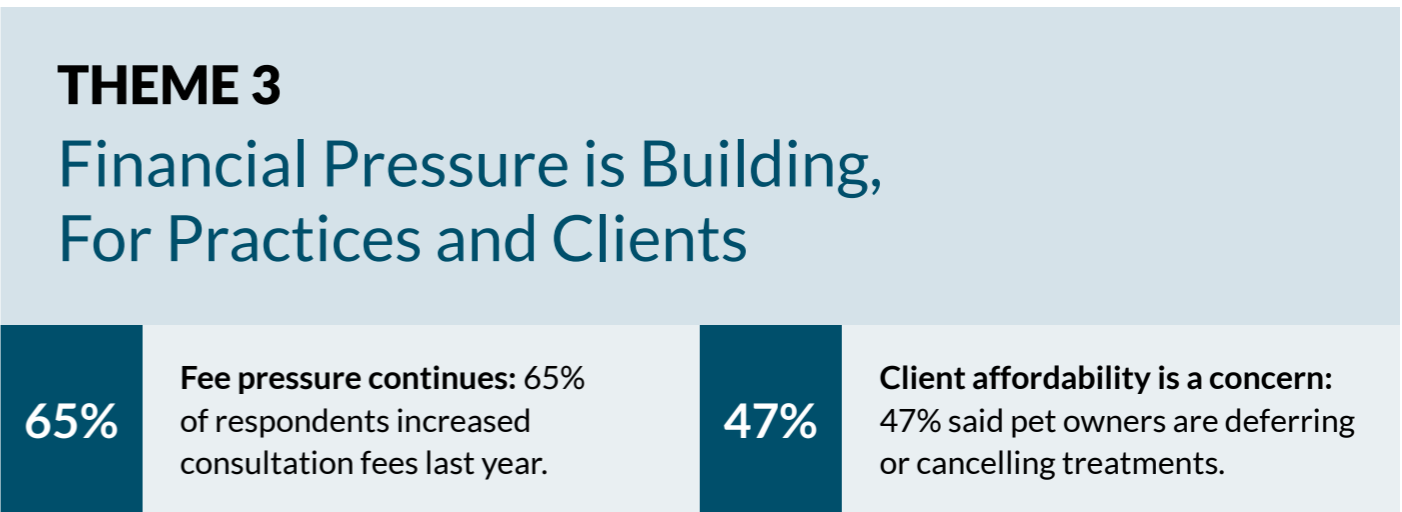
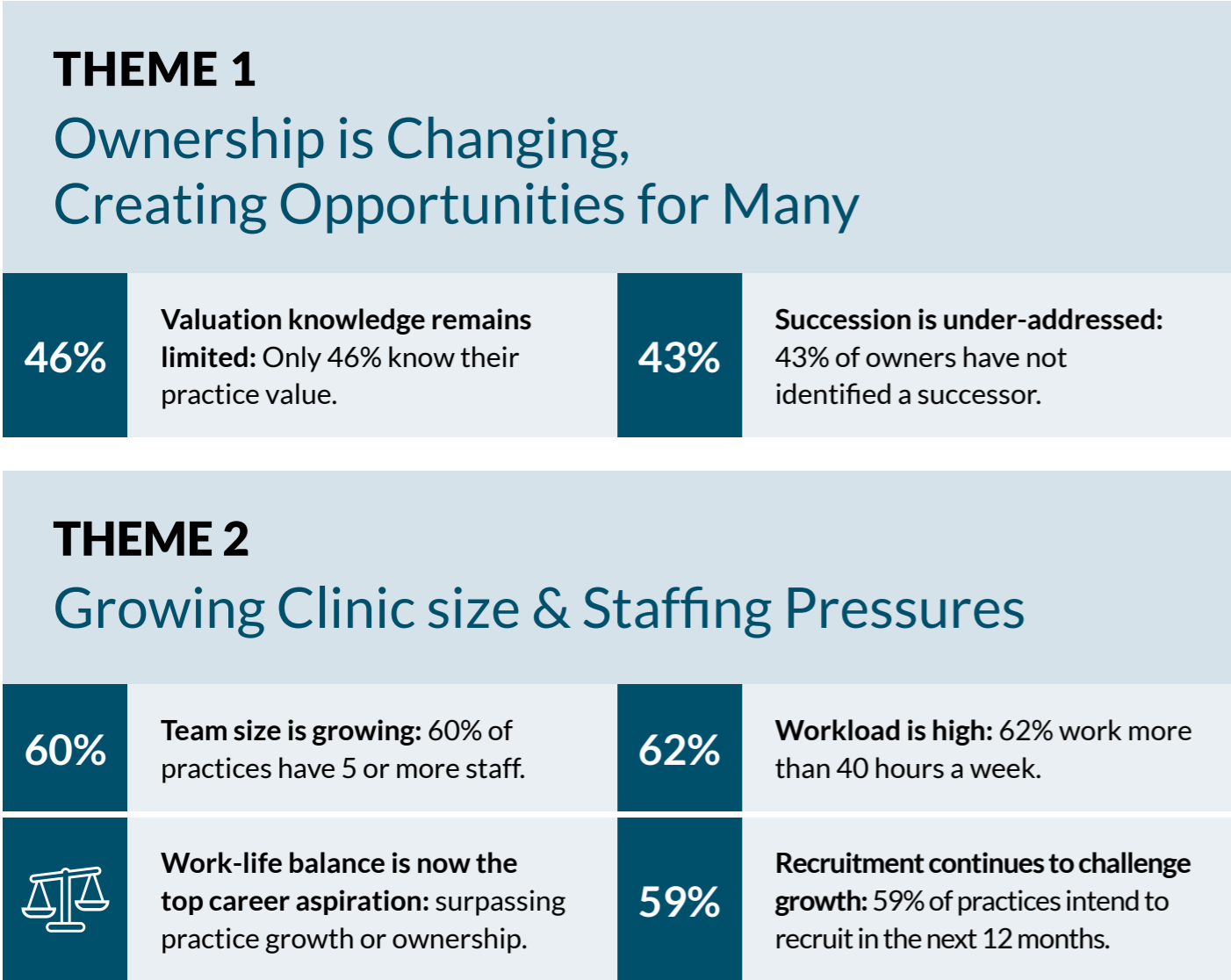
Each reflects both the day-to-day pressures facing practices and the areas where greater clarity and support can drive positive change:

- Ownership is evolving, but many feel underprepared
- Staffing pressures are intensifying and affecting wellbeing
- Financial demands are rising, for both practices and clients
- The sector is changing rapidly, and not everyone feels ready



Many practices face uncertainty about how to respond, from AI and technology adoption to corporate activity and cybersecurity. More than half now offer online booking and reminders, yet over two-thirds feel vulnerable to cyber breaches.

