



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

2023 JOB MARKET & EMPLOYMENT SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

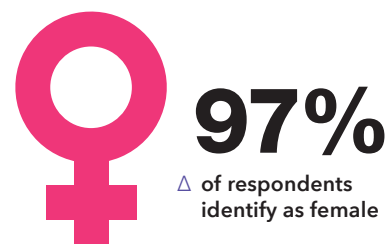


The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) retained The Portage Group to conduct the 2023 biennial Job Market & Employment Survey to obtain key labour force data about the dental hygiene profession in Canada.

The survey response rate was high. A total of 3,840 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 April 26 until May 26, 2023; analysis and reporting were completed in August 2023.

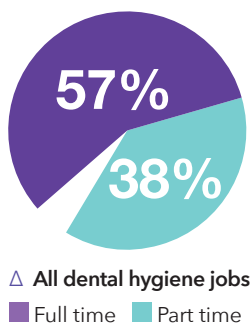
Demographic Profile

- The average age of survey respondents is 44, with an even distribution between the ages of 30 and 59.
- 78% of respondents identify as white or Caucasian. Dental hygienists of South Asian, Chinese, and Filipino descent each account for between 3% and 8% of respondents; 4% identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit.



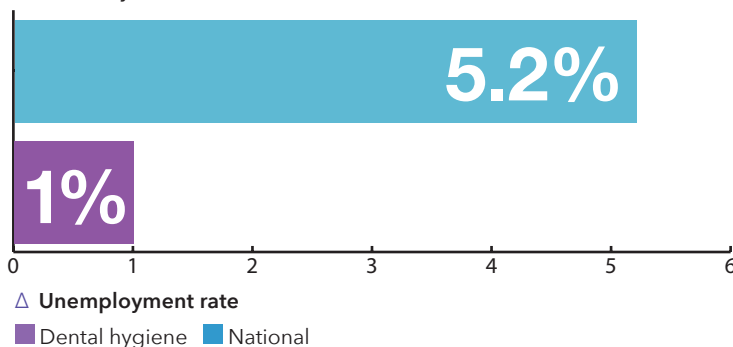
Employment Profile

- Among all respondents working in dental hygiene, 94% are employees; 57% work full time and 38% work part time. The gradual trend towards more full-time employment in dental hygiene continues.



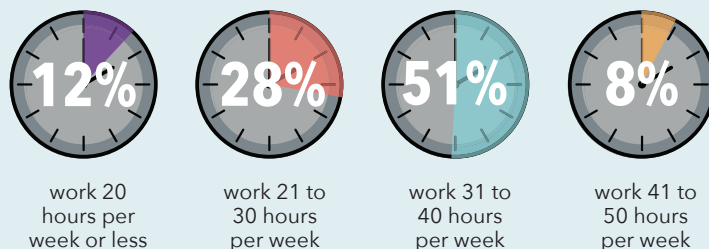
Unemployment Rate

- The unemployment rate among respondents is 1%, which is well below the national unemployment rate of 5.2% calculated in May 2023.¹



Hours of Work

- Respondents in full-time positions work an average of 37.1 hours per week while those employed part time work an average of 26.5 hours per week.
- The percentage of dental hygienists who would prefer to work fewer hours grew from 20% in 2021 to 21% in 2023 while the percentage who would like more hours has decreased from 10% in 2021 to 7% in 2023.



¹Statistics Canada: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230609/dq230609a-eng.htm>

