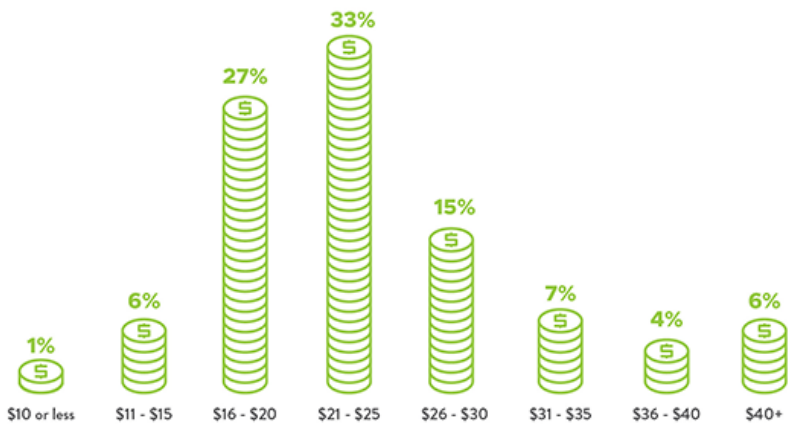


VETERINARY TECHNICIANS BEING PAID MORE BUT STILL FACE CONCERNS ABOUT WAGES, BURNOUT, DEBT

The average veterinary technician is earning 25% more than in 2016, according to a recent survey by the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America. In 2022, 33% of respondents said they earned between \$21 and \$25 an hour, compared with 22% in this category in 2016. The computed average annual salary for a veterinary technician in 2022 was \$52,000. In 2016, the computed average annual salary—based on a wage of \$20 per hour and working 40 hours a week—was \$41,600.



A third of respondents to the 2022 National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America demographic survey said they earned between \$21 and \$25 an hour, compared with just 22% in this category in 2016. (Images courtesy of NAVTA)

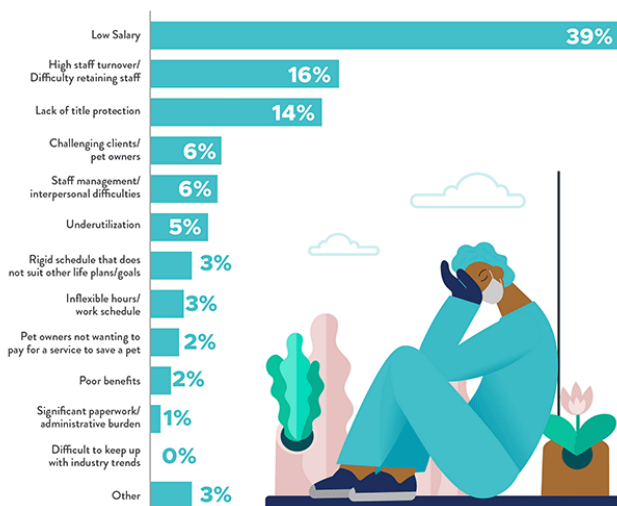
Every six years, NAVTA conducts a demographic survey among its members. The most recent version was sent between January and March 2022 and collected 1,886 qualified individual responses. The results, [announced Jan. 16](#), contain data on veterinary

technician wages and hours, educational debt, employee benefits, job satisfaction and wellness, credentials and preferred titles, and more.

Kelly Foltz, a credentialed veterinary technician, is chair of the AVMA Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities, which accredits more than 200 veterinary technology programs in the U.S. programs. She said the survey is an essential read. "It's one of the only consistently repeated analyses that we have of the vet technology profession," she said. "It gives us a snapshot in time as to the health of the profession and what we need to be concerned about—and how systems are functioning." In terms of wages, Foltz argued that current salaries are still not adequate for the knowledge and expertise that credentialed veterinary technicians provide.

Despite reported gains in hourly wages, compensation is still an issue for many veterinary technicians. When asked about the most challenging aspects of their jobs, 39% of the NAVTA survey's respondents said low salary.