Our survey of Irish veterinary professionals identified four consistent and pressing themes:



Each of these findings is expanded upon in the pages that follow, with year-on-year comparisons, expert commentary, and practical case insights.

Methodology & Respondent Profile Survey

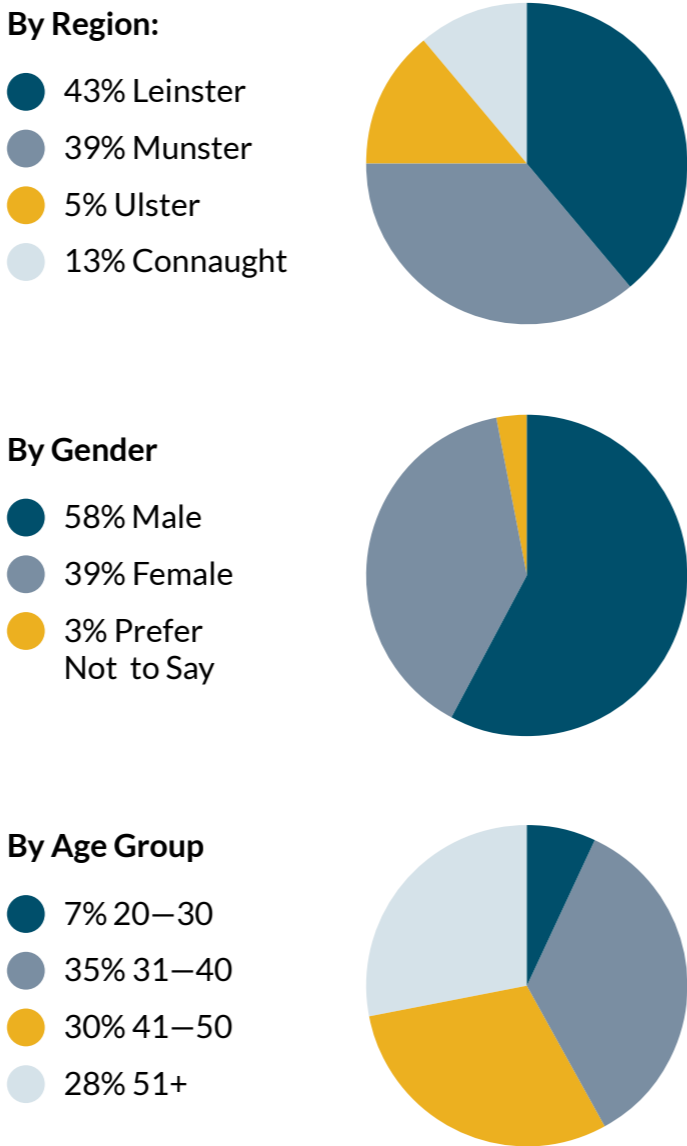
Period	Participants
January—September 2025	104 veterinary professionals from across Ireland
Approach Anonymous, online questionnaire comprising multiple-choice, ranking and free-text questions. Conducted over a 8-week period and analysed by HLB Ireland.	

Respondent Snapshot

Other Demographics

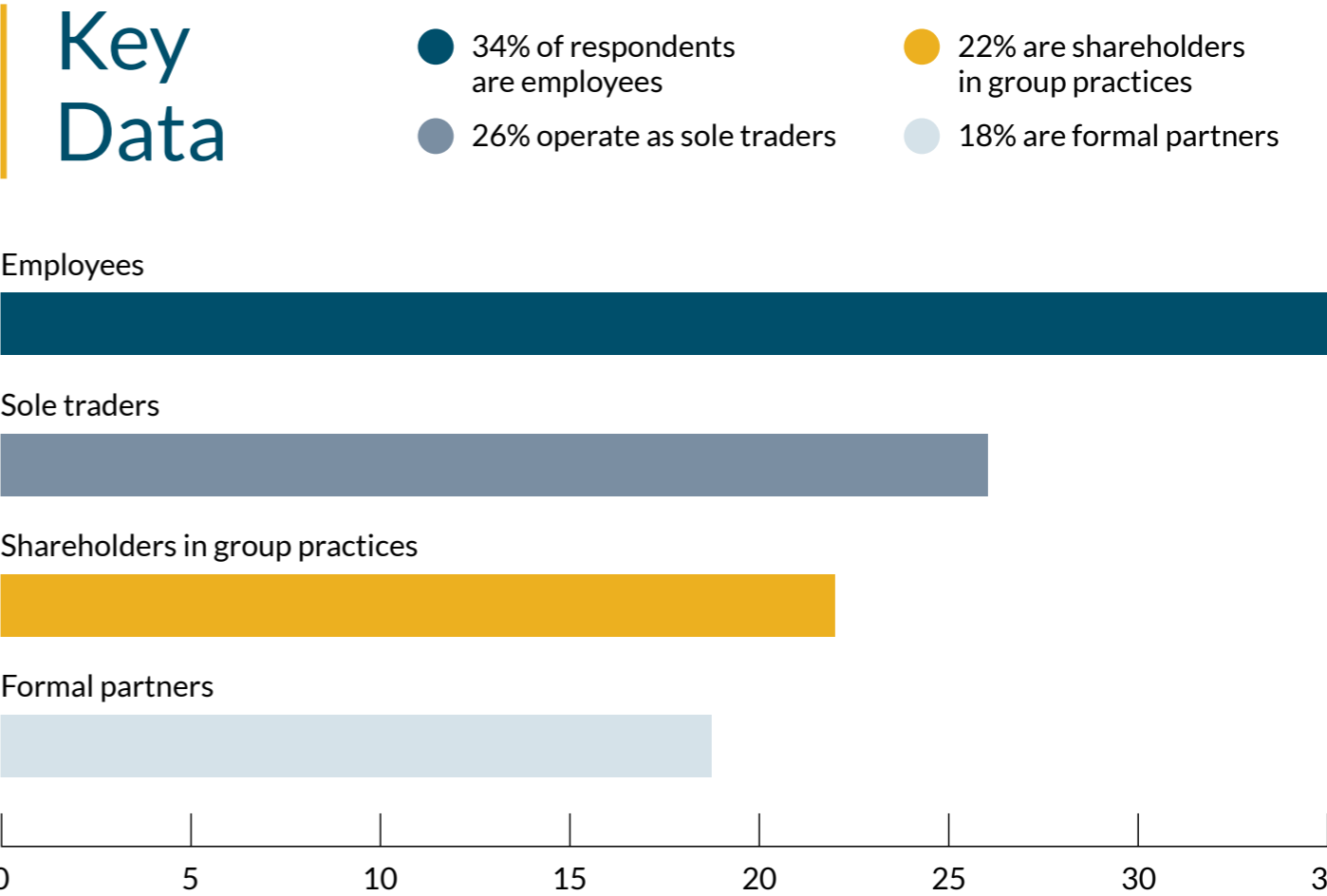
By Role
34% Employees
26% Sole Traders
22% Shareholders
18% Partners

