



THE CANADIAN DENTAL
HYGIENISTS ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRES

2021 JOB MARKET & EMPLOYMENT SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Demographic & Employment Profile

The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) retained The Portage Group to conduct the 2021 biennial Job Market & Employment Survey to obtain key labour force information about the dental hygiene profession in Canada.

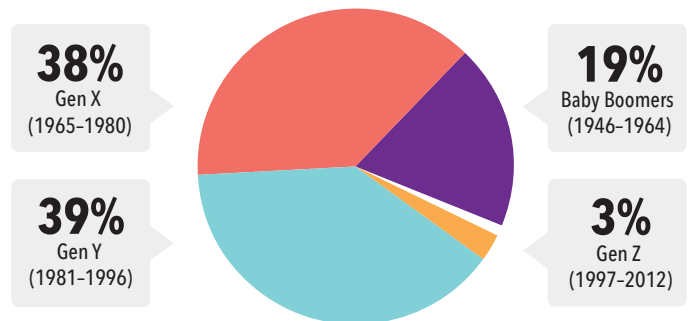
The survey response rate was high. A total of 4,137 dental hygienists completed the questionnaire, which was distributed electronically to CDHA members, 18 years of age and older, through a secure website and promoted via email. The survey ran from September 14 until October 15, 2021; analysis and reporting were completed in December 2021.

Demographic Profile

- The average age of survey respondents is 43, with an even distribution between the ages of 25 and 59.
- 81% of respondents identify as white or Caucasian. Dental hygienists of South Asian, Chinese, and Filipino descent each account for between 3% and 5% of respondents; 3% identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit.

Generational Breakdown

- The percentage of Generation Y and Generation X respondents in 2021 is roughly equal, whereas the Baby Boomers account for 19% of respondents, which is slightly higher than in 2019 (16%) and 2017 (13%).



△ Response rates by generation

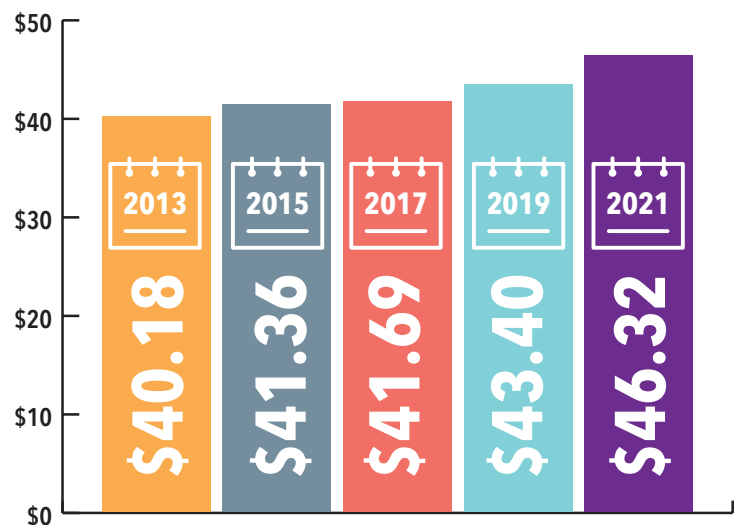
Employment Profile

Among all respondents working in dental hygiene, 94% are employees; 53% work full time and 40% work part time, which is consistent with the 2019 survey results. Full-time positions have increased slightly every year since 2013.

Over the past two years, average hourly wages have increased by 6.7%, exceeding the inflation rate for the period, which the Bank of Canada calculates as 5.72%.¹

Pay

- The average hourly rate for respondents in 2021 is \$46.32 including bonuses and commissions (if applicable), which continues the trend of increasing hourly wages observed in previous years.



△ Average hourly pay rate

¹ Bank of Canada. <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator>

Pay (cont'd)

- 90% of respondents earn an hourly wage—up slightly from 2019—while 4% earn an annual salary and 5% receive straight commission.
- 11% of dental hygiene jobs offer a bonus in addition to regular pay, which accounts on average for 2.6% of total compensation.
- Consistent with previous years, Alberta has the highest average effective hourly rate at \$57.12, which is almost 15% higher than the next highest province, British Columbia, where respondents earn an hourly rate of \$49.88. New Brunswick continues to have the lowest average hourly rate at \$36.36.

