

REPORT

Factors Influencing Career Change in the Veterinary Profession

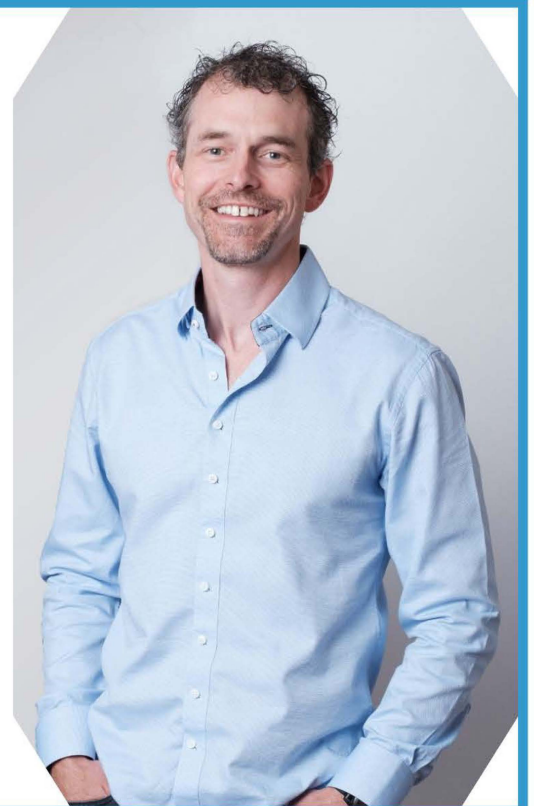
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A study conducted by: Lincoln Memorial University-College of Veterinary Medicine
& illuminated living, LLC
Supported by Banfield Pet Hospital

Gain a deeper understanding of how to build
high school students' interest to pursue a
career as a DVM



Jason helped found LMU, the 30th college of veterinary medicine in the country, built on the best in class distributive model, where he has served as Dean, where his model produced the best veterinary graduates in the market. He is also a founding member of the Center for Animal and Human Health in Appalachia, the Veterinary Learning Credentialing Network, and the Veterinary Virtual Care Association, to mention a few. He is a boarded Theriogenologist, Professor, graduate of the Executive Leadership Program of Singularity University, and previously a private practitioner. A highly awarded communicator, team builder and change agent, he has delivered scores of keynotes around the world, served on numerous boards, and strongly believes his legacy is creating platforms that perpetually give back to people and animals. He owns and operates a consultancy designed to deliver value to the veterinary space. He will soon be assuming a new role as VP & Chief Medical Officer of IDEXX.



OVERVIEW

Some would argue the veterinary profession stands at a crisis, like never witnessed before. Why would some say that?

First, there are simply not enough veterinarians to meet the animal health needs of the USA. It is the number one factor preventing more pets from getting more quality care, violating the veterinary promise.

Second, as a profession, we are not diverse. What is going on?

That is what this study is designed to begin to elucidate.

According to Gallup surveys, veterinarians consistently appear among the most trusted and respected professions in the USA. Anecdotal reports reveal that there are many young students (K-12) that desire to pursue a career in veterinary medicine, yet, it appears that many give up that dream. Why? Is it socioeconomic? Cultural? Cost of education? Return on investment of the DVM degree? Mentors? Difficult prerequisites? Organic chemistry? This study seeks to provide an evidence-based approach to elucidate why a young student, who desires to become a veterinarian, might decide to pursue an alternate profession. **The need for veterinary professionals has never been greater, specifically in the area of companion animal care, as such, this study has never been more timely.**

What's the short summary? Nearly 1000 high school and college students were surveyed and over HALF of them indicated that they considered becoming a veterinarian. Over 32% changed their mind.

We must, collectively, as a profession, united by industry, thought leaders, academia, regulatory, and other stakeholders, find a way to break down barriers for entry into veterinary school. We must open the profession, expand the number of seats, eliminate the privileged pathways to gain entry to veterinary school, and focus on tangible ways of diversifying our profession. We owe it to the pet parent, to the pet, and to society as a whole.