By Practice Type
51% Companion Animal
35% Mixed
7% Equine
7% Large Animal



Practice Roles & Ownership

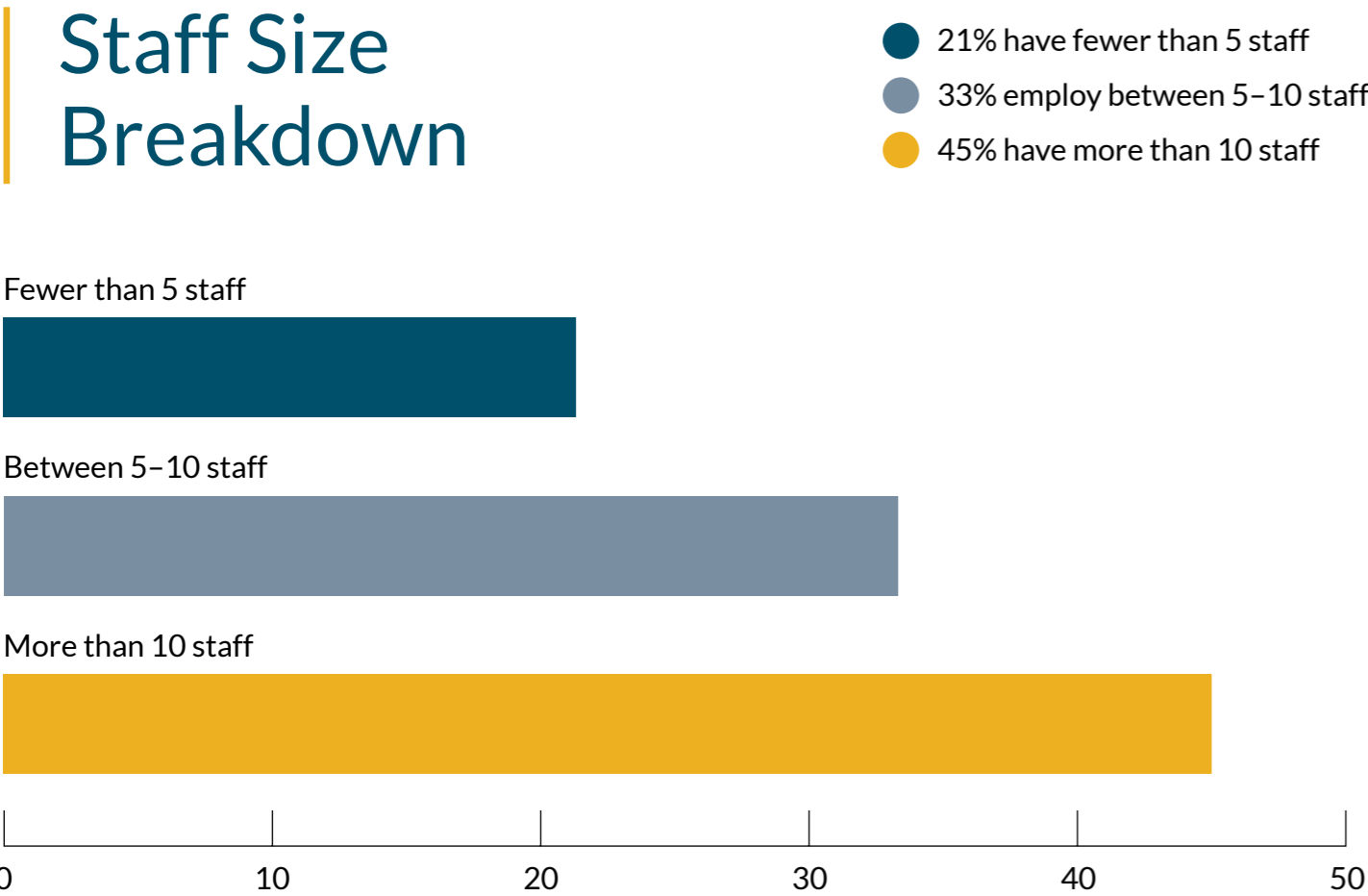
The ownership landscape is changing. While sole traders remain a strong presence, there’s a notable rise in employee and shareholder participation. This reflects broader professional services trends and points toward a future of collaborative models and hybrid management structures.



Mark Butler: “As practice operations grow more complex, clinical excellence alone isn’t enough. Clear roles and equity structures are essential for sustainable growth.”

Practice Size & Staffing Pattern

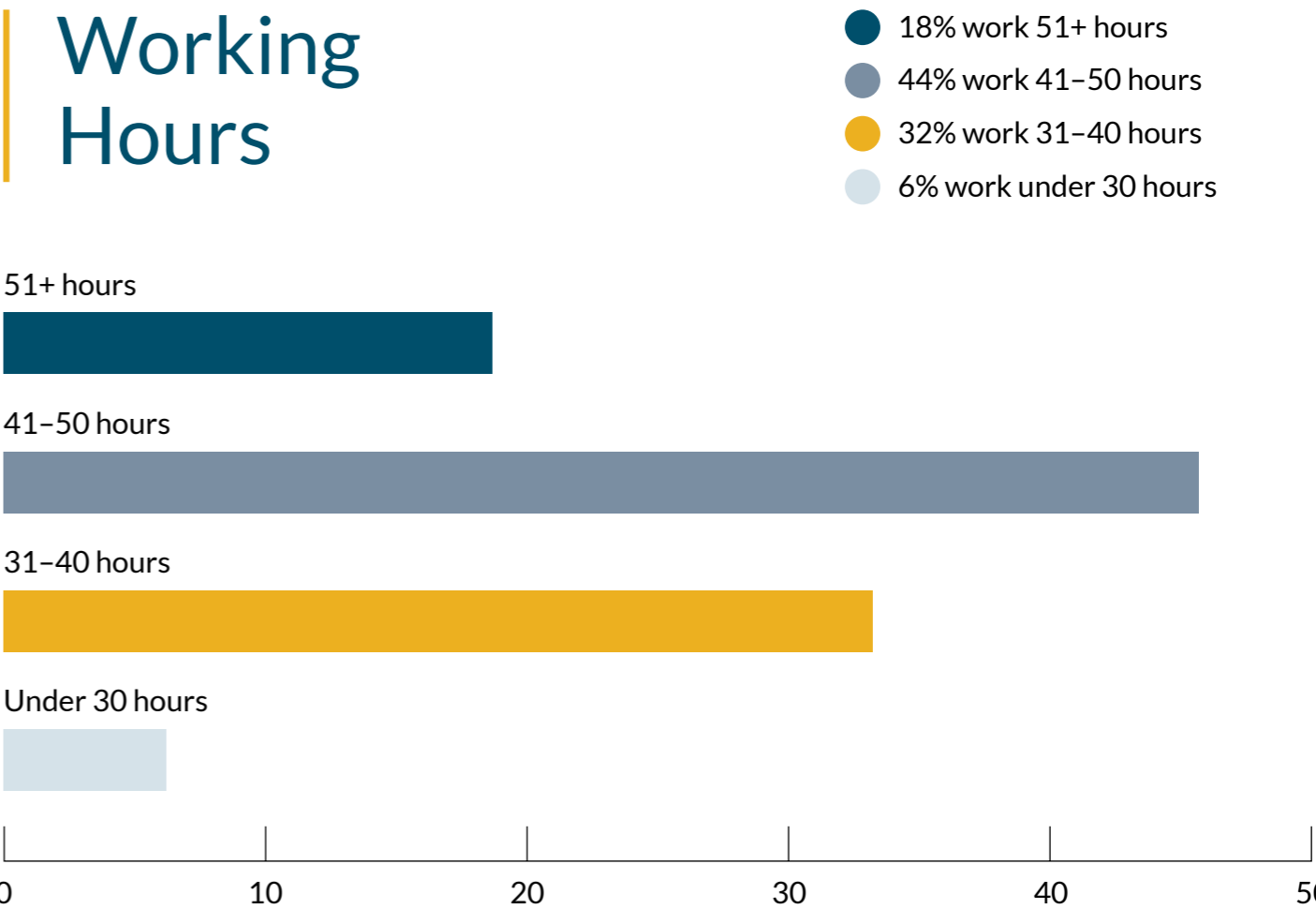
Veterinary practices in Ireland are growing in team size. Only 21% now operate with fewer than five staff, while 45% have more than 10 employees, up significantly from 36% in 2023.



