

'Disappointing' gender pay gap revealed in SPVS survey

FEMALE vets are earning more than their male counterparts for the first time, according to the SPVS Salary Survey 2017.

Statistics from the biannual survey showed the median hourly rate for women qualified for a decade or less was marginally higher than men, at £21.02 and £20.93, respectively.

However, the trend did not resonate throughout the study, with male vets qualified for 11 years or more on a median hourly rate of £35.27, compared to £28.22 for women.

Furthermore, the survey found male veterinary surgeons had a median hourly rate of £27.96, compared to £22.79 for females – an 18.5 per cent pay gap.

However, the median qualified period for men was 15.5 years, compared to 6.1 for women, which accounts for much of the difference in hourly rates, SPVS said.

Published exclusively on SPVS' online platform, the survey drew responses from 700 vets and 630 veterinary nurses.

Salaries were calculated by including any additional benefits, such as CPD, professional subscriptions, accommodation and vehicles.

SPVS senior vice-president Peter Brown said: "What is interesting to note is for veterinary surgeons qualified up to 10 years, the median hourly rate for women was marginally

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higher at £21.02, compared to £20.93 for men, and this is the first time we have seen this in our survey.

"However, for vets qualified 11 years or more, the median hourly rate for men was £35.27, compared to £28.22 for women. Whether this relates to the phenomenon observed in a variety of professions – for women to become less ambitious over time and to what extent this is caused by institutional barriers within the veterinary profession – is a subject for further research, but it would be encouraging if the equalisation of pay rates seen here for younger vets starts to ripple through to more experienced practitioners."

'Significant'

Former BVA president Gudrun Ravetz said, while parity at an earlier stage and an increase in part-time salaries were all positive, she was disappointed to still see differences in pay between the sexes.

Mrs Ravetz said: "I think it is disappointing we are still seeing a significant gender pay gap and it is important we really begin to under-

stand why that is happening.

"Practices and businesses need to see pay in the same light as other business indicators; it should be something they are tracking, making sure it is fair, transparent and open so we can overcome what, frankly, is a disappointing gender pay gap."

While pay is not always a motivator for someone to take a new job if other aspects are right, it is certainly a demotivator if it is not fair, Mrs Ravetz explained.

She added: "The reasons people make career choices or changes is because of location, career opportunities and support within a practice. It's not because of pay. But, what we are seeing... is more women than men in the profession being dissatisfied with their pay... and that shouldn't be happening. It is important, as a profession as a whole, we get to understand why this is happening. But also, businesses need to take the lead of controlling why this might be happening.

"We know more women do take a career break, but a lot of this taking a break or coming back is not gender specific. So whatever we put in place must be open to both. But, certainly, we need to look at people who are returning to work, what their needs are and how we can fit them to the business..."

It's about taking a holistic look at what the workplace package is, rather than just focusing on pay."

The proportion of respondents receiving a pension contribution from their employer has increased dramatically, with 56.8 per cent of vets and 63 per cent of VNs in receipt of one. Such a trend reflects recent legislative changes, SPVS said.

Many respondents also reported receiving an element of performance-related pay as well.

Further figures

The proportion of new and recent graduates completing the survey increased in 2017, skewing the results for median salary by type of practice. For that reason, two figures were given – one for vets qualified up to one year and another for those qualified two years or more.

Salaries for equine vets qualified up to a year stood at £39,110, compared to £44,300 for those qualified two years or more.

Mixed animal vets qualified 12 months or less were on £32,900, compared to £44,750 for colleagues in the job two years or more.

While the survey showed large animal vets with two or more years' experience earned £44,250, a lack of corresponding respondents qualified for a

year or less meant comparison was impossible.

In small animal practice, relatively little change was seen in the median salaries of new/recent graduates and more experienced vets. The same was true for experienced vets in mixed and large animal practice.

In its summary report, the SPVS said: "The drop in median salary for new/recent graduates could be the effect of sampling different cohorts (the sample is relatively small at 23), but, anecdotally, mixed practice remains a popular choice for new graduates seeking a wide range of experience, and this may exert a downwards pressure on salaries for recently qualified veterinary surgeons in this area."

Nursing salaries have risen across the board, with the exception of equine practice. But this may have been affected by the relatively small number of respondents, SPVS said.

In small animal practice, the median salary for nurses up to five years qualified was £20,673, while for those qualified six years or more the median salary was £25,800.

SPVS members can access the full survey at <https://spvs.org.uk>

● For the full report relating to RVNs, see February's *VN Times*.