

Technicians Respond!

National Demographic Survey Summary

NAVTA has conducted a national demographic survey every four years since 1991. The 2007 survey was conducted by mail for NAVTA by Irwin Broh Research in Des Plaines, Illinois. Questionnaires were circulated to two groups of veterinary technicians. All 2007 Active NAVTA members received one version of the survey with a second version sent to 1000 randomly chosen veterinary technician subscribers to FirstLine magazine who were not members of NAVTA. Forty-seven percent of NAVTA members returned their surveys.

Profile of Respondents

To no one's surprise, the overall percentage of veterinary technicians (95 percent) are women with an average age of 38 years. The percentage of women has remained about the same since the first survey was conducted. Overall 77 percent of respondents have an associate degree, 34.2 percent a baccalaureate degree, and 4.4 percent a graduate degree. NAVTA members are by far more likely to be graduates of AVMA accredited programs and/or credentialed by a state. (Table 1)

On The Job

NAVTA members report being in the profession an average of 11.5 years and 6.8 with their current employer, this remains virtually unchanged from the data collected four years ago. Nonmembers report being in the profession 12.2 years with 8.4 with their current employer. On average, both groups worked 39 hours per week for 50 weeks per year, which is unchanged from 2003.

The animal health care team has grown in size since 2003 and dramatically since 1995. (Table 2) The increase in the size of the team should theoretically allow for more effective utilization of staff.

The size of the community where the technicians are employed has changed very little. Four percent of respondents were employed in communities of 2,500 or less (4.5 percent in 2003); Thirty-four percent were employed in communities of 2,501-50,000 (35.7 percent in 2003); Thirty-six percent were employed in communities 50,001-500,000 (34.8 percent in 2003); and Twenty-one percent were employed in large metropolitan areas of 500,000 or more (22.2 percent in 2003).

The Number One Concern

Since 1991, veterinary technicians have overwhelmingly chosen "Salary" as the number one most significant problem they currently face in their career. Two-thirds of NAVTA members and three-fourths of nonmembers ranked low income among the top three problems they currently face on the most recent question-

naire. Other concerns voiced by respondents included lack of professional recognition, job burnout, lack of career advancement opportunities, and competition with assistants trained on the job. (Table 3)

Future Concerns

Respondents were also asked to predict what three issues would likely affect them five years from now. Salary continued to be the number one issue with both groups. (65.2 percent - Members, 68.1 percent - Nonmembers) After salary, specialization in veterinary technology (42.7 percent) was second for the member, followed by medical/computer technology (36.2 percent). For the nonmember number two and three were reversed with 37.4 percent indicating medical/computer technology and 32.2 percent choosing specialization in veterinary technology.

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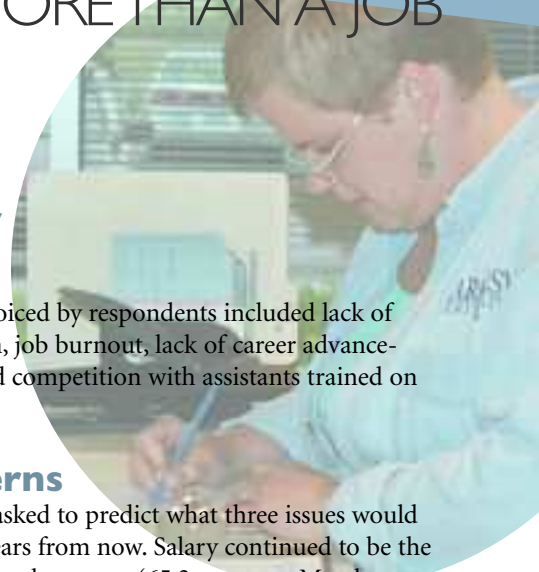


Table 1 Graduation Percentage

| | 2007 NAVTA member | 2003 NAVTA member | 2007 Nonmember | 2003 Nonmember |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Graduate of AVMA accredited program | 87.7% | 86.4% | 69.2% | 69% |
| Credentialed | 98.9% | 91.7% | 87.5% | 80.7% |

