



An Updated View of Our Profession: The NAVTA 2022 Demographic Survey



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“What does our profession look like today?” This question was the impetus for the NAVTA Demographic Survey, a periodically conducted questionnaire that gives us an overview of many points of interest related to the state of the veterinary nursing profession. NAVTA has completed the 2022 Demographic Survey and its results were revealed at VMX in January 2023.

To get the short notes on the results, refer to the presentation’s title: “NAVTA 2022 Demographic Survey Results: Pay and Education Have Increased; Burnout and Debt Are Still Issues.” Compared to survey responses in 2016, the 2022 data indicate that veterinary nurses are earning 25% more and associate degree holders have increased by 16%. More than 1 in 3 veterinary nurses carry student debt averaging \$29 700, and one-third of veterinary nurses have a second job.

Job Satisfaction

An often referred-to statistic from the previous demographic survey is the overall satisfaction level of our profession. In 2016, 51.3% of respondents said they were “satisfied and will stay in veterinary technology.” In 2022, there were 2 questions asked regarding satisfaction. For the first, 69% of respondents rated their satisfaction in their current position at their primary veterinary workplace as “extremely satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied.” For the second, 73% of respondents rated their satisfaction with their career overall in veterinary technology as “extremely satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied.” Both questions indicate a higher satisfaction rating than what we saw in 2016, which is hopeful.

Salary

When asked about the significant issues facing our profession, “salary and benefits” was the choice of most respondents. Additionally, “low salary” was given as the most challenging aspect of the job. According to 2022 data, the average hourly rate of respondents was \$26.50, which was normalized to a \$52 000 annual salary for those who work 40 hours per week. That normalized salary represents a 25% increase from the information obtained in 2016. With pay being the top concern for our profession, could the 25% increase in annual salary have contributed to the increased satisfaction in the job?

Workplace Utilization

Previous survey reports have indicated that the degree to which one is utilized as a veterinary nurse is a large factor in satisfaction in the workplace. The 2022 demographic survey asked respondents whether they feel they are utilized to their

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fullest potential. Just 40% responded “yes,” and 41% responded “sometimes.” With barriers to better utilization, such as a lack of trust from the veterinarians, the use of veterinary assistants in the same role as credentialed veterinary technicians, and a simple reluctance to delegate tasks that should be performed by veterinary nurses, utilization continues to be an important topic.

Career Longevity

Previous information indicated that the average lifespan of a veterinary nurse in the workplace was 5 to 7 years. The 2022 data indicate that while the average length of employment at the current job is 6.8 years, 78% of the respondents had been in the field between 6 and 35-plus years (25% were over 21 years), which brings the average longevity in the field to be much longer than 5 to 7 years. While this could be somewhat biased data since responding to a lengthy demographic survey is more likely done by those who are committed to the field, the result is hopeful that we are seeing a longer lifespan in the workplace.

Title Preference

The 2022 survey asked individuals their preferred profession title. A majority of the respondents, at 85%, chose the answer “veterinary nurse,” which is an increase of 30% compared to the 2016 report. The 2016 survey occurred prior to the launch of the Veterinary Nurse Initiative. Since then, we have seen 13 veterinary nursing programs emerge, which are enrolling students who envision themselves as veterinary nurses. In addition to several publications, awards, and certifications now using the term “veterinary nurse,” some state veterinary medical boards have approved the use of the title in practice by credentialed veterinary technicians. More and more hospitals now describe positions as veterinary nurse positions, which could be leading to an increased awareness of the profession of veterinary nursing. Regardless of the preference in title, the vast majority continue to advocate for national standards in credentialing requirements and title protections.

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Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

Arguably the most alarming findings of the 2022 survey are that 70% of respondents stated they experienced burnout and 65% stated they experienced compassion fatigue. Additionally, only 21% said they can spend enough time to address wellness and 32% personally knew someone in the veterinary community that has died by suicide. This is a clear indication there is much work to be done from a practice-management, self-care, and wellness-resources standpoint.

The 2022 Demographic Survey report contained sections with information on wages and hours, job satisfaction and wellness, utilization, and more, giving further insight into each of these areas. While the field had to wait 6 years for renewed information to be available, having the information renewed more frequently will be helpful as the field of veterinary nursing is rapidly changing. Now that you have this information, what will you do with it to create positive change in the field?

The 2022 Demographic Survey report is available at: bit.ly/3jY2WQG. **TVN**