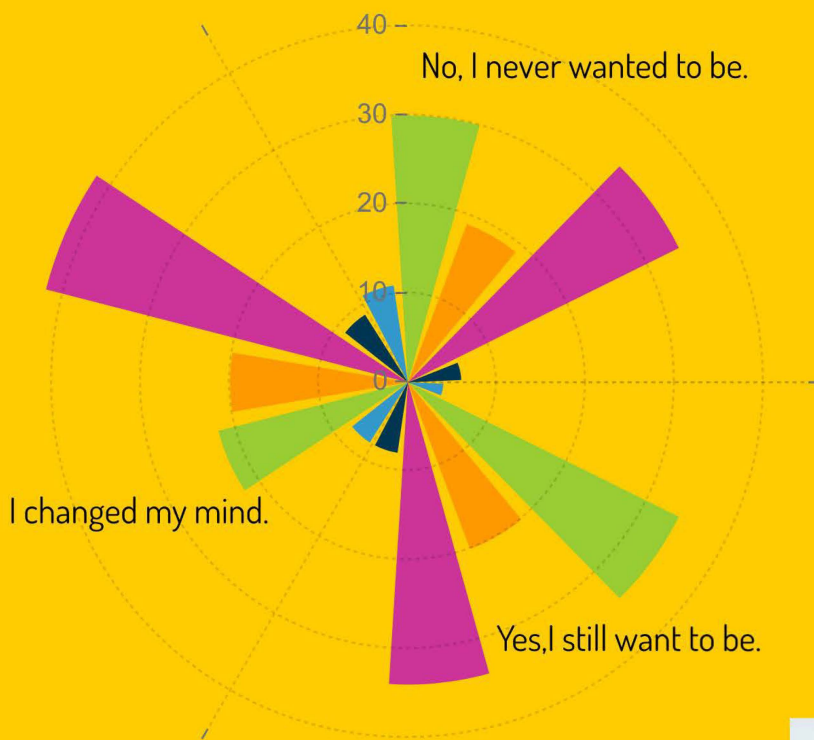


57% OF NEARLY 1000 STUDENTS SURVEYED INDICATED THAT THEY HAD CONSIDERED BECOMING A VETERINARIAN. OF THOSE STUDENTS **32% CHANGED THEIR MIND** BEFORE GRADUATING COLLEGE.

Jason W Johnson, DVM, MS, DACT
Co-Founder and former VP&Dean
Chair of LMU-CVM Advisory Board
Lincoln Memorial University College of Veterinary Medicine
founder of illuminated living, llc

High school student,
have you ever considered becoming a

VETERINARIAN?



Shown as a percentage of respondents.

Over half of Black high school students cite that the reason they no longer wanted to become a veterinarian is that they were persuaded by someone (family member, friend, mentor, school counselor) to choose a different career.

White high school students overwhelmingly (72%) cited lack of confidence in their abilities and aptitudes as reasons to not become a veterinarian, specifically they do not feel they would make a good veterinarian, are not smart enough, and are not able to handle tough scenarios.

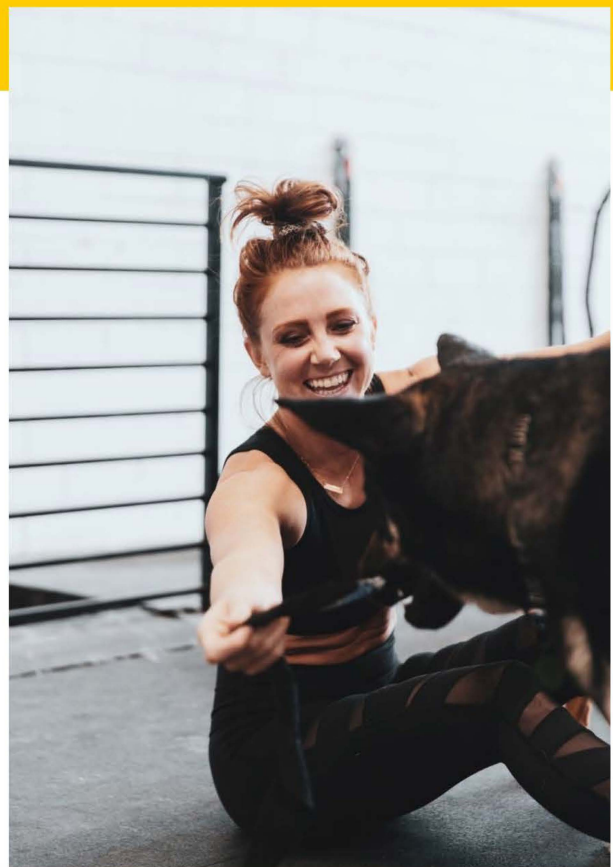
- Asian
- White
- Black
- Other
- Hispanic/LatinX



Of the high school students that considered pursuing veterinary medicine...

**4 out of 5 females (78.1%) &
1 out of 2 males (52.5%)**

...changed their mind and decided not to pursue veterinary medicine as a career path.



448 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SURVEYED

55% indicated that they had considered becoming a veterinarian.

38% indicated they changed their mind and no longer wanted to pursue a career in veterinary medicine.

Of the 38% that changed their mind, 16% made their decision during high school (grades 10-12), and 29% did so in grades 7-9.

That leaves 17% whom intend to pursue veterinary medicine.



IF 17% OF THE US HIGH SCHOOL POPULATION CONSISTENTLY DECIDES TO GO TO VETERINARY SCHOOL, WILL THAT BE ENOUGH TO SUPPLY THE ANIMAL HEALTH INDUSTRY NEEDS?

17%
are still
set on
becoming
veterinarians

AVERAGE AGE

17 y/o

MAJORITY
DECIDED IN
GRADES

4-9

GENDER

♀ 63%

♂ 37%

TOP 5

REASONS THAT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WANT TO BE A VETERINARIAN

Experience with Animals

28% I have had personal experiences with pets, livestock, and other animals that have inspired me to become a veterinarian.

Smart Enough

28% I believe that I am smart enough to succeed in veterinary school and as a veterinarian, I believe I can keep up with a heavy science course-load & prerequisites in college.