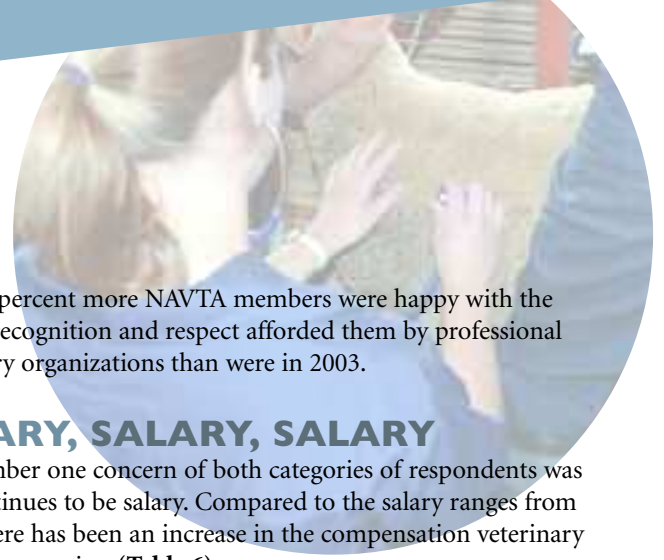
Table 2 Team Make Up

| Number Employed | 2007 | 2003 | 1999 | 1995 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|
| veterinarian | 5.18 | 4.7 | 4 | 3 |
| veterinary technician | 4.82 | 4 | 3.4 | 3 |
| assistant | 5.85 | 5.2 | 4.5 | 3 |

Table 3 Concerns

| Current Concerns | NAVTA Member | Nonmember |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Low salary | 66.7% | 75.2% |
| Lack of professional recognition | 43% | 33.3% |
| Burnout | 42.8% | 41.1% |
| Lack of career advancement | 29.4% | 35.9% |
| Competition with assistants | 27.6% | 18.9% |

MORE THAN A JOB



Career Satisfaction

This category continued to show slight increases over previous survey years. Forty-three percent of members indicated they would definitely stay in the field. This compares to 42.5 percent of members responding in this way in 2003. Forty-two percent of nonmember indicated they would definitely stay in the profession compared to 34.3 percent in 2003. (Table 4)

Philosophical Issues

Both members and nonmembers were asked to provide input on several philosophical issues as it relates to their career and veterinary medicine overall. (Table 5)

Compared to 2003 data, there was a 9 percent drop in the percentage of members who agree/strongly agree response to the first comment about veterinary technicians being underpaid. This could lead one to conclude that NAVTA members are more satisfied with their salary than they were four years ago.

Four percent more NAVTA members were happy with the level of recognition and respect afforded them by professional veterinary organizations than were in 2003.

SALARY, SALARY, SALARY

The number one concern of both categories of respondents was and continues to be salary. Compared to the salary ranges from 1991, there has been an increase in the compensation veterinary technicians receive. (Table 6)

In recent years there has been a slight movement away from clinical practice to other career opportunities. The data indicates that trend is continuing. One trend has not changed and that is the low salary realized by those in companion animal and mixed animal practice. Technicians in these two areas have the lowest compensation in the profession and yet this is where most technicians are employed. (Table 7)

Table 4 Career Satisfaction

| Question | 2007 | 2003 | 2007 | 2003 |
|---|--------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| | NAVTA Member | NAVTA Member | Nonmember | Nonmember |
| I am satisfied and will definitely stay in veterinary technology. | 43.4% | 42.5% | 41.9% | 34.3% |
| I will probably stay in veterinary technology in the future. | 39.2% | 42.1% | 43.3% | 44.3% |
| I will probably change to another field in the future. | 12.8% | 11.1% | 11.1% | 14.9% |
| I'm dissatisfied and will definitely change to another field. | 2.6% | 2.8% | 2.6% | 4.3% |

Table 5 Philosophical Issues

| Comment | Agree/Strongly agree | | Disagree/strongly disagree | |
|--|----------------------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|
| | NAVTA Member | Nonmember | NAVTA Member | Nonmember |
| Veterinary technicians are so underpaid that the feasibility of staying in the profession is declining. | 78.7% | 84.8% | 18% | 12.3% |
| In addition to veterinarians, only veterinary technicians should be allowed to perform certain tasks, for example: take radiographs, induce anesthesia, perform dentals. | 92.1% | 90% | 5.9% | 8.2% |
| The NAVTA mission statement should be changed to include more representation for assistants. | 16.9% | 23.3% | 67% | 56.9% |
| As a technician, I am currently happy with the level of recognition and support given to veterinary technicians by professional veterinary organizations. | 43.1% | 50% | 52.2% | 42.6% |