Benefits

- 86% of respondents receive at least one employment benefit. The top five benefits received are dental care (61%), paid vacation/holidays (53%), uniform allowance (42%), professional development (29%), and parking (24%).



61%
Dental



53%
Vacation



42%
Uniform



29%
Professional development

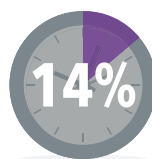


24%
Parking

- 94% of respondents who work full time report having benefits compared to only 83% of respondents who work part time.
- The least common benefits received by respondents are a retirement saving plan (5%), a pension plan (6%), profit sharing/bonuses (6%), and paid professional association or regulatory dues (8%).

Hours of Work

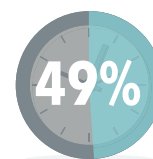
- Respondents in full-time positions work an average of 36.9 hours per week, an increase of 6.9 hours over 2019, while those employed part time work an average of 23 hours per week.
- Satisfaction with the number of hours of work per week has declined slightly, from 73% in 2019 to 70% in 2021. Since 2017, a growing number of respondents have indicated that they would prefer fewer hours of work each week.



work 20
hours per
week or less



work 21 to
30 hours
per week



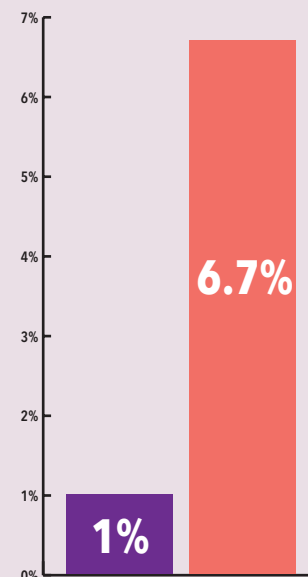
work 31 to
40 hours
per week



work 41 to
50 hours
per week

Unemployment Rate & Employment Leave

- The unemployment rate among respondents is 1%, which is well below the current Canadian unemployment rate of 6.7%, as reported by Statistics Canada in October 2021.²
- Maternity leave (43%) is the main reason given by respondents for being on leave from their job. Seventeen percent (17%) of respondents report being on disability leave; 15% are on leave for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.



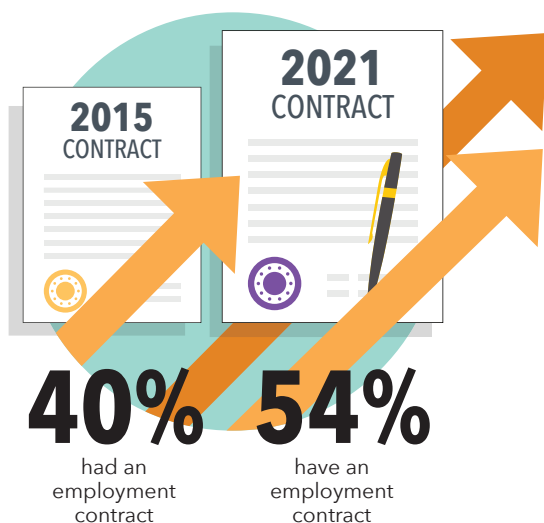
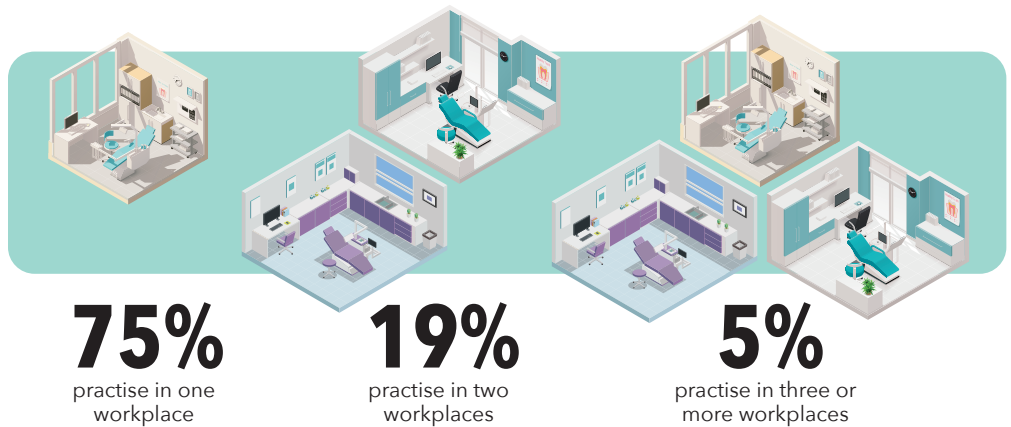
△ Unemployment rate
■ Dental hygiene
■ National

²Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/211105/dq211105a-eng.htm>

Professional Profile

Workplace Setting

- 94% of respondents (91% in 2019; 92% in 2017) work in a dental or dental hygiene practice, followed by education (3%) and public health (2%).
- 14% of respondents working in clinical practice are employed by a dental corporation; 1% work in a dental hygienist-owned practice.
- 75% of respondents practise in one workplace (71% in 2019, 72% in 2017, 74% in 2015, and 75% in 2013), 19% practise in two, while 5% practise in three or more workplaces.
- Most frequently, respondents working in a specialty practice report working in periodontic (44%) and orthodontic (31%) practices.
- The number of respondents with a written employment contract continues to trend upwards, from 40% in 2015 to 54% in 2021. As in previous years, employment contracts are most common in Ontario.



- 38% of respondents say that their employer undertakes an annual performance review, consistent with previous surveys (42% in 2019, 39% in 2017, 38% in 2015, and 34% in 2013).

- Respondents collaborate most frequently with dentists (82%), followed by denturists (34%) and physicians (31%). The results of the last three surveys are consistent.
- Respondents give a mean agreement score of 8.6 out of 10 to feeling valued by their clients, 8.1 to feeling valued by their peers, and 7.2 to feeling valued by their employer.
- Respondents are most satisfied with infection control practices (87%), location (76%), and relationship with colleagues and staff (75%).
- Respondents who provide clinical care most frequently agree that they have decision-making authority over documenting client assessments and dental hygiene diagnoses (89%), documenting services and implementing dental hygiene services (88%), and developing dental hygiene care plans (87%).
- Respondents report having the least decision-making authority over making referrals to other health professionals (64%). These results are consistent with 2019.



Dental Hygiene Education & Mean Hourly Wages

- The highest level of dental hygiene education completed by respondents is a dental hygiene diploma (87%), followed by a bachelor's degree (9%) and a master's degree (0.2%).
- Respondents with a bachelor's degree in dental hygiene earn 11% more than those with a diploma in dental hygiene.
- 18% of respondents hold a bachelor's degree in a field other than dental hygiene; 3% hold a master's or doctoral degree in a field other than dental hygiene.
- Respondents with a postgraduate degree outside of dental hygiene earn 6% more than those with no education outside the field of dental hygiene.



Credentials in Dental Hygiene



- 78%** Diploma
- 9%** Advanced diploma (ON only)
- 5%** Post-diploma bachelor's degree-completion
- 4%** Bachelor's degree
- 2%** Associate degree (US or INTL)

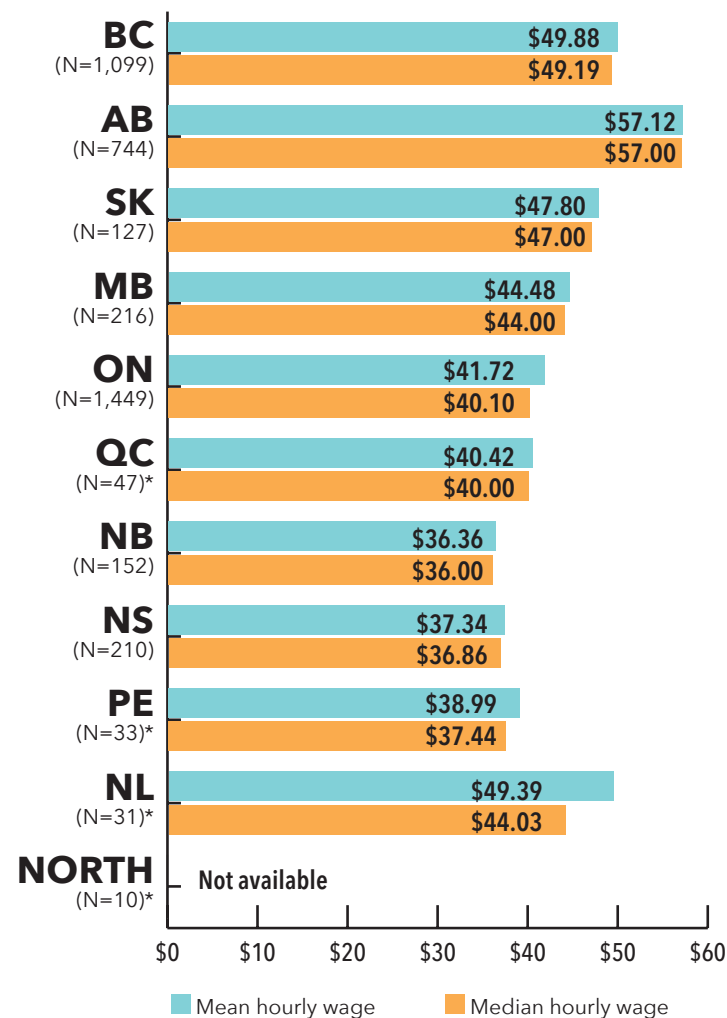
Credentials in a Field Other Than Dental Hygiene



