

BVA discrimination in the veterinary profession statistics 2021

Background

This report shares the results related to discrimination in the veterinary profession from the BVA Voice of the Veterinary Profession Spring 2021 survey.

The survey was conducted amongst the BVA Voice of the Veterinary Profession panel including student and retired members. An invitation to participate was e-mailed to all 2,199 UK-based BVA members who provided an email, on 28th April 2021. Four reminders were issued to non-respondents and the survey closed on 1st June, with responses from 825 vets in total.

Where comparisons are made between different groups of vets, only differences that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level are reported. Where a group of vets is reported as “more/less likely to”, this comparison is with the average of the other sub-groups of vets.

The results

Comparison with 2019 survey

These questions were a repeat of those asked in 2019, which formed part of the [BVA report on discrimination in the veterinary profession](#). Note that only the quantitative Voice survey results have been repeated, and not the qualitative discrimination questionnaire which also fed into the original report

Vets' experiences and perceptions of discrimination in the profession are unchanged since Spring 2019. There are no significant changes to report in terms of levels of discrimination or levels of concern, who is considered responsible for the discrimination, whether the incident was reported and whether it was dealt with satisfactorily.

How big is the problem?

Just under one in six vets surveyed (15%) reported having personally experienced discrimination within a veterinary workplace or learning environment in the past twelve months, while just over one in five (21%) had witnessed discrimination.

The following groups of vets were more likely to have *personally experienced* discrimination:

- Younger vets: a third (34%) of vets aged under 35 reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months, compared to 7% of those 55 and over.
- Vets with a disability (31% vs. 13% without a disability).
- Vets from BAME backgrounds (27%¹ vs. 14% White).
- Vets who were not heterosexual (24% vs. 14% heterosexual).
- Vets with mental health concerns (23% vs. 7% without mental health concerns).
- Female vets (19% vs. 8% male vets).
- Vets in clinical practice (17% vs. 9% not in clinical practice).

Those who said their workplace was a good place to work, or a supportive work environment were less likely to have experienced discrimination (13% and 11% respectively vs. 15% average).

¹ 9 of the 33 vets from BAME backgrounds surveyed.

What characteristics are being discriminated against?

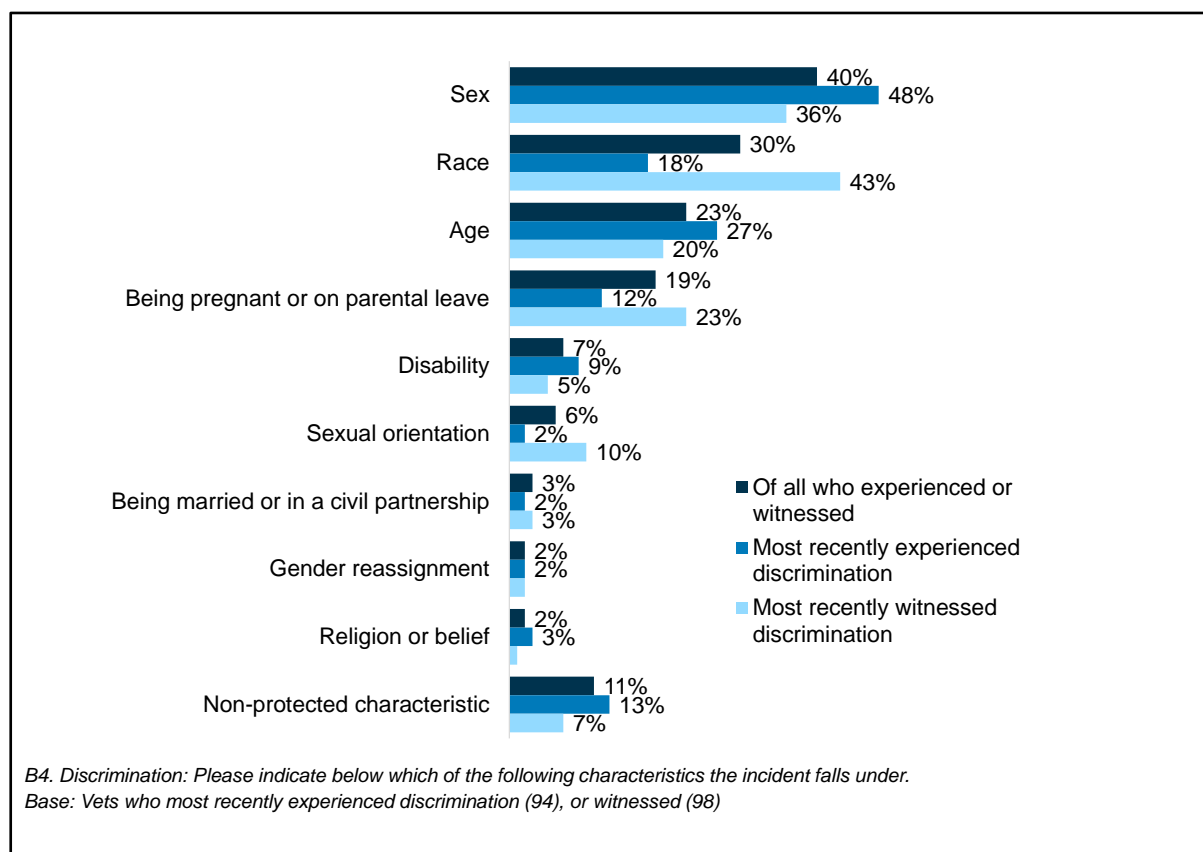
Those who had witnessed or personally experienced discrimination in the last twelve months were asked about the most recent case. In around half (47%) of these cases the respondent had personally experienced the discrimination, with a similar proportion (49%) having witnessed an incident.

