CAREERS

A fifth of surgeons in England are female

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Women now make up 19% of higher trainees, specialist doctors, and consultants in surgery in England, data from NHS Digital show.

The figures, collected in January 2018, show that the proportion of women in surgery is lower at more senior career grades. While 54% of foundation trainees in surgery are women and 41% of those in core training are women, 30% of higher specialty trainees, 20% of specialty and associate specialist surgeons, and 12% of consultant surgeons are women.

The proportion of women is higher in some specialties than in others. Paediatric surgery is the subspecialty that has the largest proportion of higher trainees, specialist doctors, and consultants who are women (35%). This is higher than the proportion in oral and maxillofacial surgery (34%), plastic surgery (29%), otolaryngology (26%), general surgery (23%), vascular surgery (18%), urology (16%), neurosurgery (15%), cardiothoracic surgery (14%), or trauma and orthopaedic surgery (11%).

Among those in training, almost half of higher specialist trainees in some surgical subspecialties are women. In ophthalmology, paediatric surgery, otolaryngology, and plastic surgery, over 40% of higher specialty trainees are women (48% in ophthalmology, 46% in paediatric surgery, 43% in otolaryngology, and 40% in plastic surgery). Across all surgical subspecialties, 30% of higher trainees are women.

The proportion of women in surgical specialties has risen over the past decade. In November 2009, women made up 24% of doctors working in surgery (including doctors in foundation training, core training, specialty training, staff grades, and specialist and associate specialist and consultant posts). By November 2017, this proportion had risen to 27%.

These figures were produced by the Royal College of Surgeons of England from data collected by NHS Digital.

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