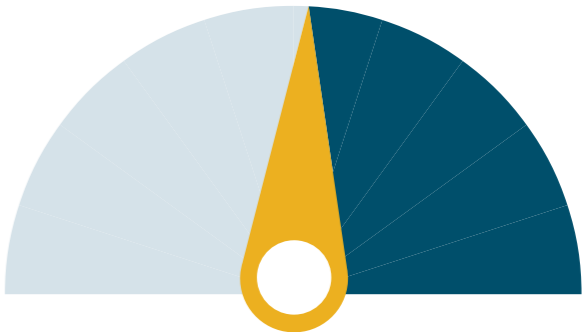
This shift reflects both increasing client demand and the sector’s recognition that team support is key to avoiding burnout.

Working Hours & Job Satisfaction

Workload continues to be a concern. 62% of vets report working more than 40 hours per week, with nearly one in five exceeding 51 hours.



These figures underscore the pressure clinics are under. While demand is strong, sustainability is uncertain without better systems and boundaries.



Average Satisfaction: 5.3 out of 10

Career Aspirations

Career goals have shifted significantly. In contrast to traditional models where ownership was the ambition, today’s vets prioritise wellbeing, balance and legacy.

Top Career Goals

- 49% work-life balance
- 22% secure retirement
- 18% grow their practice
- 11% own their own practice



This mindset shift needs to be factored into leadership, CPD, and retention strategies.

Expert View Look After Your Health

Contributor	Credentials
Adam Kelly	Sports Scientist, Personal Trainer, Life Coach, Triathlon Coach (L2)

Vets are in the health business. You look after the well-being of animals every day, but what about your own?

It’s easy to push your health down the list when work is busy. But just like you advise regular pet check-ups, you need to check in with your GP. Build that relationship early. Don’t wait for a crisis.

Make movement part of the routine

Exercise doesn’t have to be dramatic. A brisk walk, a swim, a strength session – whatever suits your lifestyle. Mornings are often best if you’re self-employed. Before the calls start and the day takes over, you’ve already done something for yourself.

Training with a friend or joining a small group can help. The structure keeps you accountable, and the group is good company, too.

Work should support your life

If you run your practice, design your hours around your life, not the other way around. This is especially important if you have a young family or caring responsibilities. Don’t let work steal your best energy from the people who matter most.

Do something that’s just for you.

Veterinary work is demanding. It’s emotional and physical. That’s why having a hobby or interest outside of work matters, ideally something active, but anything that gives you a break and clears your head.

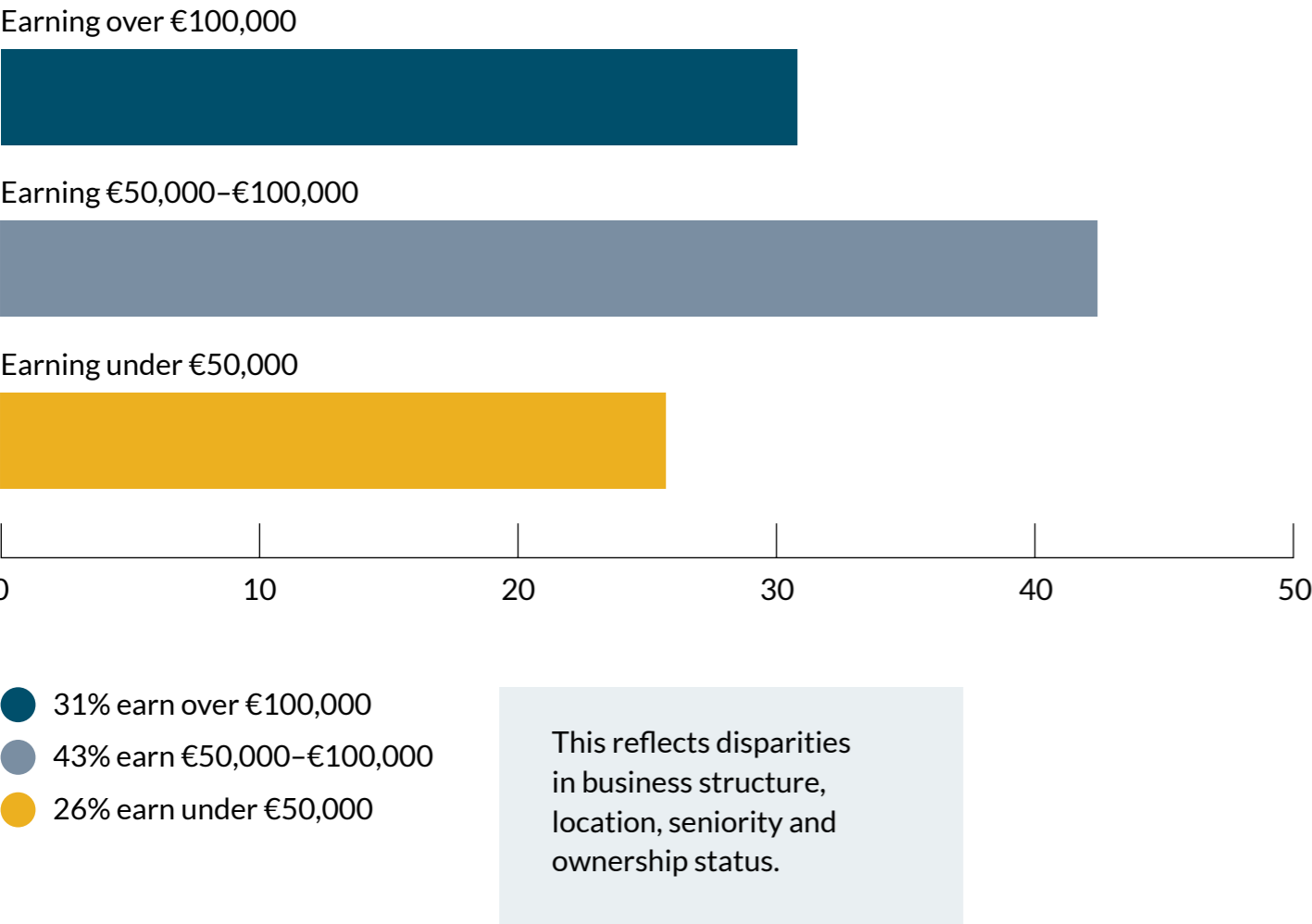
Ask yourself: if you stopped working tomorrow, who would you be? You’re more than your job title. Maybe you’re also a cyclist, a drummer, a hillwalker. That identity matters more than you think.