Compensation

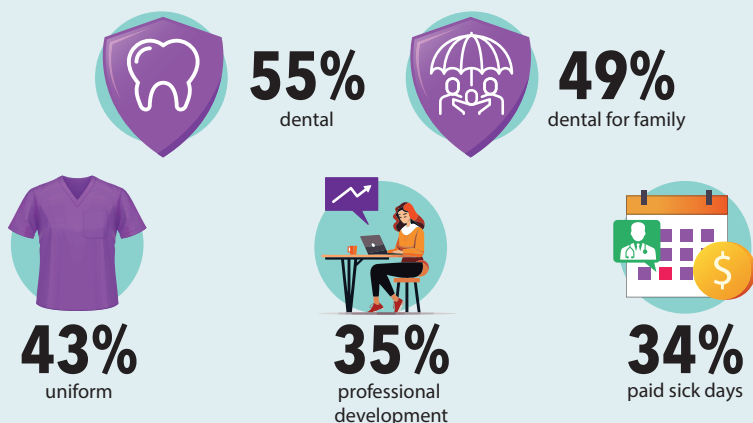
- The average hourly wage rate for respondents in 2023 is \$49.69 including bonuses and commissions (if applicable), which continues the trend of increasing hourly wages observed in previous surveys.
- 89% of respondents earn an hourly wage, similar to findings from 2021.
- 14% of dental hygiene jobs offer a bonus in addition to regular pay which accounts, on average, for 3.4% of total compensation.
- Consistent with previous surveys, Alberta respondents report the highest average effective hourly rate (\$58.86), which is 8% higher than the next highest province, British Columbia, at \$54.38 per hour.
- New Brunswick continues to have the lowest average hourly rate (\$39.17).
- The pay for 60% of dental hygiene jobs has increased by an average of 6% over the past 12 months.



△ Average hourly pay rate

Benefits

- 87% of respondents receive at least one employment benefit. The top five benefits are dental care for themselves (55%), dental care for family (49%), uniform allowance (43%), professional development (35%), and paid sick days (34%).



Employment Leave

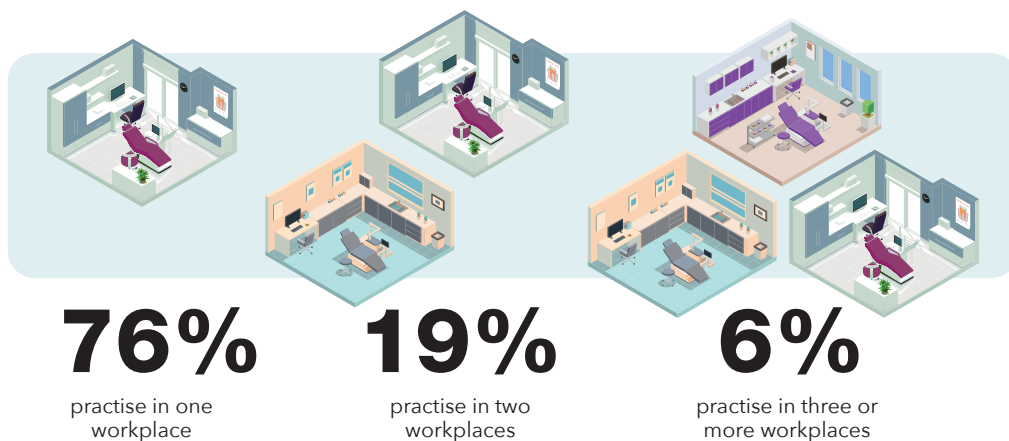
- Of the respondents who are on leave from work, 50% report maternity or parental leave as the reason, followed by disability leave (26%). Only 1% report being on leave for COVID-related reasons, down from 15% in 2021.



Professional Profile

Workplace Setting

- 91% of respondents (94% in 2021; 91% in 2019; 92% in 2017) work in a dental or dental hygiene practice, followed by educational (4%) and public health (3%) settings.
- 15% of respondents work in a corporately owned dental practice, while 1% work in a dental hygienist-owned practice.
- 85% of dental hygiene jobs are in general dental practices.
- The two most common specialty practices in which dental hygienists work are periodontics (38%) and orthodontics (37%).