- 18%** Bachelor's degree
- 3%** Master's or doctoral degree

Provincial Variance

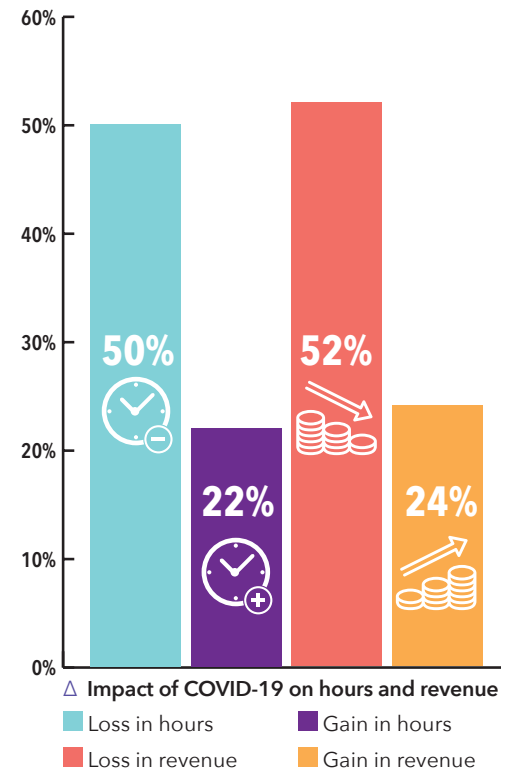
- Respondents from the Atlantic provinces, Quebec, and Saskatchewan are more likely to work full time, while respondents from British Columbia and Alberta are more likely to work part time. Across Canada, respondents who work part time earn, on average, an hourly wage 4% higher than those working full time.
- Respondents employed by corporately owned dental clinics are more common in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan.



*Interpret with caution due to small sample sizes

Independent Practice Owners

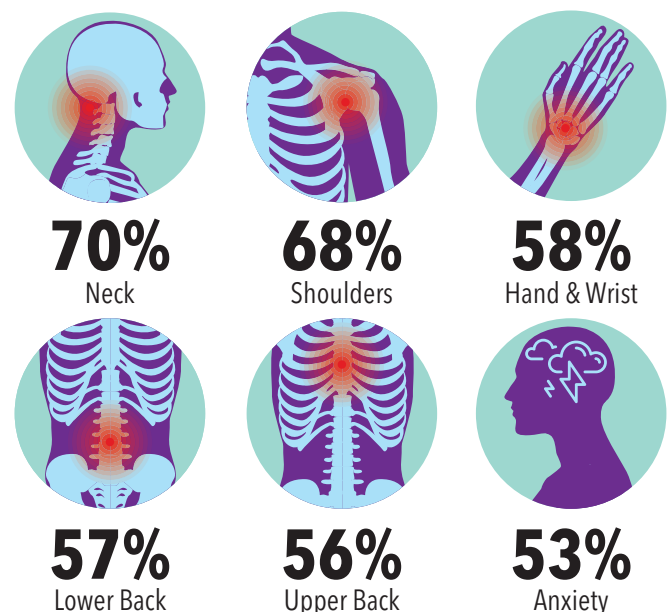
- The percentage of respondents who report owning their dental hygiene practice (5%) has remained stable since 2017.
- On average, these independent dental hygiene practice owners have been in business for just under six years. Thirty-nine percent (39%) have owned their practice for one to five years, and 20% have been in business for more than 10 years, which is almost double the percentage (11%) in 2019.
- Most independent practices are storefront or home-based locations (67%), followed by mobile practices (25%) and long-term care practices (7%).
- 90% of these dental hygiene practice owners are sole proprietors of their business.
- Half of independent practice owners report a decrease in hours (50%) and/or gross revenue (52%) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, 22% report an increase in hours and 24% report an increase in gross revenue because of COVID-19.
- Independent practice owners' level of satisfaction with their practice is high, with a mean of 8.7 on a 10-point scale.