Persuaded by Family or Friends

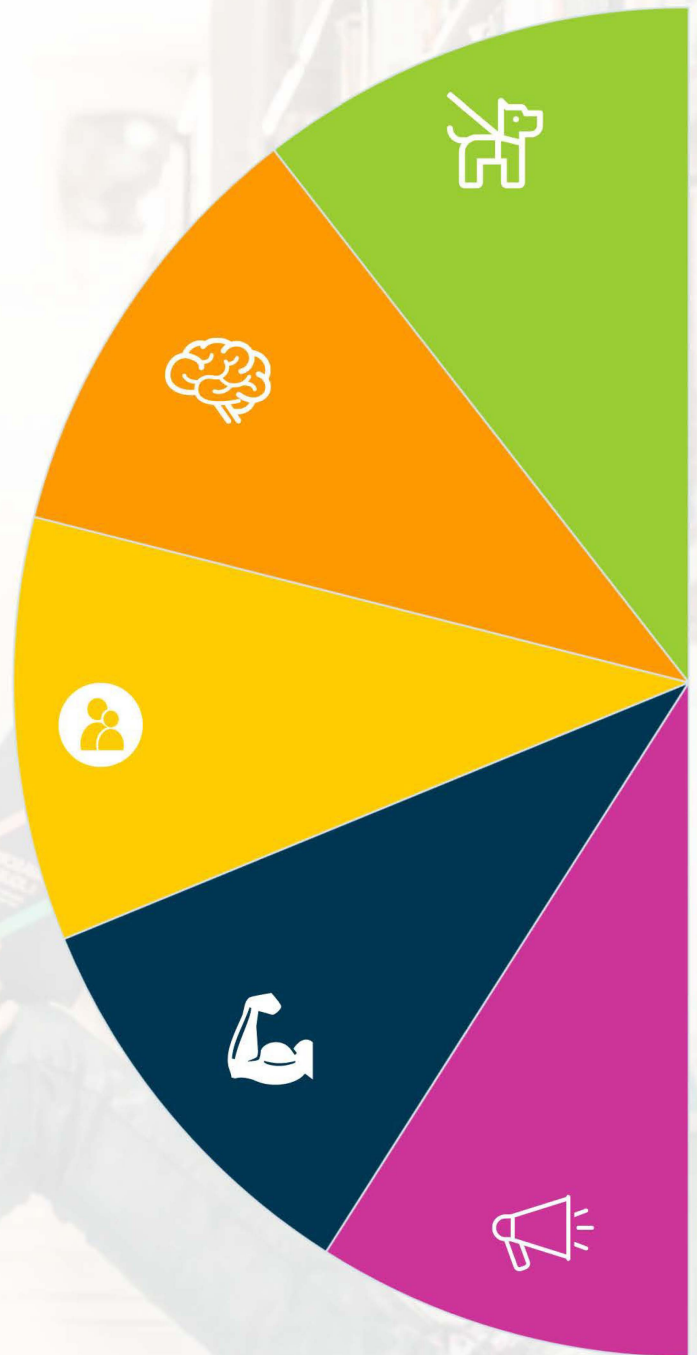
27% I have been persuaded to consider becoming a veterinarian by family members or friends.

Have What it Takes

26% I believe I have what it takes to make a good veterinarian.

Communication

24% I enjoy communicating with people, and believe I would excel at not only working with animals but with their owners as well.



TOP 5

REASONS THAT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS DO NOT WANT TO BE A VETERINARIAN



Lack of Experience with Animals

35%

I have not had any personal experiences with pets, livestock, and other animals that have inspired me to become a veterinarian.

Don't Have What it Takes

22%

I don't believe I have what it takes to make a good veterinarian.

Incapable of Handling "Sad Sides"

15%

I don't believe I'm capable of handling the "sad sides" of being a veterinarian such as euthanasia and animal abuse cases.

Persuaded by Family or Friends

14%

I have been persuaded to consider another career choice by family members or friends.