“You’re not just a vet. You’re a whole person. Look after yourself the way you look after others.”

I’m always happy to chat if you’d like support in building better habits around exercise, routine, or lifestyle.

Income & Financial Realities

A Notable Divergence In Earnings



CSO 2025 average salary for healthcare professionals: €63,200

Expert View

Planning Ahead: Tax Matters More Than You Think

Contributor
Louise Mollahan, Tax Director, HLB Ireland

Tax planning is not just something to consider when preparing to sell your practice. It's a crucial part of running and growing a veterinary business, from how ownership is shared, to how property is held, to how you prepare for the future of your team and your family.

While selling or stepping back is a significant milestone, leaving tax planning until you're already in negotiations can limit your options. We often see cases where the practice operates through one entity and the premises are owned separately. If not planned properly, that structure can lead to complex outcomes, especially around capital gains tax, retirement relief, or VAT.

By taking advice early, you give yourself more choices. Whether your goals involve succession, partial exit, gradual handover or more clarity, a good tax plan lays the foundations for confident, informed decisions.

We specialise in supporting veterinary professionals with practical, forward-thinking tax advice. We understand the unique challenges of running a veterinary practice and work with owners to structure their affairs to support succession, protect value, and allow for smooth transitions.

Our approach is practical, open and focused on helping you understand what works best for your situation. There is no one-size-fits-all answer. The most valuable planning usually starts with a conversation, often before you think you need one.

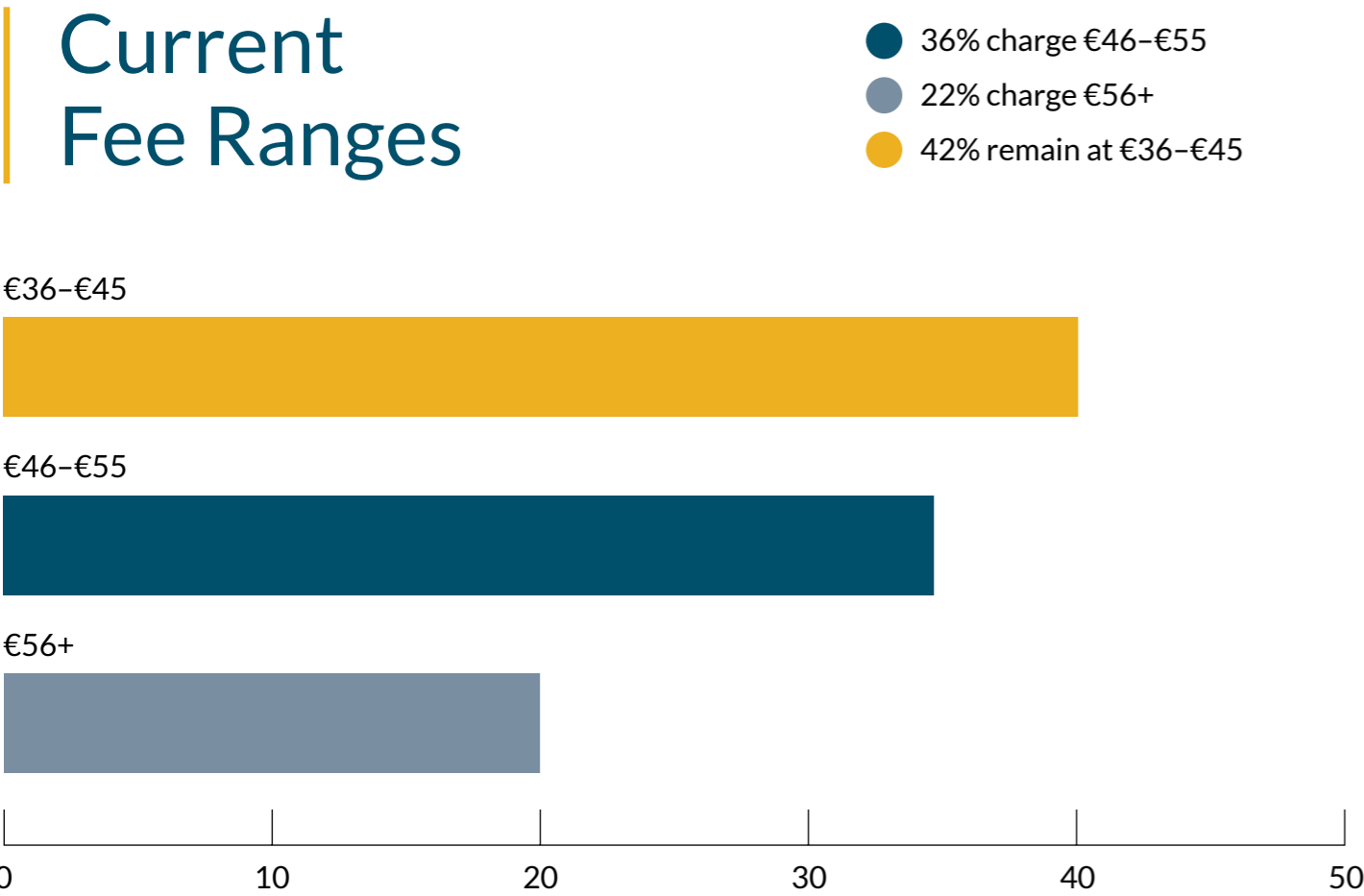
Veterinary practices are often family-led businesses, driven by care, commitment, and community. They deserve the same care when it comes to planning. With the proper structure, you can preserve more of the value you've built, support a smooth transition, and secure the legacy of your life's work.