Table 6 Total Salaries

| | Average 2007 | Average 2003 | Average 1999 | Average 1995 | Average 1991 |
|-----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Member | \$36,120 | \$30,500 | \$27,070 | \$22,000 | \$19,200 |
| Nonmember | \$31,070 | \$26,560 | \$24,100 | \$19,900 | \$17,500 |

Table 7 Salary by Employment Type

| Employment type | 2007 | 2003 | 2007 NAVTA Member | 2003 NAVTA Member | 1999 NAVTA Member | 1995 NAVTA Member | 2007 Nonmember | 2003 Nonmember | 1999 Nonmember | 1995 Nonmember |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Average for all respondents | | | \$36,120 | \$30,500 | \$27,070 | \$22,000 | \$31,070 | \$26,560 | \$24,100 | \$19,000 |
| Food animal practice | .7% | .3% | \$39,800 | 0 | \$25,250 | \$18,800 | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$16,700 |
| Companion animal practice | 52.2% | 52.5% | \$33,270 | \$28,700 | \$25,186 | \$19,800 | \$31,130 | \$25,500 | \$23,207 | \$19,000 |
| Equine practice | 1.1% | 1.0% | \$32,840 | \$30,100 | \$26,250 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed animal practice | 12.3% | 11.5% | \$28,960 | \$25,800 | \$23,303 | \$19,200 | \$27,870 | \$21,500 | \$20,626 | \$18,000 |
| Emergency practice | 8.4% | 7.5% | \$38,860 | \$32,300 | \$26,500 | \$24,300 | \$32,830 | \$25,500 | \$24,454 | \$22,100 |
| Specialty practice | 9% | 7.5% | \$39,810 | \$32,300 | \$26,693 | 0 | \$35,230 | \$30,500 | \$25,642 | 0 |
| Industry/sales | .8% | 1.3% | \$51,510 | \$40,100 | \$35,833 | \$31,600 | \$57,400 | \$35,500 | \$33,000 | \$27,700 |
| Vet. tech. education | 6% | 5.4% | \$42,980 | \$35,100 | \$33,254 | \$29,900 | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$24,500 |
| University/College | 4.2% | 4.7% | \$37,350 | \$33,700 | \$30,512 | \$28,000 | 0 | \$30,500 | \$24,071 | \$24,100 |
| Government | .9% | 1.1% | 42,200 | \$35,300 | \$33,125 | \$28,600 | 0 | \$25,500 | \$22,500 | \$24,200 |
| Not for profit | 1.3% | 2.5% | 34,180 | \$31,000 | \$27,000 | 0 | \$34,500 | \$21,500 | \$24,714 | 0 |
| Diagnostic/Research | 2.2% | 3.6% | \$45,060 | \$37,600 | \$37,410 | \$25,200 | 0 | \$33,000 | \$31,562 | \$24,600 |
| Other | | .3% | | | | | 0 | | | |

Benefits

Salary is a key component to being able to support yourself in a chosen career. However, benefits, have become very important as well. (Table 8) The percentage of veterinary technicians receiving health insurance has made great strides since 1995 when roughly two thirds of respondents were provided this benefit by their employer. Now over 80 percent report they have health insurance. Other types of insurance have not seen those kinds of gains, for example life and disability insurance. These are provided to less than one third of respondents.

Another disturbing figure that has improved since 1995 is CE. Over 75 percent of respondents receive compensation for CE registration, but the percentage receiving time off to attend and reimbursement for travel and lodging is considerably less. This indicates in a time when more states are requiring CE to meet state credentialing requirements, approximately 40 percent of respondents would have to attend when they aren't scheduled to work or take vacation time. Forty-three percent, would have to pay for the trip themselves.