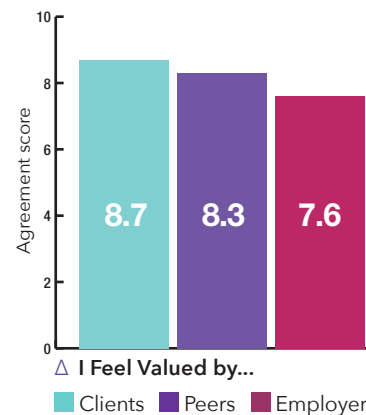
Employment Contracts & Policies

- Since 2015, there has been an upward trend in the percentage of dental hygienists with written contracts in their primary practice setting.
- 45% of respondents say their employer undertakes a regular performance review, up from 38% in 2021.



Job Satisfaction

- Respondents give a mean agreement score of 8.7 out of 10 to feeling valued by their clients, 8.3 to feeling valued by their peers, and 7.6 to feeling valued by their employer.
- Respondents are highly satisfied with infection prevention and control practices (88%) in their workplaces. They are equally satisfied (78%) with their practice location, billing practices, opportunities to practise to their full scope of practice, and their relationship with their colleagues and staff.
- Respondents who provide clinical care most frequently agree that they have decision-making authority over documenting the client assessment (92%), the dental hygiene diagnoses (91%), and the services and treatment outcomes (91%), as well as implementing dental hygiene services (91%).
- Respondents report having the least decision-making authority over making referrals to other health professionals (71%), although this percentage has improved considerably since 2021 (64%).
- 58% of respondents are somewhat or very satisfied with their latest pay increase.



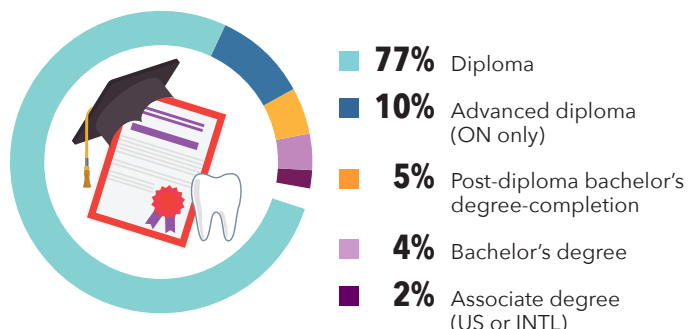
Interprofessional Collaboration

- Respondents collaborate most frequently with dentists (79%), followed by denturists (35%) and physicians (33%). These results are consistent with findings from 2019 and 2021.

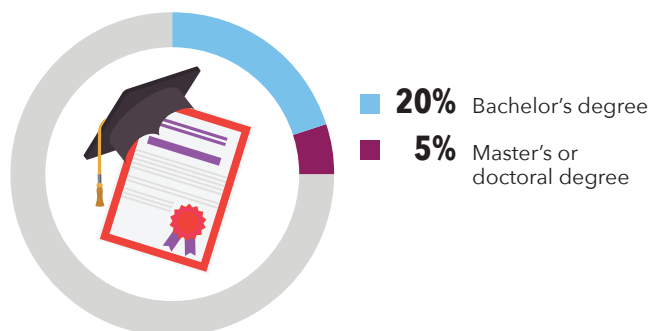
Dental Hygiene Education & Mean Hourly Wages

- The highest level of dental hygiene education completed by respondents is a diploma (87%), followed by a bachelor's degree (9%), and a master's degree (0.3%).
- Respondents with a bachelor's degree in dental hygiene earn 11% more than those with a diploma.
- 47% of respondents have completed post-secondary education in a non-oral health field, with studies in biology (15%), education (9%), and biomedical sciences (8%) being mentioned most frequently.
- 20% of respondents hold a bachelor's degree in a field other than dental hygiene and 4.5% hold a master's or a doctoral degree in a field other than dental hygiene.