If you're wondering what the future could look like, we're here to help you plan it, with clarity, confidence, and the right support behind you.



Consultation Fees & Pricing Strategy

65% of practices raised their consultation fees in the past 12 months, driven by inflation, wage demands and insurance costs.



Strategy Tip: Transparent communication about fees helps retain trust. Bundled health plans and phased increases can ease resistance.

Case Insight Anonymous Urban Practice



An established vet centre is a mixed companion animal practice in a high-footfall part of south Dublin. In early 2025, they faced a growing mismatch between rising costs and clients’ price sensitivity. Rather than continuing ad hoc fee increases, they implemented a structured pricing strategy that bundled preventive care and introduced a modestly priced annual wellness plan for pets with chronic conditions.

ACTIONS TAKEN		OUTCOMES	
	Clear tiered consultation structure		Increased client retention over a 12-month period
	Health and loyalty plans are communicated via email and in-practice signage	22%	22% of clients enrolled in the wellness plan by year-end
	Training for front desk staff on how to talk about fees	9%	9% increase in average spend per client

Client Feedback: “We needed a pricing system that felt fair to our team and to our clients.”

Exit Planning & Practice Valuation

Succession is one of the most under-addressed areas in Irish veterinary practice. Despite growing market activity, many practice owners are unsure how or when they will exit. In 2025, only 46% of respondents reported having a clear understanding of their current practice value.

TOP BARRIERS	
	Unclear valuation
	No successor identified
	No formal retirement or handover plan

Expert Note: Exit planning isn't about retiring tomorrow, it's about ensuring you can, when the time is right.

Incorporation Trends

The majority of veterinary practices surveyed (61%) are now incorporated. Among those that aren't, 35% are actively considering it.

WHY INCORPORATE?	
	Easier succession planning
	Potential tax efficiencies
	Improved clarity in ownership and liability
WHY SOME DON'T	
	Uncertainty about benefits versus cost
	Perceived complexity

Corporate Activity in Ireland




Consolidation is shaping the Irish veterinary sector. 65% of respondents said a corporate group had acquired a practice in their area. Views on this were mixed:

THE RESULTS	
33%	33% reported positive local impact
32%	32% were neutral
20%	20% didn't respond
15%	15% said it negatively affected their client base or referrals

This mindset shift needs to be factored into leadership, CPD, and retention strategies.

Case Insight Anonymous Rural Response Practice

After a nearby rural practice was acquired by a Corporate group, they saw an opportunity to position itself as a community-first alternative.

ACTIONS TAKEN		OUTCOMES	
	Website and signage updated with a "locally owned" message	12%	12% growth in new client registrations
	Sponsored local events and ran animal health talks in primary schools	87%	87% client satisfaction in annual feedback survey
	Improved continuity with extended nurse consultations		

Client Feedback: "We leaned into what made us different and built stronger relationships because of it."

Recruitment Outlook

59% of practices intend to recruit in the coming year, but many fear they won't find the right candidates.

TOP ROLES SOUGHT

	Experienced mixed-practice vets		RVNs (especially in rural areas)
	Part-time support staff		

BIGGEST CHALLENGES

	Salary competition with corporates		Perceived workload culture
	Candidate preference for urban centres		

PRACTICAL TIPS

	Offer flexible shifts or job shares		Provide clear progression options
	Highlight culture and CPD in job ads		

Retention & Employee Priorities

What do veterinary employees want most?

TOP PRIORITIES			
43%	43% Higher salaries	23%	23% More annual leave
18%	18% Ongoing training and CPD	11%	11% Better communication from management

“It’s not just pay, **it’s knowing you’ll be listened to and supported.**”

Insight: Salaries matter, but culture, trust and growth are essential for long-term retention.

Expert View Hiring Smart

Contributor
Veterinary Recruitment Consultant

The First 60 Days: Make or Break

The veterinary sector continues to face real challenges in recruiting, but the bigger problem is often retaining the right people once they’ve been hired. “Too many clinics invest months into hiring, only to lose a great new starter in the first few weeks because the fundamentals weren’t in place.” A thoughtful onboarding process isn’t a nice-to-have; it’s a retention tool.

Poor inductions leave new hires feeling lost or overwhelmed, particularly in fast-paced practices where expectations are high and the learning curve is steep. Clarity, connection, and feedback are essential, and they need to start early.

“Retention starts on Day One. You can’t afford to lose someone in the first 60 days because the basics weren’t clear”

TOP TIPS FOR ONBOARDING SUCCESS

- 1

Create a structured induction and assign a buddy

Don’t just show them around plan their first two weeks in detail. Schedule time for introductions, training, and shadowing. Assign a ‘go-to’ person they can check in with daily. This builds confidence and creates a culture of support from day one.
- 2