Continues





Table 8 Respondent Benefits

| | 2007 | 2003 | 1999 | 1995 | | 2007 | 2003 | 1999 | 1995 |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Health insurance | 82.9% | 80.7% | 78% | 67% | CE registration | 78.7% | 73.3% | 74% | 60% |
| Dental insurance | 49% | 44.8% | 37.5% | 26% | CE time off | 62% | 60.1% | 60% | 54% |
| Malpractice insurance | 4.2% | 4.8% | 6% | 3% | CE travel/lodging | 57% | 48.1% | 46.5% | 35% |
| Life insurance | 32.1% | 32.4% | 31% | 27% | NAVTA dues | 34% | 30.7% | 26% | 16% |
| Disability insurance | 28.9% | 25.2% | 25% | n/a | State assn. dues | 40.4% | 37.9% | 33% | 23% |
| Paid vacation | 93.3% | 90.8% | 92% | 90% | Credentialing fees | 36.2% | 30.3% | 25.5% | n/a |
| Paid sick leave | 65.6% | 67.2% | 67% | 59% | Housing/apartment | .4% | 1.5% | 1% | 1% |
| Paid legal holidays | 74.9% | 74.2% | 74% | 70% | Free/discounted animal care | 82.4% | 81.1% | 85.5% | 83% |
| Paid overtime | 73.6% | 72.5% | 70% | 66% | | | | | |
| Retirement/pension plan | 65.8% | 60.5% | 52% | 33% | | | | | |

NAVTA members statistics on the benefits was significantly higher in all categories than their nonmember counterparts. For example 85 percent of NAVTA members indicated they had health insurance compared to 70 percent of nonmembers. NAVTA members received paid sick time 67 percent of the time compared to only 55 percent of the time for nonmembers.

Part-time Work

More technicians are working on a part-time basis. The average hourly wage for all respondents was \$15.36/hour. The following represents hourly compensation rates for technicians working part-time.(Table 9)

In the next article, we will report on the professional aspects of the veterinary technician’s career including involvement in professional associations, meeting attendance trends, and what respondents want from a professional association. **TNJ**

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Table 9 Part-time Compensation

| | 2007 NAVTA Members | 2007 Nonmembers |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Less than \$12 per hour | 11.7% | 13.6% |
| \$12 - \$14.99 per hour | 26.7% | 30.9% |
| \$15 - \$17.99 per hour | 22.6% | 33.3% |
| \$18 + per hour | 22.3% | 8.6% |

Technicians Respond!

Part Two Demographic Survey Summary

The fifth national veterinary technician demographic survey was conducted by NAVTA in the Fall of 2007. This is part two in the reporting of the data and will focus on lifelong learning, respondents involvement in promoting the profession, assessment of NAVTA programs, and areas members feel important. In addition, computer usage trends both at home and at work will be reported.

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is a recognized component of the veterinary technician profession. Since NAVTA began following this trend in 1999, there have been some interesting changes. For example, since the last survey in 2003, the percentage of veterinary technicians indicating that they attended CE meetings has dropped significantly. One of the biggest shifts is seen at the local level (49% in 2003, 21% in 2007).

Table 1 is a summary of four types of CE meetings attended by veterinary technicians over the 12 months prior to the survey.

NAVTA members, (41 percent) indicated that speakers/topics was the number one factor influencing their choice of CE meetings. Location was ranked second at 37 percent, with 12 percent choosing a meeting to fulfill a mandatory CE requirement, and 9 percent indicating price was their number one consideration. There is no significant change in this data since 2003.

Respondents are still assuming some of the cost of their CE. Employer reimbursement and time off to attend has not changed

significantly in four years. NAVTA members (78.7 percent) indicated that their employer paid CE registration fees. Sixty-five percent were given time off to attend the conference and only 59 percent were provided with reimbursement for travel and lodging. These numbers were significantly lower in the nonmember group (74.4 percent—registration, 45.6 percent—time off, 45 percent—reimbursed for travel and lodging).