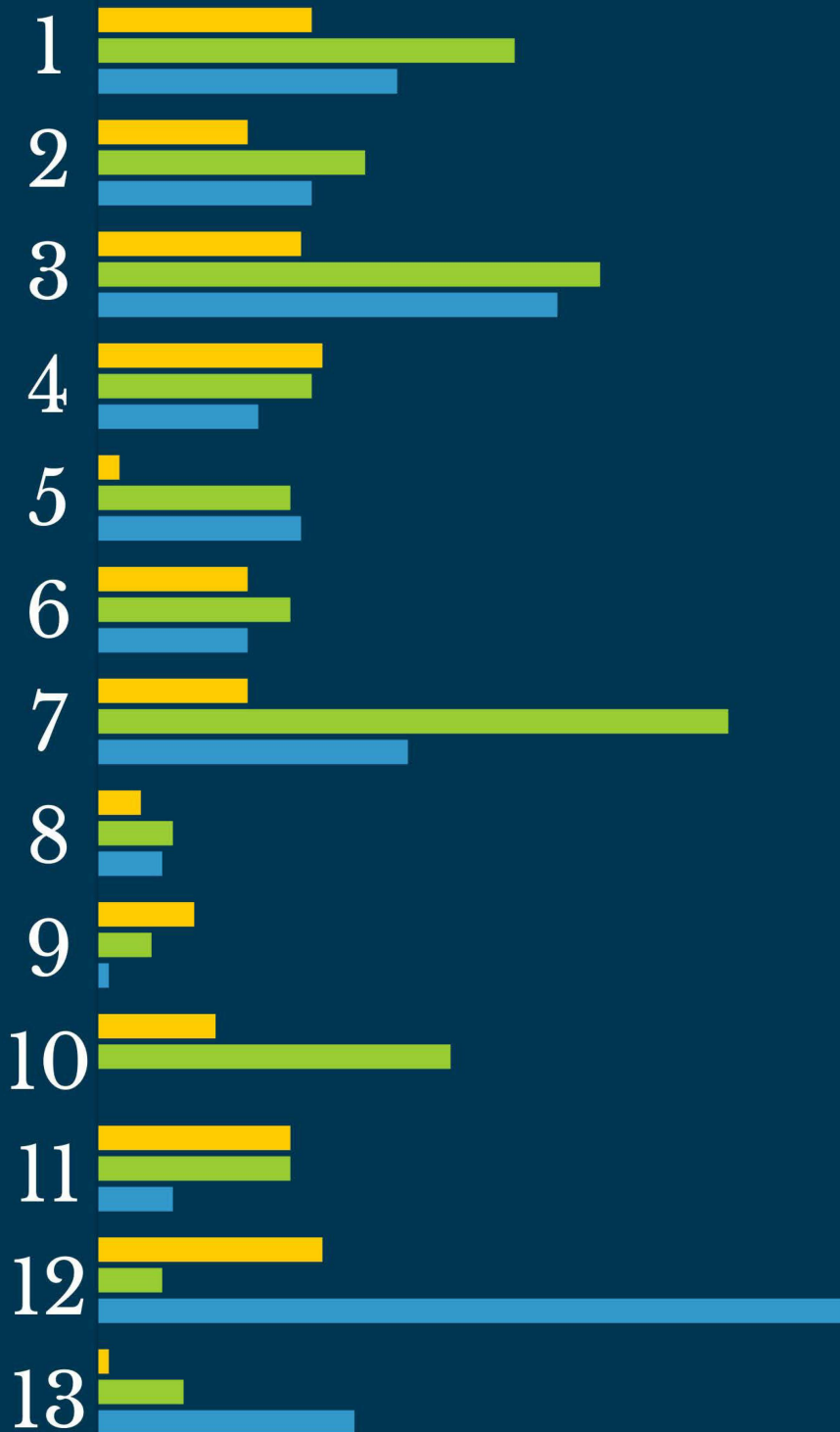
Persuaded by Mentor

10%

I have been persuaded to consider another career choice by a teacher, mentor, or high school or college advisor.

Have you ever considered becoming a **VETERINARIAN?**

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



Number of responses per category



PERSUADED BY FAMILY

I have been persuaded to consider becoming a veterinarian (consider another career choice) by family members or friends.



PERSUADED BY MENTOR

I have been persuaded to become a veterinarian (consider another career choice) by a teacher, mentor, or high school or college advisor.



HAVE WHAT IT TAKES

I (don't) believe I have what it takes to make a good veterinarian.



SMART ENOUGH

I (don't) believe that I am smart enough to succeed in veterinary school and as a veterinarian, I don't believe I can keep up with a heavy science course-load & prerequisites in college.



PAY FOR SCHOOL

I (don't) believe I could afford to pay for veterinary school.



COMPENSATION

I (don't) believe I would make enough money as a veterinarian to live the lifestyle I desire.

KEY:

YES, I STILL WANT TO BE

I CHANGED MY MIND

NO, I NEVER WANTED TO BE

COLLEGE STUDENTS

HANDLING "SAD SIDES"

I (don't) believe I'm capable of handling the "sad sides" of being a veterinarian such as euthanasia and animal abuse cases.



JOB OPPORTUNITIES

I (don't) believe the area I want to live in has enough job opportunities for me to work as a veterinarian in the area.



SHADOWING

Since I originally decided to be a veterinarian, I have shadowed or worked in a veterinary clinic and had a positive (poor) experience.



OPPORTUNITIES

Since I originally decided to be a veterinarian, I have (not) been exposed to a new career path through a career fair, job opportunity, or other format that I think would be a better fit for me than becoming a veterinarian.



COMMUNICATION

I (do not) enjoy communicating with people, and believe I would (not) excel at working with animals and with their owners.