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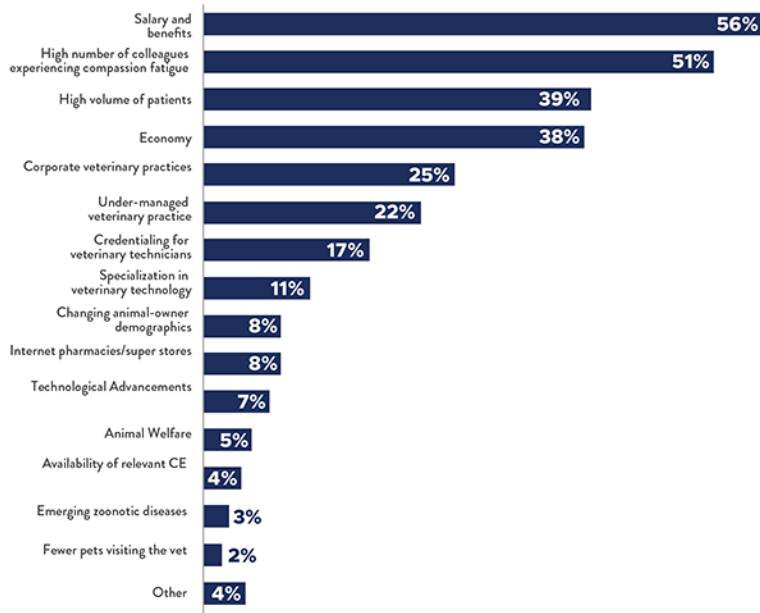
"So, while it's a step in the right direction, it's still very sobering," she said. "I would love the vast majority to be in the \$30- to \$35-an-hour range and beyond."

Relatedly, one-third of veterinary technicians reported having a second job, usually one that is full time. This is an increase from 2016, when 27% of respondents had a second and even a third job.

"I don't think it's a coincidence that people aren't making enough, they have second jobs, and they're more burned out at their primary job," said Foltz, who is a veterinary technician specialist in emergency and critical care.

The two biggest projected issues impacting veterinary technicians have not changed since the last survey from 2016: salary and benefits as well as compassion fatigue. Seventy percent of respondents said they have experienced burnout, and 65% cited compassion fatigue as the most frequent well-being issue they faced. The percentage of

respondents who said their veterinary practices were discussing compassion fatigue had more than doubled since 2016—from 23% to 52%. However, only one in five respondents reported spending sufficient time on self-care, and only 41% of respondents used all of their allotted paid time off. Foltz explained that burnout is associated with the workplace, while compassion fatigue is associated with the nature of the work itself. “We can do a lot better job of preparing people and giving them tools for the kind of compassion fatigue and secondary trauma they will experience in vet medicine,” she said. The AVMA offers [a number of well-being resources](#) for individuals and teams. When asked about the most challenging aspects of their jobs, 39% of respondents said low salary, 16% said high staff turnover or difficulty retaining staff members, and 14% said lack of title protection. Ashli Selke, immediate past president of NAVTA, acknowledged a shift in the industry during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The two biggest projected issues impacting veterinary technicians over the next five years will be salary and benefits along with compassion fatigue. That has not changed since the 2016 survey. [\[Enlarge\]](#)

“I believe we lost a lot of people due to overworking and burnout,” she said. “I think that’s why there was such a turnover. It was a hard time in our career path.”

Other findings from the survey show that more than 70% of respondents who identified as veterinary technicians had an associate degree in veterinary technology, up 16% from 2016.

Since 2016, employers have enhanced the available benefits for veterinary technicians by adding coverage for vision and dental insurance as well as overtime pay. Selke mentioned that many

employers are offering employee assistance programs and even discounted pet care as benefits to employees.

More than one-third of veterinary technicians reporting having debt from student loans, averaging \$29,700 per person. In 2016, 90% of respondents said it was important to have a national standardized credentialing requirement for veterinary technicians, which does not currently exist. In 2022, 83% of respondents said this was important. In 2022, 85% of respondents preferred a title with the word “nurse” in it, a substantial increase from 30% in 2016. “The word ‘technician’ is not always understood by the public,” Selke said. “Seeing that people would rather gravitate towards that title (veterinary nurse), that lets us know that our Veterinary Nurse Initiative committee that NAVTA has is on the right path.” Last year, only 27% of respondents said they are extremely satisfied with their veterinary technology career. However, more than 70% said they were either somewhat satisfied or extremely satisfied with their career.

The [full report](#) (PDF) is available to download on NAVTA’s website.

The [AVMA](#) and NAVTA have been working together to support improved recognition of the knowledge and skills of veterinary technicians and better engagement of veterinary technicians within practices. More recently, the AVMA is creating a Committee on Advancing Veterinary Technicians and Technologists to actively work on many of the issues mentioned in the survey, including title protection, retention within the veterinary technology field, and financial security for veterinary technicians. “Wherever discussions about technicians are being had and decisions about technicians are being made, technicians need to be at the table,” Foltz said. “We deserve a say in our profession and deserve to be stakeholders in our own future.” Foltz explained that one of the wonderful things about veterinary medicine is the collaboration between the veterinarian and the veterinary technician. “There’s a lot of dynamism, a lot of energy, and a lot of reaching across the aisle and collaboration going on right now,” Foltz said. She added that now more than ever, clients want to know who is caring for their animals and what their qualifications are. She is hopeful for the future of the profession. “We need to seize this moment. This is our time as technicians,” Foltz said. “It is a better time to be a credentialed veterinary technician now in the U.S. than it’s ever been.”