Computer Use

Computer usage, for respondents at home, has stayed consistent at about a third of both members and nonmembers. However respondents indicating they used the computer at home multiple times a day has almost doubled in the member category. Work usage of the computer has also increased significantly, especially for the member. (**Table 2**)

The number one use of the computer at work is for client records (87 percent for members and 97 percent for nonmembers) Internet access is the next highest at 68 percent for members and 56 percent for nonmembers. Word processing is at 62 percent for members and 54 percent for nonmembers. Computer

Table 1—CE Meeting Attendance

| Provider | Member 2007 | Nonmember 2007 | Member 2003 | Nonmember 2003 |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Local VTA | 21% | 18% | 49% | 49% |
| State VTA | 39% | 26% | 59% | 55% |
| State VMA | 42% | 37% | 60% | 53% |
| National | 48% | 33% | 60% | 57% |

Table 2 Computer Usage

| | 2007 | 2003 | 2007 | 2003 | 2007 | 2003 |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Home | <i>Once a day</i> | <i>Once a day</i> | <i>Multiple times/day</i> | <i>Multiple times/day</i> | <i>Once a week</i> | <i>Once a week</i> |
| Member | 32% | 34% | 45% | 24% | 12% | 27% |
| Nonmember | 35% | 32% | 30% | 25% | 17% | 29% |
| | 2007 | 2003 | 2007 | 2003 | 2007 | 2003 |
| Work | <i>Once a day</i> | <i>Once a day</i> | <i>Multiple times/day</i> | <i>Multiple times/day</i> | <i>Once a week</i> | <i>Once a week</i> |
| Member | 16% | 13% | 47% | 30% | 9% | 19% |
| Nonmember | 23% | 9% | 30% | 18% | 23% | 20% |



use for inventory is at 47 percent for members and 59 percent for the nonmember.

Member Services and Programs

Members and nonmembers were asked to comment on how they felt about current NAVTA dues. Eighty-one percent of members felt the current NAVTA dues were “about right.” Only forty-nine percent of nonmembers, indicated the dues were “about right.” With 39 percent indicating they were “high.” Forty-nine percent of NAVTA members would be willing to pay higher dues in order to support added NAVTA programs and services. Nonmembers indicated the reasons for not currently belonging to NAVTA were unfamiliarity with the association at 36 percent, 33 percent were too busy to get involved, and 30 percent felt the dues were too expensive.

Members were asked how important each of 13 programs or services were to them. See **Table 3** for how respondents ranked current programs and services.

Table 3—Current NAVTA Programs

| | <i>Very/Somewhat Important</i> |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>The NAVTA Journal</i> | 93% |
| CVTS | 88% |
| Website | 86% |
| Liaison with AAVSB | 85% |
| NVTW | 84% |
| AVMA/NAVTA Liaison Committee | 83% |
| State Representative Network | 82% |
| Student Chapters | 79% |
| Discounts | 74% |
| Members Only Section | 71% |

The NAVTA Journal was ranked as the most important program the association offers. Over 93 percent of respondents ranked the journal as Very Important or Somewhat Important. Additional rankings of specific sections are summarized in **Table 4**.

Table 4 Importance of The NAVTA Journal by Section

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Opportunity for CE Credit | 91% |
| Four CE Articles per issue | 93% |
| News for Members | 95% |
| CE Announcements | 96% |

Promoting the Profession

Twenty-four percent of members and 10 percent of nonmembers have given a presentation about the profession in the last twelve months. Sixty-three point six percent of NAVTA members and 39 percent of nonmembers are also members of their state associations. Under 15 percent of either group had ever served their state association as an officer or committee member.

Continues





Areas to Address

Members were once again asked to rank the highest priority areas they felt NAVTA should address on their behalf. Not surprisingly 34% of members ranked “Increase veterinarian awareness of effective utilization” as the highest priority for NAVTA. Twenty-four percent of members ranked “Assist states with credentialing laws and requirements” as the second highest priority, followed by “Provide the public with information about the profession” (21%), and “Continuing Education development” (17%). “Recruitment of students for veterinary technology programs”, and “Implementation of certification process for assistants” were ranked low at 3.6% and 1.3% respectively. (Table 5) **TNJ**

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Table 5 Priority Ranking of Areas to Address

| | |
|------|--|
| 34% | Increase veterinarians awareness of effective utilization |
| 24% | Assist states with credentialing laws |
| 21% | Provide the public with information about the profession |
| 17% | Assist with continuing education development |
| 3.6% | Recruitment of students for veterinary technology programs |
| 1.3% | Implementation of certification process for assistants |

It's no trick loving somebody at their best.

Love is loving them at their worst.

- Tom Stoppard