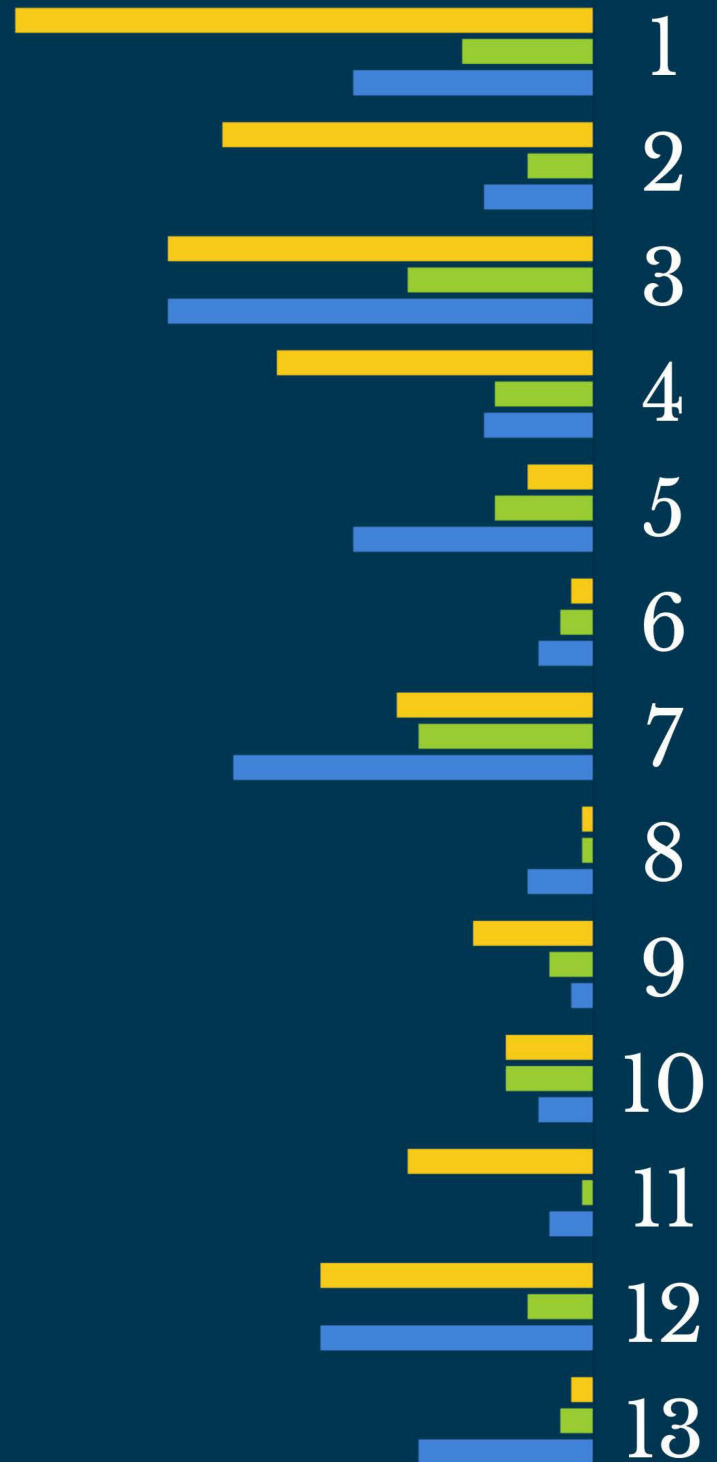
ANIMAL EXPERIENCE

I have (not) had any personal experiences with pets, livestock, and other animals that have inspired me to become a veterinarian.



OTHER

Other Reason.

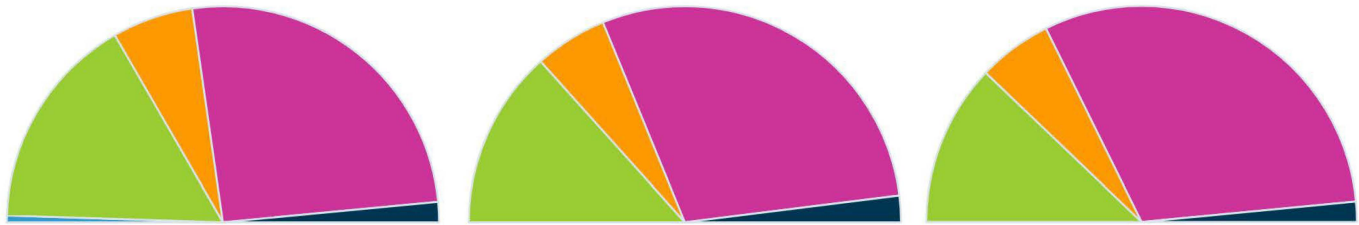


Number of responses per category

COLLEGE STUDENTS

Consideration of Veterinary Career; *by race/ethnicity*

443 college student respondents



Yes, I still want to be.

I changed my mind.

No, I never wanted to be.

- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic/LatinX
- White
- Other



65% of Hispanic/LatinX students who chose to pursue veterinary medicine were influenced by someone in their life.

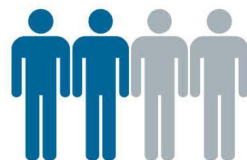


Gender Breakdown



74% of FEMALE college students that originally wanted to be a veterinarian changed their mind before starting college.

56% of MALE college students that originally wanted to be a veterinarian, changed their mind before starting college.



70%

of college respondents were FEMALE

The majority of female students who want to pursue veterinary medicine decided to become a veterinarian in middle school.



Of the **443** college students that responded,

58% indicated that they had considered becoming a veterinarian.

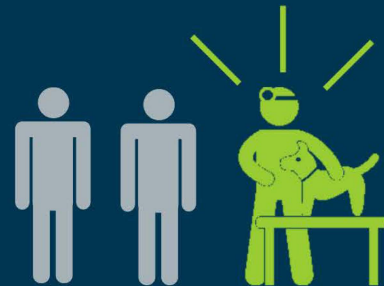
27% changed their mind before graduating college.



What grade were you in when you decided you wanted to become a **Veterinarian?**

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| PRE-K OR YOUNGER | 7% |
| K - 3 | 14% |
| 4-6 | 12% |
| 7-9 | 20% |
| 10-12 | 13% |
| COLLEGE | 29% |
| <i>don't remember</i> | 4% |

1 ^{about} decided **in** college **3** that they wanted to become a veterinarian