Work-Related Discomfort, Pain or Medical Issues

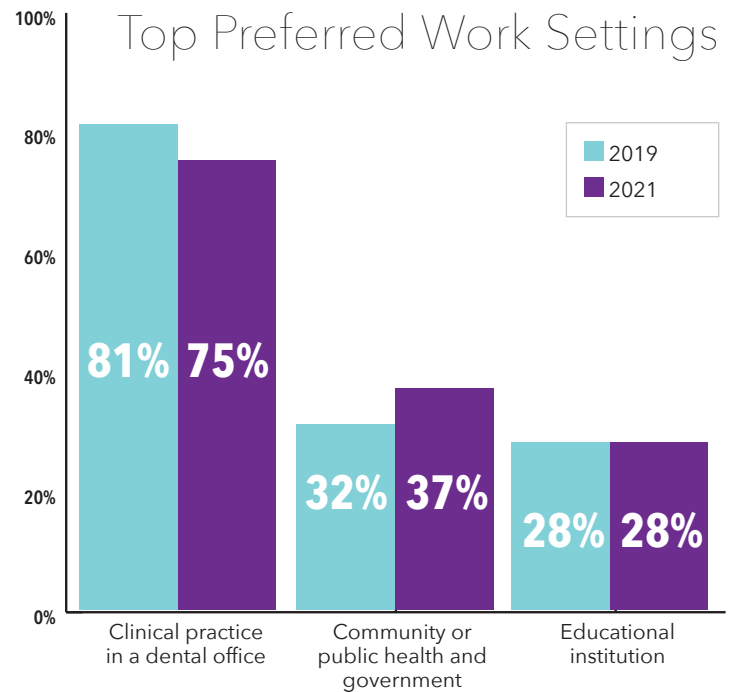
- 92% of respondents report having had work-related pain in the past year. While this represents a significant increase over 2019 (76%), it is in line with the 2015 (89%) and 2017 (87%) survey results.
- 65% of respondents report having had a work-related medical issue in the past year. While still high, this is a significant decline from 74% in 2019 and 72% in 2017. Most frequently, respondents report experiencing anxiety/stress (53%), which is two-and-a-half times higher than in 2019. The next most common medical issue is mental health at 15%. Only 6% of respondents report having experienced a COVID-19-related medical issue.

Reported Pain & Medical Issues



Future Plans

- There is potential for considerable turnover in the dental hygiene profession in the next five years. Ten percent (10%) of respondents plan to leave the profession within the next two years (compared to 4% in 2019, 5% in 2017, and 4% in 2015), while a further 18% plan to leave within three to five years. Less than half of respondents (48%) plan to stay in the profession for more than 10 years.
- Retirement is the most frequently cited reason for leaving the profession (60%), followed by seeking change and/or a new career (22%).
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on future plans. 17% of respondents who plan to leave the profession are doing so because of a decline in workplace satisfaction due to the pandemic; 12% cited early retirement because of the pandemic.
- Among those who plan to stay longer than two years in the profession, the top preferred work setting continues to be clinical practice (75%), followed by community or public health and government (37%), and educational institutions (28%).



Conclusion

Dental hygienists are committed to preserving, promoting, and improving the oral and systemic health of all Canadians. While the upward trend in wages continues across the country and dental hygienists are benefitting from improvements in their workplace environments, they have also faced unprecedented challenges in providing safe, high-quality oral care services to their clients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CDHA is humbled by the strength and resilience of its members and will continue to support them professionally through the crisis. CDHA is also committed to raising public awareness of dental hygienists as essential primary health care providers and to advocating for improved access to oral health care for all Canadians.



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