Vets were presented with a list of protected characteristics and asked to indicate which of the characteristics the most recent incident of discrimination fell under, indicating more than one characteristic if appropriate.

Vets most commonly experienced discrimination on the basis of sex, which accounted for four in ten of the most recent incidents (40%). Three in ten (30%) were described as incidents of race discrimination, while almost a quarter were seen as age discrimination (23%) and almost one in five (19%) of the incidents were discrimination around pregnancy or parental leave. Further characteristics are shown in Figure 3.

Around one in ten (11%) vets cited discrimination on characteristics which are not legally protected.

Figure 1 Characteristic the incident of discrimination falls under



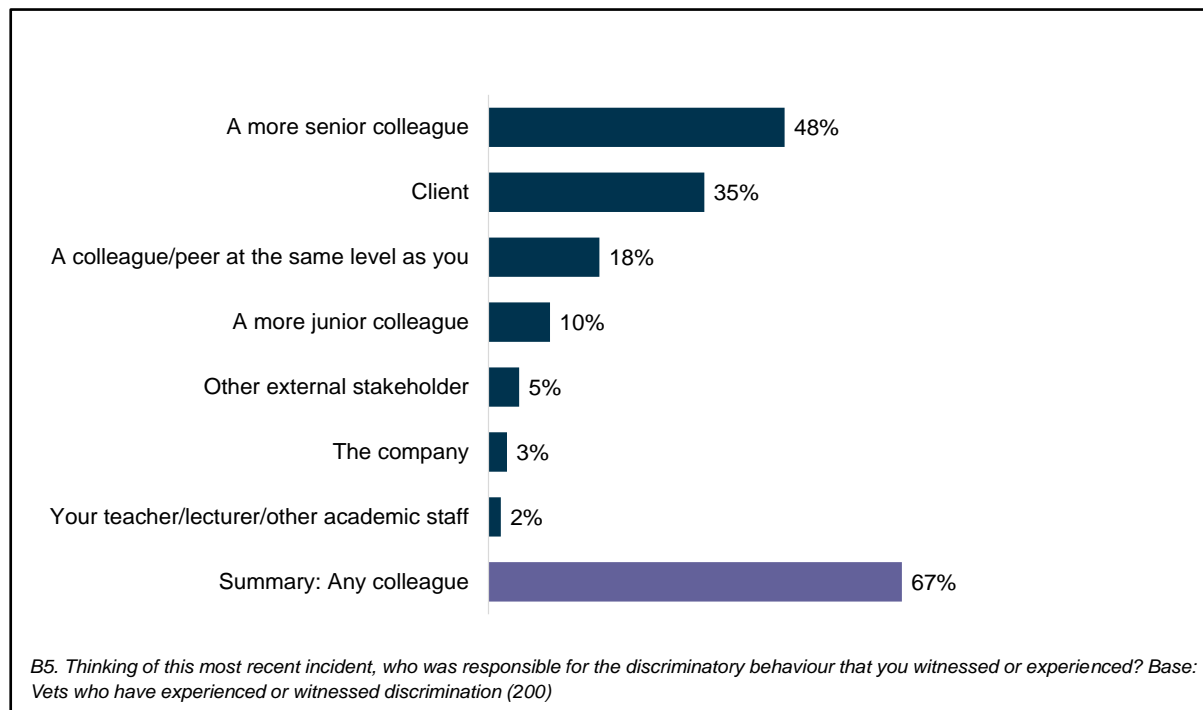
Vets were more likely to witness discrimination based on race (43% vs. 18%), pregnancy or parental leave (23% vs. 12%) or sexual orientation (10% vs. 2%).