Credentials in Dental Hygiene

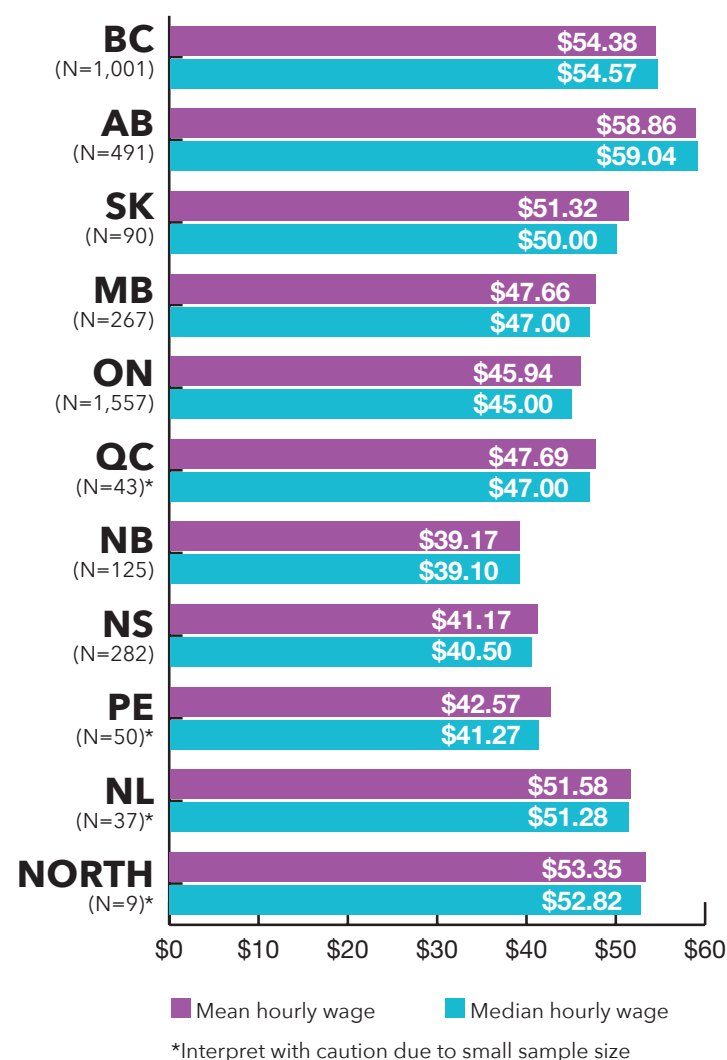


Credentials in a Field Other Than Dental Hygiene



Provincial Variance

- While Alberta has the highest effective hourly wage, it also has the slowest wage growth rate of any province at an annual rate of 1.5% over the last two years.
- Over the past two years, the fastest wage growth rates have been in Nova Scotia (5.0% two-year average) and Ontario (4.9%).
- Respondents from the Atlantic provinces are more likely to be employed full time than those working in any other region.
- Respondents employed by corporately owned dental clinics are more common in PEI, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick.



5%

The percentage of respondents who report owning their dental hygiene practice (5%) has remained stable since 2017.