Be transparent about workload expectations

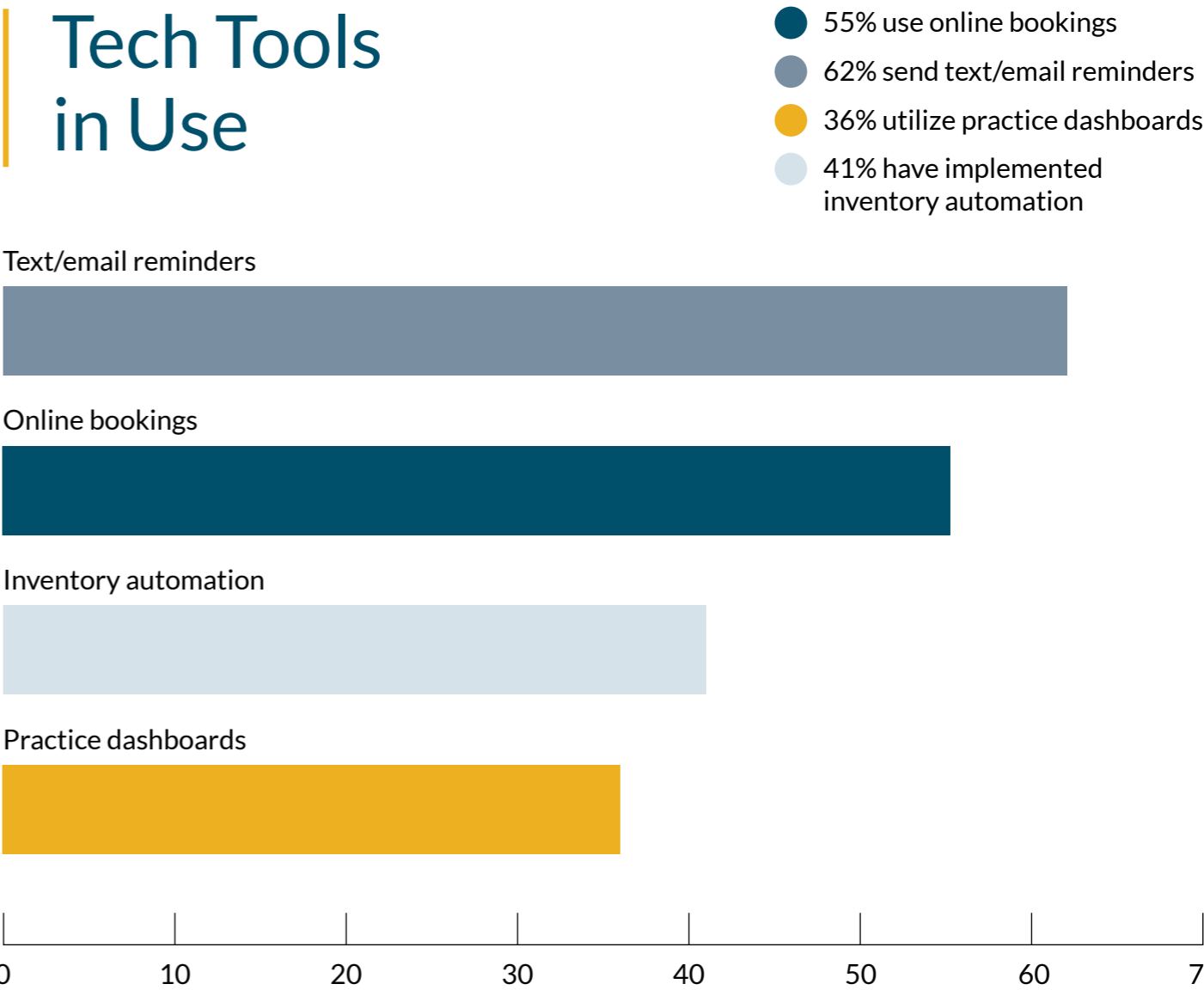
Too often, new hires are left to figure it out themselves. Be clear about a typical day, the caseload, shift patterns, and breaks. Let them know how to ask for help and what support is available during busy periods.
- 3

Offer feedback early and often

Don’t wait for the first review meeting. Check in regularly, even informally, to acknowledge wins and offer guidance. Early feedback prevents bad habits, boosts morale, and strengthens engagement.

Technology in Practice Operations

Technology adoption is rising, but uneven. 55% now offer online booking, and 62% use automated text/email reminders.



Insight: Small steps can yield real-time savings and a better client experience.

EMERGING AREAS



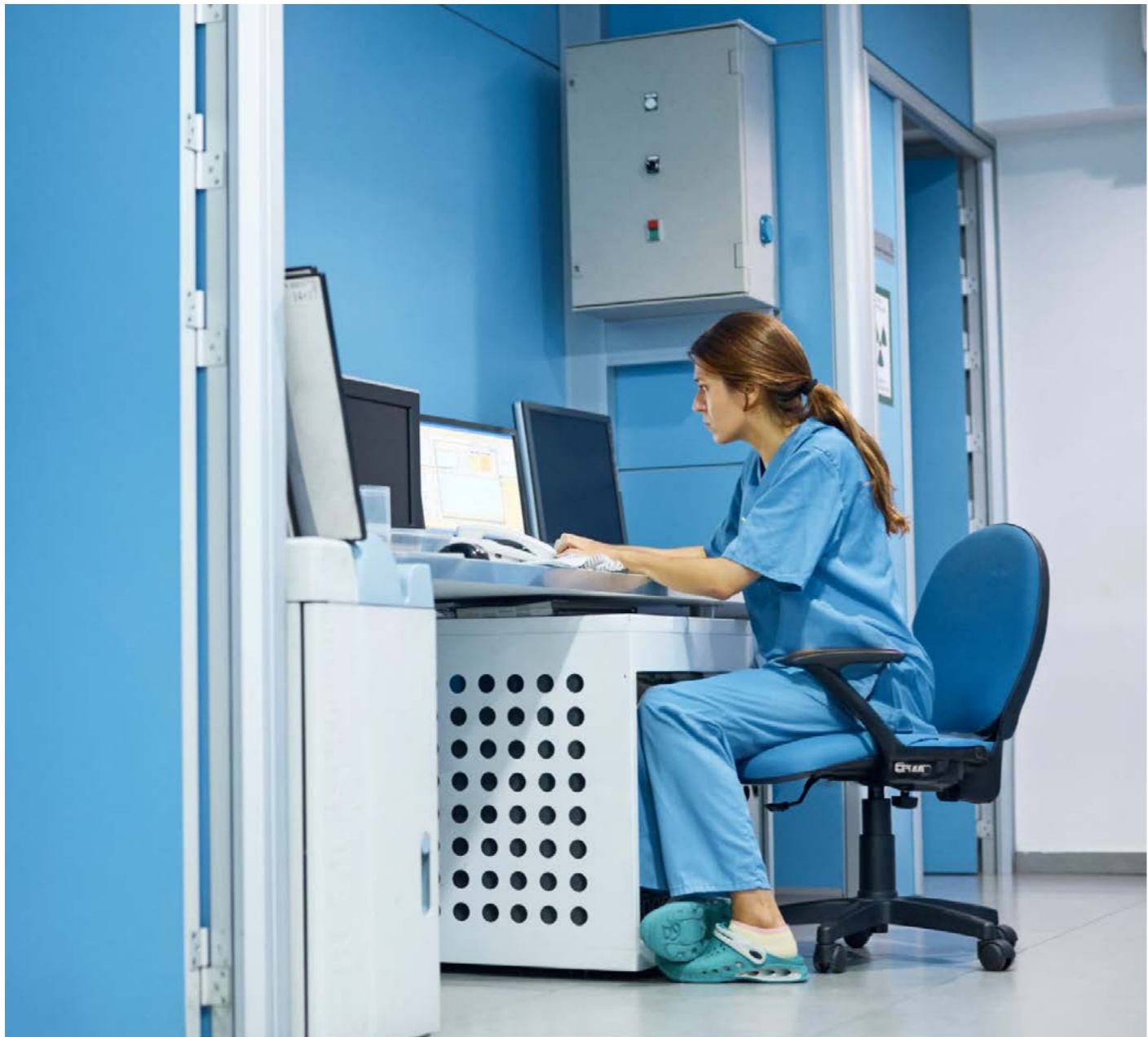
AI triage tools



AI Operations & diagnostics



Online prescription renewal



Cybersecurity Readiness

Despite growing digital reliance, most practices feel underprepared.