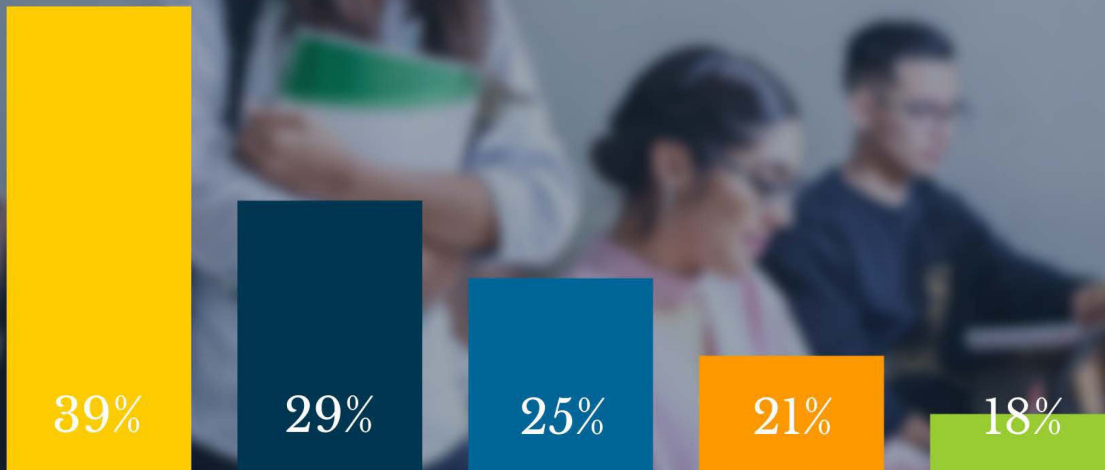


Most commonly, students decide **NOT** to become a veterinarian between

4th - 9th grade

COLLEGE STUDENTS

TOP 5 REASONS THAT STUDENTS WANT TO BE A VETERINARIAN



PERSUADED BY FAMILY

I have been persuaded to consider becoming a veterinarian by family members or friends.



HAVE WHAT IT TAKES

I believe I have what it takes to make a good veterinarian.



PERSUADED BY MENTOR

I have been persuaded to become a veterinarian by a teacher, mentor, or high school or college advisor.



SMART ENOUGH

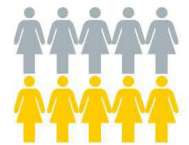
I believe that I am smart enough to succeed in veterinary school and as a veterinarian, I don't believe I can keep up with a heavy science course-load & prerequisites in college.



EXPERIENCE WITH ANIMALS

I have had personal experiences with pets, livestock, and other animals that have inspired me to become a veterinarian.

54%
female

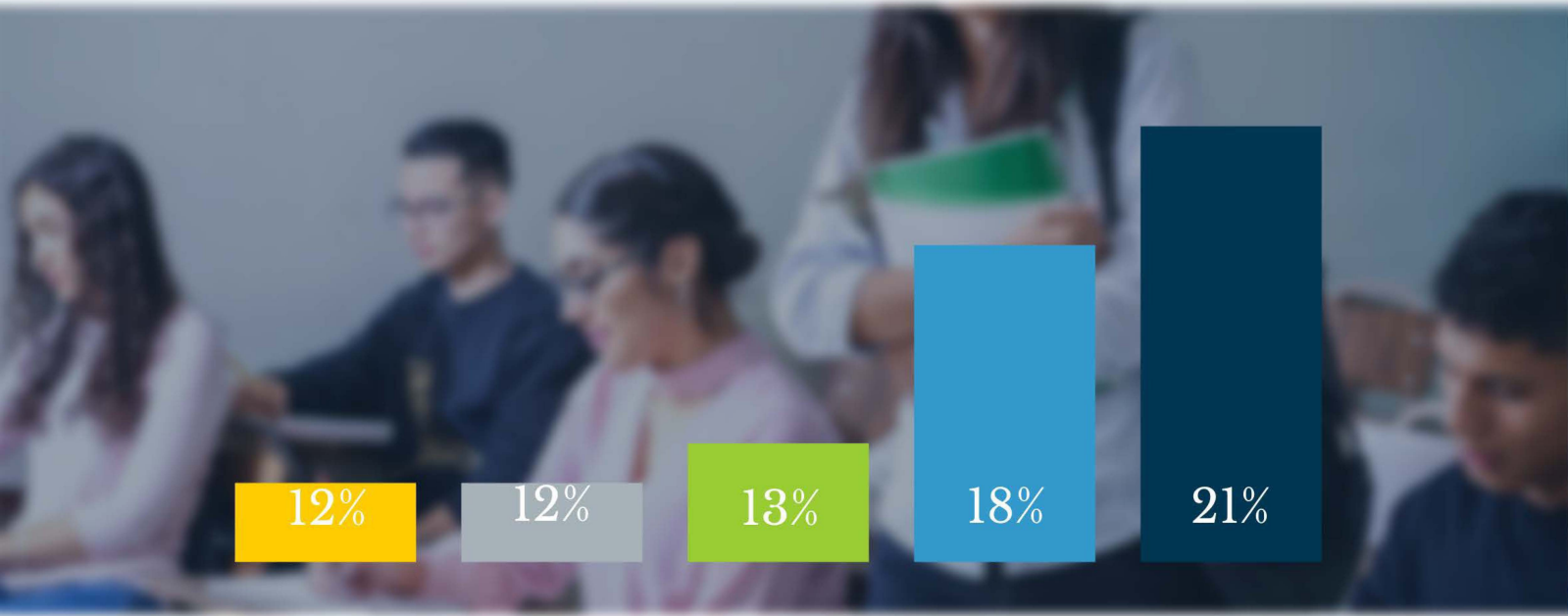


COLLEGE STUDENTS

indicated they "have been persuaded to consider becoming a veterinarian by family members or friends" as their top reason they chose veterinary medicine.