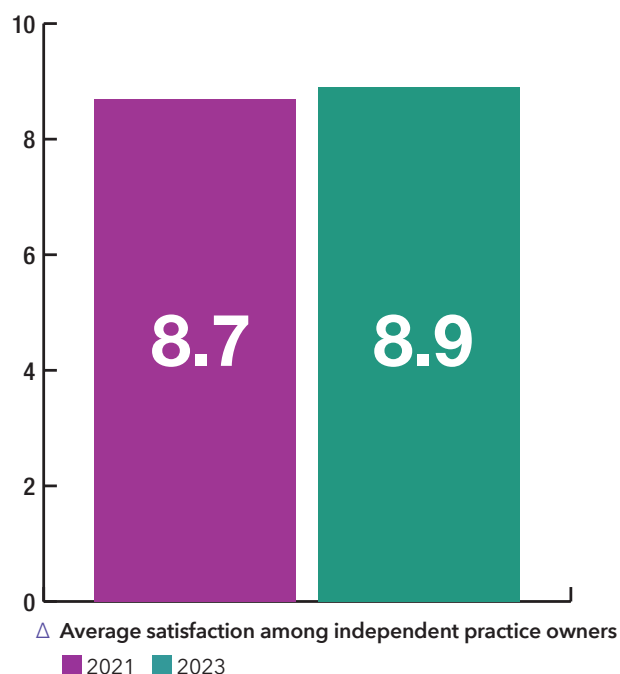


Independent Dental Hygiene Practice

- On average, independent dental hygiene practice owners have been in business for just over six years. 41% have owned their practice for one to five years, and 26% have been in business for more than 10 years.
- Most independent practices are storefront or home-based locations (65%), followed by mobile practices (28%), and long-term care (6%).
- In the past 12 months, working hours have either remained the same (39%) or increased (48%) for business owners; their gross revenue has either remained the same (30%) or increased (54%).
- Comparing their situation in 2023 to that before March 2020, business owners report an increase in both the number of hours worked (46%) and their gross revenue (53%).
- The average satisfaction rating for practice owners has increased from 8.7 to 8.9 on a 10-point scale, since 2021.

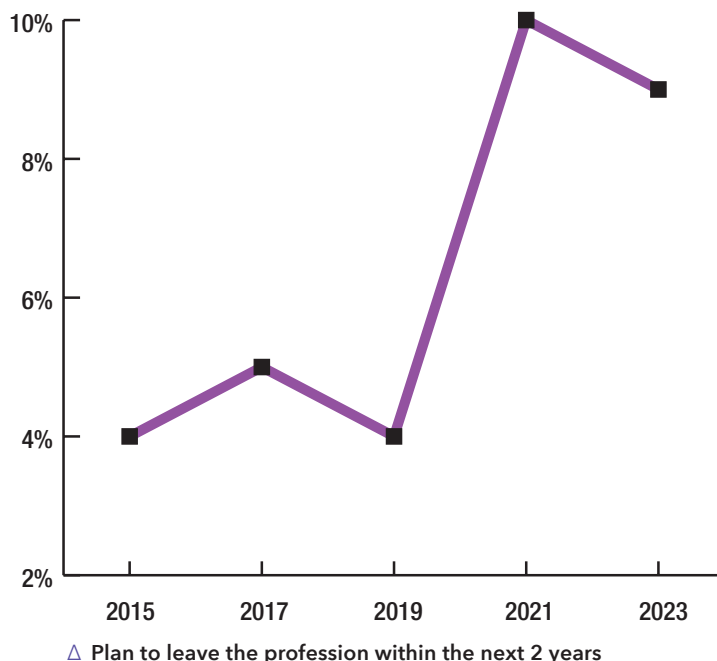
97%

97% of these dental hygiene practices are owned by a single dental hygienist (sole owner).



Future Plans

- The survey results continue to point to the potential for considerable turnover in the dental hygiene profession in the next five years. Nine percent (9%) of respondents plan to leave the profession within the next two years, while a further 18% plan to leave within three to five years. Close to half of the respondents (49%) plan to stay in the profession for more than 10 years.
- Retirement is the most frequently cited reason for leaving the profession (64%), followed by seeking change of career (21%) and not feeling valued (18%).
- Among those who plan to stay longer than two years in the profession, the top preferred work setting continues to be clinical practice (76%), followed by public health and government (37%), educational institutions (31%), and clinical practice in a dental hygienist-led clinic (26%).



Conclusion

As the dental hygiene profession emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, there are many reasons for optimism. The workforce continues to grow, thanks to healthy graduation numbers from education programs across the country. The unemployment rate is very low, and dental hygienists are increasingly employed full time. Wages are maintaining an encouraging upward trend, and more dental hygienists than ever have written contracts, employment benefits, and bonuses. The proportion of dental hygienists who report feeling valued by their employers and coworkers is also on the rise, suggesting a more positive and collaborative work environment.

With growing public awareness of the importance of preventive oral care and the federal government's recent recognition of dental hygienists as eligible oral health care providers under the new national dental care plan, there are exciting career opportunities on the horizon for all. The future of dental hygiene in Canada is strong!



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