Who is responsible for the discrimination?

Vets who had experienced or witnessed discrimination in the past twelve months were asked who was responsible for the most recent incident of discrimination (and they were able to choose more than one person/source). Most incidents of discrimination were carried out by colleagues (67%), most

commonly a more senior colleague (48%), while clients were responsible for over a third (35%) of incidents of discrimination.

Figure 2 Who was responsible for the most recent incidence of discrimination



Are the incidents being reported?

Only around a fifth (22%) of the most recent incidents of discrimination were reported. Two thirds (66%) of those who said the incident was reported had done so themselves, while a third (34%) said it had been reported by someone else. As might be expected, those who had experienced discrimination were more likely to report the incident themselves than those who had just witnessed it (22% of those who had experienced the most recent incident themselves reported it vs. 8% who had witnessed it).

There was considerable dissatisfaction among vets as to how incidents of discrimination were dealt with. Only one in seven (14%) vets who experienced or witnessed discrimination thought the most recent incident was dealt with satisfactorily, while over half (56%) thought the incident was not dealt with satisfactorily.

Incidents were more likely to be dealt with satisfactorily if they were reported than if they were not (27% vs. 11%). Those who said their workplace was a supportive environment were more likely to say the incident was dealt with satisfactorily (18% vs. 5%).

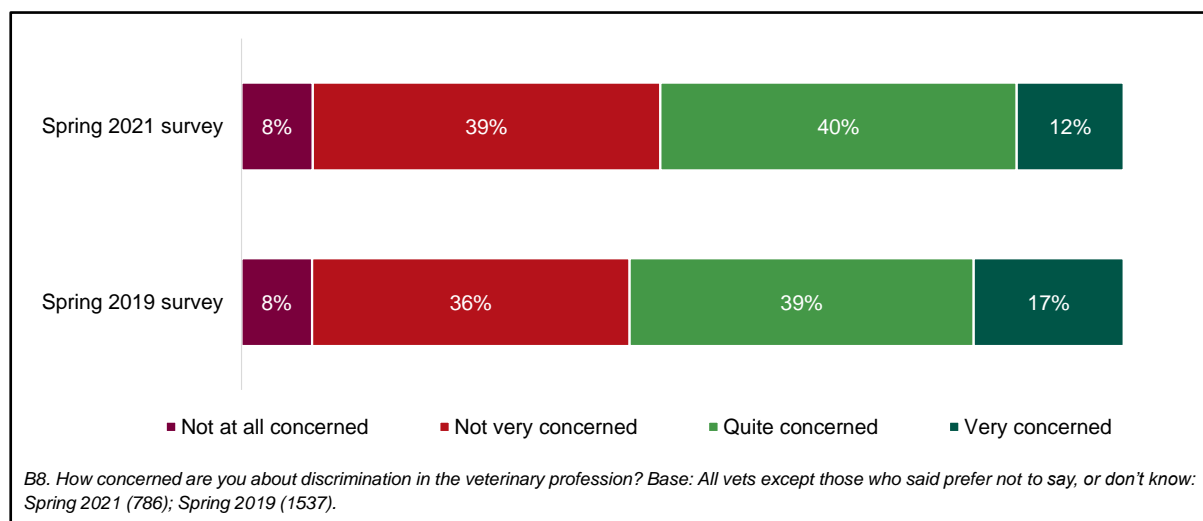
Female vets were less likely than male vets to say the incident was dealt with satisfactorily (10% vs. 24%).

How concerned is the profession?

All vets were asked how concerned they were about discrimination in the profession. Just over half (53%) of vets said they were concerned about discrimination in the profession, in line with Spring 2019.² A slightly smaller proportion however said that they were very concerned in 2021 compared to 2019 (12% vs. 17% in 2019).

² Note that figures for 2021 are rebased to exclude those who said Prefer not to say or Don't know to improve

Figure 3 Level of concern about discrimination in the profession Spring 2021 and Spring 2019



Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who had experienced discrimination were more likely to be concerned about discrimination in the profession (86%). Reflecting this, the following groups of vets were also more likely to be concerned about discrimination:

- Vets under 35 years of age (72%)
- Vets with a disability (67%)
- Vets who are not heterosexual (68%)
- Female vets (60%)
- Vets who have had concerns around mental health (59%)

BAME vets were more likely to be *very* concerned than average (24% vs. 12%).

comparability to the 2019 survey.