COLLEGE STUDENTS

TOP 5 REASONS THAT STUDENTS DO NOT WANT TO BE A VETERINARIAN



HAVE WHAT IT TAKES

I don't believe I have what it takes to make a good veterinarian.



HANDLING "SAD SIDES"

I don't believe I'm capable of handling the "sad sides" of being a veterinarian such as euthanasia and animal abuse cases.



EXPERIENCE WITH ANIMALS

I have not had any personal experiences with pets, livestock, and other animals that have inspired me to become a veterinarian.



PAY FOR SCHOOL

I don't believe I could afford to pay for veterinary school.



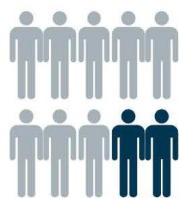
PERSUADED BY FAMILY

I have been persuaded to consider another career choice by family members or friends.



20%

male
COLLEGE STUDENTS



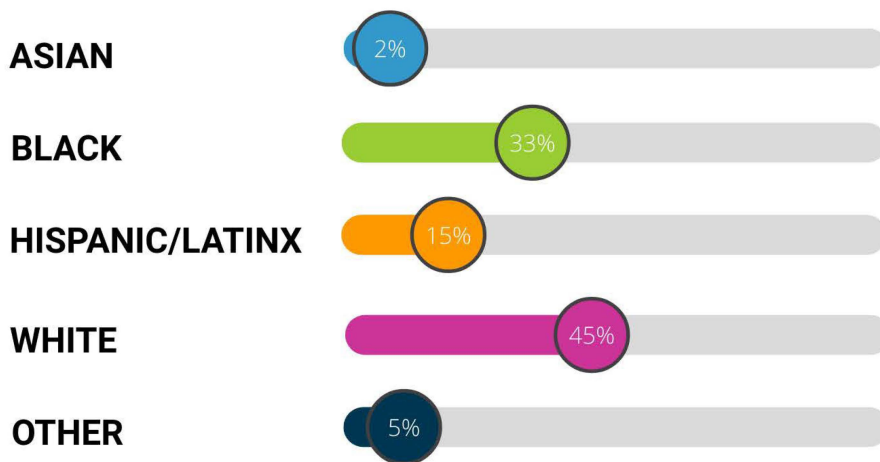
indicated they "don't believe they have what it takes to make a good veterinarian"

HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE STUDENTS

891 STUDENTS SURVEYED

214 indicated they want to pursue veterinary medicine

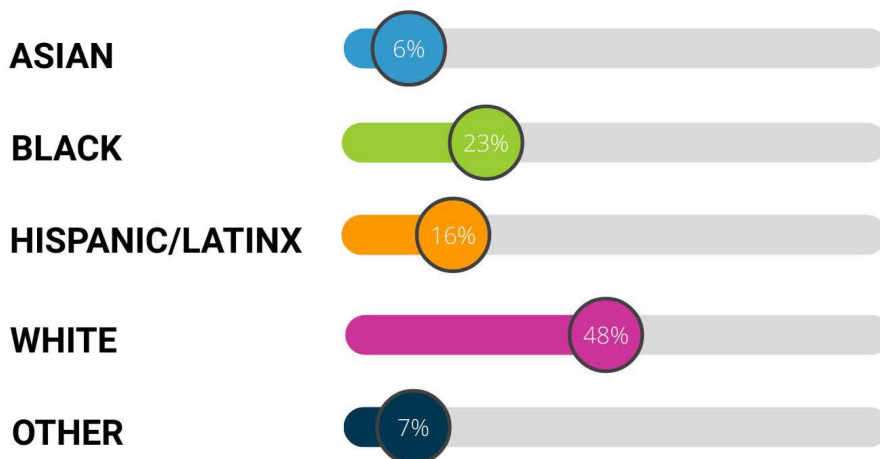
Of that 214, the racial/ethnic breakdown is as follows:



The reason I want to be a Veterinarian, is after a poor experience in getting treatment for my pet, I want to be certain that any animal I can help is properly cared for.

290 indicated they originally wanted to pursue veterinary medicine *but have changed their mind*;