SURVEY RESULTS

68% 68% feel vulnerable to cyberattack

24% Only 24% have formal policies

17% 17% conduct regular backups

COMMON RISKS



Weak or shared passwords



No formal data access policies



Lack of IT support during outages

Tip: Even a basic security audit and staff policy session can prevent breaches.

Practice Tech Checklist

Five Core Technology Essentials for Veterinary Practices

Every practice, regardless of size, should ensure the following tech foundations are in place:







1	Password and Access Management Unique logins, multi-factor authentication, and regular updates
2	Automated Data Backup Daily backups to secure, encrypted locations
3	Cloud-Based Practice Management System Accessible, scalable, and regularly updated
4	Online Booking and Communication Tools For appointments, reminders, and prescription refills
5	Staff Training and IT Policy Awareness Every team member understands their role in data protection

Security is everyone’s responsibility — **make it a core part of your team’s culture.**

Cost-of-Living Pressures

Balancing Compassion and Commercial Reality

47% of respondents reported a noticeable increase in clients delaying or deferring treatment due to cost.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICES			
	Increased strain on cash flow		Ethical tension for clinical teams
	Risk of missed preventive care		
SUGGESTED STRATEGIES			
	Introduce phased payment options		Promote wellness and value plans
	Train staff in sensitive fee communication		

Client Feedback: “We never want to turn clients away—but we also can’t subsidise every case. Clarity and support options are key.”

Mindfulness Matters

Why Mindfulness matters in Veterinary Care

Animal care brings unique pressures – patient loss, distressed clients, long hours, and heavy caseloads all place real mental and emotional strain on veterinary professionals. As a result, the profession sees some of the highest rates of burnout, compassion fatigue, and mental health challenges in the medical field. In this high-pressure setting, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed or disconnected from your own wellbeing. Mindfulness offers practical, evidence-based ways to manage stress, stay present, and build emotional resilience. The five tips below are designed to fit naturally into daily clinical practice without requiring long meditation sessions or major lifestyle changes.

TIPS FOR MINDFULNESS & EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

1

Pause between patients: A mindful minute

Before moving from one case to the next, take just one quiet minute to reset. Sit or stand still, feel your feet on the ground, and take 3 slow breaths.

Gently ask: “What am I carrying right now, and can I let some of it go?”

This small practice reduces emotional residue from earlier cases and activates the calming nervous system response to move to the next.

2

Name It to tame it

Emotional awareness is a powerful first step. Rather than suppress difficult feelings, acknowledge them clearly:

“This is sadness after a tough loss.”—“This is the weight of responsibility.”

Naming emotions reduces their intensity and prevents overwhelm and makes emotions more manageable.

3

Shift the inner dialogue

Veterinary professionals often hold themselves to very high standards. The next time self-criticism appears, ask:

“Would I speak to a colleague the way I am speaking to myself?”

Reframe the thought: “I did my best under tough circumstances.”

Self-compassion fosters resilience and counters the inner critic that can drive burnout.

4

Grounding through the senses

When stress peaks, **bring your attention to the physical world:**

Name 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, 1 you can taste.

Sensory grounding reduces anxiety, improves focus, and breaks the spiral of racing thoughts.

5

Create end of day closure

To help lessen what you bring home emotionally from your workday, to let go, try a brief reflective exercise:

Write down: 1 thing that went well, 1 thing you learned, and 1 thing you are leaving behind today.

Repeat a closing phrase: **“Today is done. I did what I could. I will rest.”**

Encourages emotional boundaries and prepares your nervous system for recovery and rest.

Conclusion: You can’t pour from an empty cup

Veterinary work is a calling but even the most passionate professionals can burn out if they neglect their own wellbeing. Mindfulness is not about perfection or silencing your emotions, it’s about learning to pause, to be kind to yourself, and to build inner resources that help you navigate challenges with greater clarity and resilience. By making space for mindfulness, you are not only caring for yourself but also renewing your capacity to care deeply and sustainably for others.

Sector Opportunities

Where Can Practices Grow in 2026?

Survey responses and advisory insight point to five clear growth areas:





1	Preventive Health Plans Recurring revenue and client retention
2	Specialist Services E.g. dermatology, imaging, dentistry
3	Rural Outreach Mobile clinics and large animal support
4	Technology-Driven Efficiency Digital triage and reminders
5	Client Education Initiatives Boosting compliance and care

The best growth isn't always about size, it's about focus and follow-through.

Future Outlook

What Will Define the Sector by 2030?

Irish veterinary practices are evolving rapidly from market consolidation to shifting workforce expectations.

PREDICTED DEVELOPMENTS	
	Greater consolidation, especially in urban areas
	Rise of women in leadership and ownership roles
	Increased use of AI in scheduling, reminders, and triage
	Broader access to specialist referral networks

The practices that succeed long-term are planning for more than just next quarter.

Practice Concerns & Risks

What Keeps Veterinary Leaders Awake at Night?



TOP 5 CONCERNS IDENTIFIED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS:	
1	Burnout and mental health
2	Recruitment and retention
3	Client affordability and missed care
4	Increased operational costs
5	Succession and practice continuity

Tip: Consider quarterly team health checks alongside financial metrics.

HLB Ireland Support Framework

Tailored Advisory for Veterinary Practice Owners

We provide veterinary professionals nationwide with strategic, accounting, and succession planning support.

OUR CORE SERVICES INCLUDE:	
	Practice valuation and benchmarking
	Exit planning and ownership transfer
	Tax-efficient incorporation structuring
	Recruitment advisory and HR policy support
	IT audit and digital transformation planning

Your practice is more than a business, it's your legacy.
We help protect both.

Meet Our Team

The Veterinary Practice Specialists at HLB Ireland



Mark Butler
Managing Partner & an expert in strategic business planning with over twenty years experience.



Lesley Whelan
Lesley has extensive experience in managing and overseeing compliance operations.



Louise Mollahan
Chartered Accountant (ACA) and a Chartered Tax Adviser (AITI CTA) with the Irish Tax Institute.



Bruce Stanley
Chartered Accountant (ACA), Chartered Tax Adviser (AITI), and member of the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners, with 20+ years' experience.



Eoghan Briody
Eoghan (ACA & QFA) is a Corporate Finance Manager at HLB, advising clients on M&A and valuations with a practical, results-focused approach.



Jenny Holohan
Director of Outsourcing at HLB Ireland, with over 15 years of experience in the field.

Contact & Next Steps

Let's Talk About Your Next Chapter

Whether you're preparing to expand, restructure or step away, our experienced team is ready to help. We offer:

	Confidential strategy sessions
	Valuation and incorporation reviews
	Outsourcing
	Tax

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We've advised almost 100 practices nationwide, we're here for yours too.

Supporting Ireland's Veterinary Sector **with Clarity, Care and Commitment**