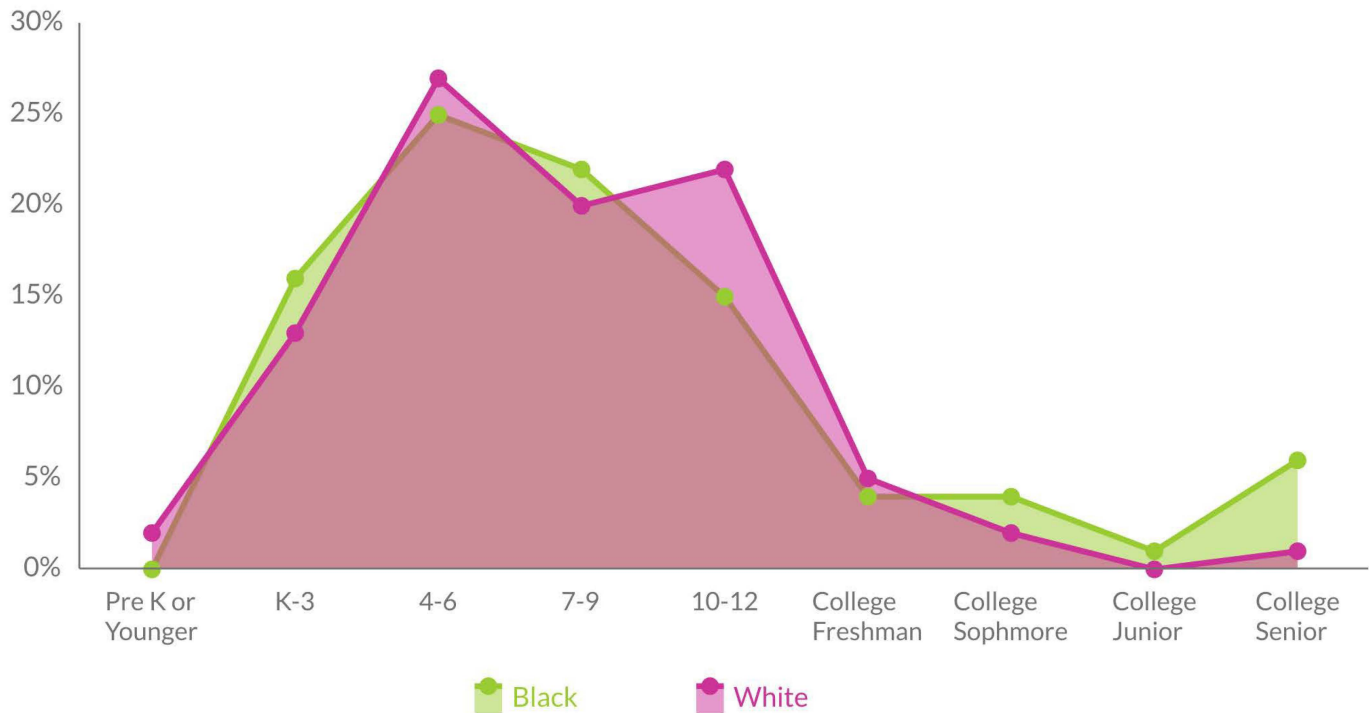
Of that 290, the racial/ethnic breakdown is as follows:



It never occurred to me to be a veterinarian.

I could not imagine having to deliver bad news to an owner.

At what point in their education does a student change their mind about pursuing veterinary medicine?



There is an increase in Black students vs. White students changing their minds in college, with the biggest change being their senior year.

TOP 3 REASONS BLACK STUDENTS DECIDED NOT TO BECOME A VETERINARIAN



EXPERIENCE WITH ANIMALS

I have not had any personal experiences with pets, livestock, and other animals that have inspired me to become a veterinarian.



PERSUADED BY FAMILY

I have been persuaded to consider another career choice by family members or friends.



HAVE WHAT IT TAKES


I don't believe I have what it takes to make a good veterinarian.

COMPREHENSIVE DATA

High School Students

Of the 448 valid responses, the most frequently reported grade level was 12th (42.4%), followed by 11th (31.9%), 10th (18.3%), and lastly 9th (7.4%). Students' ages aligned with the grade level distribution, as 80.8% of respondents were between 16-18 years old. The range of ages was 12-19 years old, with an average age of 16.6 years old. Regarding race, the most frequently reported category was white/Caucasian (37.3%), followed by African American (27.5%), and then Hispanic (19.2%). The vast majority of respondents identified as female (72.5%), and 26.6% of respondents identified as male.

When asked about career intentions, most respondents (44.6%) stated that they had never considered becoming a veterinarian. 17.0% indicated they had considered becoming a veterinarian and still considered becoming a veterinarian to be their dream job, while 38.4% had since changed their mind and pursued another career path. Of the 76 respondents who indicated they still wanted to become a veterinarian, when asked which grade they decided to become a veterinarian, 48.7% of respondents stated that they decided between 4th and 9th grade, with 4th-6th grade being the highest reported category (25.0% of respondents). For the 172 students who stated either having never considered becoming a veterinarian or having since changed their mind and indicated the grade they made that decision, 58.1% made this decision between 4th-9th grade, with 7th-9th grade being the most frequently reported category (29.1% of respondents).



Over HALF of the nearly 1000 high school and college student respondents indicated that they considered becoming a veterinarian. Over 32% changed their mind.

COMPREHENSIVE DATA

College Students

Of the 443 valid responses, grade levels of the respondents ranged from College Freshman to College Senior. The highest number of respondents reported College Sophomore (27.5%), College Freshman (27.3%), College Junior (26.4%), and College Senior (18.7%). There was a wide age range of respondents, with majority (53.5%) of them aged 18-25. The mean age for the respondents was 29.42 years. The most common reported race/ethnicity was White/Caucasian (54.9%), followed by African American (26.2%) and Hispanic (11.1%). Majority of the respondents were female (70.0%).

When asking respondents about a possible veterinary career, 42.2% of respondents stated they had never considered becoming a veterinarian. 31.2% indicated they had considered becoming a veterinarian and still considered it their dream job, and 26.6% had once considered it but have since changed their mind and becoming a veterinarian was no longer an option. Of the 138 respondents who indicated they still wanted to become a veterinarian, when asked which grade they decided to become a veterinarian, 20.3% of respondents stated they decided between 7th-9th grade, followed by K-3rd (14.5%), 10th-12th (13.0%), and 4th-6th (11.6%). For the 118 respondents that were no longer considering becoming a veterinarian, 27.1% had decided they no longer wanted to become a veterinarian in grades 10th-12th, 16.9% decided in 4th-6th grade, and 14.4% in 7th-9th grade.





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